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## Unlikely hero lifts Concord-Carlisle

By Jason Mastrodonato

Globe Correspondent / November 21, 2010

WORCESTER — Concord-Carlisle had scored 71 goals in 22 games leading up to yesterday's MIAA Division 2 state championship game against Nipmuc at Foley Stadium. There was only one player on the roster who had yet to tally a point.

Sophomore Stowe Simonton, who was the seventh player coach Ray Pavlik had tried at the central midfield position this year, finally got in on the scoring action, and the timing couldn't have been better.

Simonton connected on a mid-air volley off a corner kick in the second half as the Patriots defeated Nipmuc, 2-1, to earn their second consecutive state title.

"I've been missing my opportunities, I guess, but luckily I was able to get one at the right time," Simonton said. "This is a good feeling."

Concord-Carlisle (21-1-1) has won three of the past five Division 2 crowns, going 22-2 in the postseason during that span.

"It's a testament to the kids," Pavlik said. "It's incredible. They work so hard in practice. They train all year round to get to this moment. It certainly helps having been here. Just to be composed and to know what to expect in this environment goes a long way."

C-C got on the board first, as Mikey O'Brien collected a through pass and buried it in the corner of the net. It was the junior's sixth goal of the tournament.

"He's incredible," Pavlik said. "The great thing about him, when he makes that turn when he finishes, he gets so calm in the box and relaxes, not panics, and just puts the ball home."

Nipmuc tied the scored later in the half when its leading scorer, Tanor Jobe (13 goals) took a quick pass off a free kick and sent it past keeper Cam McGrory, who couldn't reach the ball with a diving effort.

After the Patriots couldn't convert on three consecutive corner kicks in the second half, Simonton stepped up. Aaron Nickelsberg laid a short pass off to Alex Puchrik, who found Simonton for the score.

"All season we've tried to work on the short corner and perfect it, but with their team only sending one player to defend us, it made it easier," Puchrik said.

"It's incredible; the only kid on the team without a point, getting a game-winning goal in the state championship. It doesn't get much better than that."

Jobe nearly tied things up for Nipmuc moments later, but his shot caught the edge of the post.

"If you're going to win a state championship, you have to look back and say, 'We found one chance where we got a little luck,'" Pavlik said. "And that just trickled through and hit the post."

"It's been a crazy year for us," Pavlik said. "We had a ton of injuries. To watch some of these younger kids step up on this stage is incredible."