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## A-B girls soccer advances to state title game

By Stephen Tobey

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WEYMOUTH -

Three days after knocking off top-seeded Whitman-Hanson to win the Division 1 South title, the Weymouth High girls soccer team had a chance to upend another undefeated team, Acton-Boxborough.

The Wildcats nearly accomplished that objective, possessing the ball for much of the second half and getting three shots in the A-B net that just missed going in during the final 20 minutes of regulation time, but the Colonials prevailed, 2-1 in overtime Wednesday in a state semifinal match at Weymouth High School.

“From everyone I talked to, Acton-Boxborough was a very good team,” said Weymouth coach John MacIntyre, whose team ended the season at 17-2-4 and won its first-ever sectional championship. “I think we showed that if we’re not as good as they are, we’re a notch below.”

Acton-Boxborough (21-0-1) will play Shrewsbury for the state championship on Saturday at Westboro High School (1:30 p.m.).

Regulation time ended with the game tied at 1. The Colonials spent most of the first 10-minute sudden-death overtime in the Wildcats’ end of the field, getting off three corner kicks. The winning goal came with 2:40 remaining in the first overtime when A-B sophomore Hayley Brock gained possession of the ball at the 35-yard line and went down the left sideline. Her shot from 25 yards out went into the left side of the net, giving A-B the victory.

“That’s a well-coached team,” said A-B coach Ru Sweeney. “We started the first overtime in a 4-5-1 because we wanted to get better defense.”

After a scoreless first half, A-B scored in the first minute of the second. Freshman Kristen Gargiulo knocked a loose ball into the net following a corner kick from Lindsey Raymond. Tracy Potter was credited with the assist.

Three minutes later, after a corner kick, the Wildcats’ Jess Stuart tied the game with a header. Sam Norton assisted. It was just the fifth goal A-B allowed all season.

“We’ve been inconsistent in the second half all season,” MacIntyre said. “We tend to do better in the second half.”

After the Wildcats tied the game, they continued to pressure the A-B defense, retaining possession of the ball for the most of the next 15 minutes and getting three more corner kicks. Weymouth placed four more shots on goal in the second half, including one that almost slipped into the right corner, but freshman goalie Jessie Wiggins kept the ball out of the net.

“In the tournament, she’s made about 10 game-saving saves,” Sweeney said. “She always plays the second half and she’s always tested.”

After hitting the turf at least a half-dozen times during the course of the game, A-B midfielder Courtney Findlen was shaken up enough to leave the game for good with less than two minutes left in regulation following a collision at midfield.

“Once Courtney got hurt, we knew we had to win it for her,” Brock said. “We wanted to win this game for our seniors.”

Goalie Meg Dempsey made two saves for Weymouth.

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