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What a weekend

By Stephen Tobey

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ACTON, MASS. -

For many years, Acton-Boxborough Regional High School has enjoyed its share of athletic success.

Hardly a year or even a season goes by without at least one of the school's teams winning a Dual County League title.

Teams have also been successful in the postseason. Earlier in this decade, the football team had its run of four straight Eastern Mass. Super Bowl championships. Two years ago, the girls indoor track team won the All-State championship without the benefit of a single individual champion.

For all the wins and all the titles, however, it's been a while since the school and the community has seen anything quite like last weekend. Maybe something like this has happened before, but if it has, it's been a while.

Saturday morning, the field hockey team played Shrewsbury at Worcester State College for the MIAA Division 1 state championship. After a wild second half in which Shrewsbury came back from a 3-0 deficit to tie the game at 3 and at 4-4, A-B won, 6-4, capturing the school's first state championship in field hockey since 2000.

That afternoon, 13 miles from Worcester State at Westboro High School, about an hour after the field hockey team claimed its trophy and medals, the girls soccer team played Shrewsbury for the Division 1 state title. In a tightly contested game between two teams that scrimmaged each other in the preseason, A-B prevailed, 1-0 to win its first state championship in girls soccer ever.

Two teams from A-B, played two teams from Shrewsbury High School, a school that shares a nickname (Colonials) with A-B, and two first-place trophies made the trip home to 96 Hayward Rd.

A third A-B girls team, the swimming team, contended for a Division 1 state championship on Sunday, but placed third behind nine-time state champion Andover and Chelmsford, two teams it had beaten during an undefeated dual meet campaign.

"To have three girls teams doing that is amazing," said A-B field hockey coach Mae Shoemaker. "It's a credit to the families and the investment that they make. The parents value sports."

The athletes on each of the teams know each other and though bus schedules may have kept them attending each others' games, they wished each other the best.

"We pretty much support each other," said Monica Jensen, the captain of the girls soccer team.

According to athletic director Steve Desy, it was business as usual at the school during the week, but the athletes had a somewhat different perspective.

"This week wasn't about schoolwork," said Maggie Ashton, the field hockey team's co-captain.

The field hockey team broke through to the state championship game after defeating defending state champion Walpole in the semifinals. To get into the final four, A-B won its first Division 1 North title after three unsuccessful trips to the sectional finals. The last state title the Colonials won in field hockey was in 2000, when everyone on the team was in elementary school and had yet to pick up a field hockey stick.

“I don’t think we even knew about field hockey back then,” Ashton said. “We’ve all been playing together since the seventh grade.”

While the girls soccer team had not won a state title before Saturday (an A-B team lost in the finals in 1988) the team played with the burden of high expectations all year. Three of the seniors, Jensen (Lafayette University or Colgate), Courtney Findlen (University of Rhode Island) and Lindsey Raymond (Yale University), will be playing soccer for a Division I college program next year. At least that many underclassmen are likely to follow them into the Division I ranks when their high school days are over.

With that kind of talent usually come some pretty big egos, but if the Colonials had those kind of egos, they had no trouble putting them aside for the greater good. Part of the reason that was possible is because most of the players on the team had known each other for so long.

“If anyone ever gets [too big a head], we could always tell them ‘Hey, I remember you when you were 6,’” said Raymond.

Stephen Tobey is the sports editor of The Beacon.

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