

SPORTS

Section 7AA girls soccer championship: Blaine 3, Andover 1

CHAMPIONSHIP REVENGE



Blaine celebrates its final goal in a 3-1 victory over Andover in the Section 7AA championship match Oct. 16. The title avenged overtime defeats to the Huskies in the past two 7AA finals and powers the Bengals on to state.

Photo by Patrick Slack

First-half surge powers Blaine past Andover, on to state

Patrick Slack
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The first goal was a blur, coming minutes into the match on a ball simply meant to apply pressure.

The second score came from perfect positioning, being in the right place at the right time to handle a deflection.

The final strike was the result of a legendary blast, one that left the stadium stunned.

The past two years had ended on the very same field, with Blaine left just on the doorstep of the state tournament.

This time, the Bengals weren't going to be denied. They were blasting through.

Third-seeded Blaine used a trio of first-half goals to take down top-seeded

Andover 3-1 in the Section 7AA championship Oct. 16, avenging back-to-back runner-up finishes to the Huskies.

"It's a great feeling, especially after two years of losing to this team," Blaine senior midfielder Jaida Wiege said. "This game was on our mind since the beginning of summer. Senior year, this was our time to beat this team. We knew we could do it."

To do so, the Bengals knew they needed to get off to a quick start, looking to press the action in the early going. Just how early it would pay off, though, they did not expect.

Blaine pushed the ball deep downfield in the opening minutes, applying pressure on the Andover defense. When the Huskies attempted to clear the ball through the middle of the field, Wiege controlled

it on her foot and quickly directed it toward the net. And, as has often been the case this season, the result was a goal, coming just over three minutes into the match.

"It was so fast, I barely remember it," Wiege said. "I just knew I had to be in the right position. I wasn't really looking to score, I just wanted to get it in the right place. And, it worked! It definitely helped us, because usually we're a second-half team. We start picking it up in the second half. I think starting the game off, first five minutes, really helped our confidence."

The entire landscape of the match shifted, with Blaine now in control.

"It was important for us to play well from the start," Blaine head coach Scott Zachmann said. "They're a team that

comes after you right away and they come after you hard, so we figured if we could get up by a goal we could set the pace and the tone for the game."

Blaine maintained its 1-0 lead for the next 20 minutes as both teams battled the wind and one another in search of scoring opportunities.

Then, with just over 12 minutes before halftime, another chance came.

Wiege fired a difficult shot toward the net that was nearly impossible to corral. A rebound landed in a prime spot for sophomore forward Sammi Proulx, who deposited it into the net for a 2-0 lead.

"I told Jaida, 'We don't get that second goal if she doesn't hit the ball where she does,'" Zachmann said. "The only

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