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SPORTS

DYNASTY: Patriots Repeat as State Champions

C-C boys' soccer team gets late go-ahead goal to claim third state title in past five years.

By **Jon Pelland** November 20, 2010

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WORCESTER – Stowe Simonton got his first point of the 2010 season in dramatic fashion on Saturday, with his team competing on its highest possible stage.

The Concord-Carlisle High School boys' soccer team was tied with Nipmuc Regional of Mendon with 32 minutes left in the second half of the MIAA Division 2 state tournament championship game. Without a goal on the season entering the game, it was Simonton that scored what proved to be the game-winner to give the Patriots a 2-1 win at Foley Field.

It is Concord-Carlisle's D-2 state championship in the past five years.

C-C senior captain Alex Puchrik passed a short corner to fellow senior captain Aaron Nicklesberg. It caught Nipmuc (15-5-4) by surprise, and as defenders adjusted to get to Nicklesberg, he crossed the ball into the 6-yard-box. Simonton snuck behind his defender, and when he was given the opportunity to shoot, he bounced the ball off of the far goalpost and into the top of the net. It proved to be the defining moment of the game, as the Patriots (22-1-1) held on to win.

"I was ecstatic after the goal," Simonton said. "I just didn't know what to think. The guys have been ragging on me for not having a point. But I guess it was a good time to get it ... This has been a thrill. The older guys have always been so supportive."

It was a blustery day and both teams came prepared for what they knew would be a hard fought game.

C-C had to fight against the wind throughout the first half. Any clear would hang in the air and get sent back to the defense like a boomerang. The Warriors used that wind to attack the Patriots with their speedy strikers. Tanor Jobe proved especially dangerous for Nipmuc. He muscled with the Patriots' Chris Walker-Jacks and the defense for ball control in Patriots' territory.

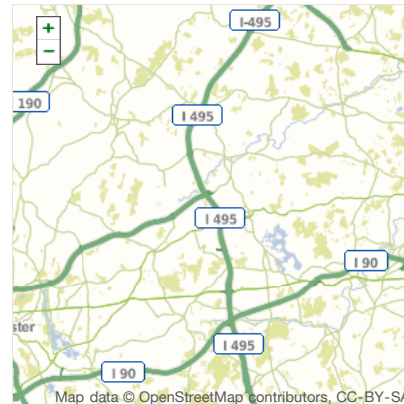
The Patriots managed to tie Nipmuc in the first half, despite the wind. The defense tried to keep the ball low. Walker-Jacks booted the ball with his knee over to his offense, and his athleticism allowed him to get back to any ball Nipmuc's offense tried to slip past them.

"It was a tremendous game. Our defense played well," C-C coach Ray Pavlik said. "Chris Walker-Jacks is an amazing athlete and a great player. Having him back there makes me feel like I can sleep at night, you know. Both teams were battling extraordinarily hard. Stowe couldn't have found a better time to step up."

Concord-Carlisle's first goal of the game was scored by Mike O'Brien. He boxed out a Nipmuc defender at the top of the 6-yard-box and fell into a cross goal shot that bounced off of the goalpost and in. O'Brien has been the leading scorer of the Patriots throughout the year, and the goal was his 7th of the tournament.

"O'Brien is just incredible," said coach Pavlik. "He's a warrior. He is so focused out there and he doesn't let anything get in his way. When he finishes he stays so calm. He has the ability to relax in the box and just execute. That goal was great."

In the second half the Patriots took over the game. Puchrik and O'Brien had shots that went just wide of the goal. But the pressure eventually paid off when Simonton sunk his shot.



PHOTOS (6)



Minutes later, Nipmuc's striker Jobe just missed a shot against the side goalpost. It was the Warrior's last good chance at goal.

"I think the biggest change for us in the second half was we had the wind," said Pavlik. "And we had a little luck. You're going to need that to win a championship."

"This is a dream come true," said Nickelsberg, a captain of the team. "Last year being injured, I'm just happy I got to see my team through this."

The Patriot's celebrated after the game, and chants of "Can you say, dynasty?" echoed across the field.

"What they've achieved is impressive," said Pavlik. "We look forward to next year. And it certainly helps to see this development of the younger players."



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