

Acton-Boxboro 4, Framingham 1: An early decision

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GHS
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ACTON -

After playing a combined 40 games this season, Framingham and Acton-Boxboro came into last night's Division 1 North girls soccer semifinal with a total of one loss and four ties. And after battling each other for 80 minutes last night at Leary Field, each side left believing any hype that had accompanied the opponent coming into the match.

"They were the most skilled team we've seen all year," said A-B coach Ru Sweeney.

"That's by far the best team I've seen," said Framingham dynamo Melanie Baskind.

While No. 4 Framingham fought and clawed in the second half, the top-seeded and unbeaten Colonials provided the tangible evidence to support Baskind's claim. A-B rushed out to a 3-0 lead in the first 20 minutes en route to a 4-1 victory.

While Framingham pressured A-B freshman goalie Jessie Wiggins early with several shots, the Colonials (20-0-1) put their quick-strike ability on display in a hurry. A-B senior Lindsay Raymond received a pass from in the middle of the field and, with her left foot, booted a laser to the top righthand corner of the net past Flyers senior goalie Erin Greenstein.

"It's hard to dig yourself out of an early hole, especially against a team like (A-B)," said Baskind after her team finished the year at 16-2-3.

The Colonials did not let its foot off the gas pedal. In the 15th minute, sophomore sensation Hayley Brock (2 goals) broke into the clear in front of the Flyers net and received a pass from junior Ceci Jensen. Greenstein was able to stop Brock's first attempt, but Brock got her own rebound and slipped the ball into the back of the net.

Just five minutes later, A-B's Marie Margolius scored off a Brock assist to increase the lead to 3-0.

Framingham's slow climb back into the game began in the 31st minute, when freshman Alexandra Doody booted a shot past Wiggins off a dish from sophomore Stephanie Leonard. The score was 3-1 at half, but Flyers coach Franco Bruno felt his team composed itself after A-B's early dominance.

"After those first goals, I thought the game was even," Bruno said. "The second half was even, and we had some opportunities to do some things, but that's soccer. That was a beautiful game with two great teams, and I am really proud of what this team has done."

The second half did not see either team control play. A-B went into a bit of a holding pattern while the Flyers won many balls at midfield but weren't able to capitalize. Each team managed just two shots after the break, but A-B made one of them count.

Streiking down the right side in the 58th minute, Brock let a shot rip from just inside the football sideline. The ball spun to the left before nestling itself into the top-left corner of the net, putting her personal finishing touch on an A-B win.

Both sides thought the final score was not a proper indicator of the battle that had just taken place.

"It was an even game," said Sweeney, whose team plays Winchester on Monday at Leary Field in the D1 North final. "We scored on our chances and they didn't, unfortunately. But the scoreboard was not indicative of what this game was, no way. Even with five minutes left when we were up by three, I was still a little shaky there, because they are potent offensively."

Baskind agreed with Sweeney's assessment.

"I thought the score didn't reflect the game at all," said the Harvard-bound senior. "I wouldn't be surprised if they won it all, though. But I'm proud of our team. We stuck with them and played as well as we could even though the scoreboard may not have shown it.

"This season was unbelievable," Baskind added. "We had such a small number of seniors, and to see the upperclassmen step up to the challenge every game of the year and just get better and better, it was incredible to be a part of."

Bruno also will have fond memories of what this Flyers bunch accomplished.

"This team to me was a family," he said. "It's been a long time since I've had as much fun as I've had with this team. I'm really going to miss them.

"I'll be miserable for at least the next three days," he added.

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