

A-B 2, ST. JOHN'S PREP 0

The Boston Globe

Colonials give Prep the boot

By Jeff Powalisz, Globe Correspondent | November 5, 2007

ACTON - The champions went down. Their offense was stalled, their defense exposed, and their bench ultimately muted.

But, at least in the words of coach David Crowell, there was a sense of finality for his defending Division 1 state champion St. John's Prep soccer team, which fell to Acton-Boxboro, 2-0, yesterday afternoon at Leary Field in a Division 1 North contest.

"We made two mistakes, they punished us with both mistakes," Crowell said of his team's first-round loss, which had the intensity of a contest usually reserved for the final rounds. "They did a much better job until the end."

The 13th-ranked Eagles could also walk away knowing it was their second unsuccessful try at defeating No. 4 Acton-Boxboro in a week. St. John's Prep (8-4-7) dropped a 3-2 decision to the Colonials to conclude the regular season.

"We didn't possess the ball as well as we normally do," Crowell said. "And a lot of credit goes to [A-B]. They didn't let us move the ball the way we usually do."

A-B (12-1-6) seemed prepared to match the Eagles' physicality from the start, seldom letting striker Alexander Farr and his Eagles teammates get good looks at the net. Colonial senior defender Will Edmonds sacrificed his body on numerous plays, pestering St. John's Prep with several blocks and clear-outs.

"It was a good physical battle for both sides," said A-B coach Dave Baumritter, whose team will host Haverhill tomorrow at 4 p.m. in quarterfinal matchup. "We played [St. John's Prep] a week ago. It's always a challenge to beat the same team twice in a season. To play a team of that caliber and beat them and then come back a week later and beat them again is a huge task. We were certainly up for it today."

The Eagles let their physical play hurt them just seven minutes into the first half. After senior forward Jake Hart fell hard after a tackle in the box, the Colonials were awarded a penalty kick. Senior midfielder Jay Hayward skyrocketed it past Prep goalkeeper Douglas Wilson for the 1-0 lead.

"Going down early is tough," Crowell said. "Especially on the road. It's a big game. Regardless of our experience, the players know it could be their last game. And going down early sets a tone."

The Eagles kept the ball in A-B's zone more often in the first half, but A-B came back with a vengeance in the second. A-B led in second-half shots, 8-6, and it was Hart's shot 26 minutes in that mattered the most.

Collecting the ball and steadying it, he brought it down the left side and gently pushed it past Wilson for the 2-0 lead.

"At that point, with [14] minutes left, chances are at a premium," Baumritter said. "The second goal there, that's the winner. That put the game out of reach for St. John's Prep."

A-B senior D.J. Brock had nine saves to record the shutout. ■