

Outlaws advance to soccer semifinals

By Rongi Yost
Correspondent

The boys soccer team was strong in its 3-1 win over Molalla at home on Saturday, November 7, in the playoff quarterfinals. With the win, the Outlaws advance to the semifinals. The game was to be held at home in Sisters on Tuesday, November 10, against the North Marion Huskies.

In Saturday's action against Molalla, Sisters scored the first goal of the game at the 12-minute mark. Colton Mannhalter exhibited some fancy footwork, separated from the Molalla defense, and laid the ball across the middle to Malachy Sundstrom for an easy tap-in goal.

Six minutes later, Jadon Bachtold rounded the corner onto the left side and placed a perfect cross to Alec Gannon, who scored his first varsity goal.

Sisters put forth a tremendous effort, and the crowd witnessed some amazing, athletic moments from both sides. The Outlaws had two great headers from Sundstrom and Keegan Greaney that almost made it into the goal, but Molalla's keeper did a great job and got the saves. The game was tight, and both teams had good opportunities to score. At the half Sisters held a 2-0 lead.

In the 65th minute, keeper Ryan Funk made a save off a Molalla shot, and the ball rolled out in front of the goal. A Molalla player went to kick it in, but Minam Cravens made a slide tackle at the goal line before another player took a shot, and then Funk dove on it for the final save.

"That was an intense series to keep the score at 2-0," said Coach Rob Jensen.

In the 75th minute, the ball was crossed and headed back-and-forth near the goal three times before Gannon finally headed it in for his second goal of the game.

With two minutes left on the clock, Molalla was able to score on a low driving cross to one of their forwards.

The final whistle blew and Sisters' players stormed the field, excited with the victory, and greeted their fans on the sidelines.

Gannon commented on his first goals of the season.

"I'm so excited that I was able to get those two goals in the back of the net for my team," said Gannon. "I was at the right place at the right time, and without my teammates those goals would've never happened. If we can bring how we played in the previous two games to the semi's, I like our chances."

Funk played an outstanding game in goal and told *The Nugget* he's been very relaxed and at ease in the box.

"During these last two playoff games, I haven't been nervous at all," said Funk. "Having Tristan (Kaczmarek) and Minam (Cravens) in the back line is tons of extra insurance for me. If we keep playing like we have, we will have great chances in semi's and state. We need to keep the offense and our great defense up."

Jensen had praise for Funk's exceptional play.

"Ryan played flawlessly in the goal," said Jensen. "He made multiple saves on very tough shots from Molalla and kept the slate clean until the waning minutes of the game. His leadership improved and he was talking to the defense. We knew that he would have to play big in the playoffs, because he would be tested, and all of his hard work paid off."

Four days earlier, the Outlaws dominated play and shut out McLoughlin 4-0 at home in the first round of the



Outlaws celebrate Alec Gannon's first goal this season vs. Molalla.

playoffs. The win was especially sweet, since Mac Hi knocked Sisters out in the first round last year.

Jadon Bachtold got the Outlaws on the scoreboard in the 20th minute of play. Jadon received the ball in the center of the field at approximately 30 yards, and hit a left-footed banger to the upper-left V. Sisters held onto the 1-0 lead as the teams headed into halftime.

Jensen said, "We started to get comfortable in the first half, and figured out weaknesses that we could attack. Our success increased as the half went on."

Ten minutes into the second half, the Mac Hi defense got caught playing flat, and Malachy Sundstrom was able to dribble past them up the middle for a breakaway goal.

The Outlaws tacked on another goal in the 57th minute. Sean Willitts took a really nice shot from 40 yards that dropped hard. The keeper

made a great save, which put the ball out to about 15 yards on the left side of the box. A streaking Keegan Greaney put the ball on a line to the right-side netting for the score, and put the Outlaws on top 3-0.

Sisters scored their final goal with two minutes left in the contest. One of the Outlaws was tackled in the penalty box, and Sisters was awarded a PK that Jadon Bachtold was easily able to convert.

Keegan Greaney commented on the game.

"We did a great job defending McLoughlin's counterattack. Our team

chemistry and ability to move as one has allowed us to be successful."

Jensen praised the defense for their fine work.

"Our defense did a great job defending the long ball, and being prepared for the Mac Hi counterattack. Minam (Cravens) and Tristan (Kaczmarek) worked well and prevented them from having any real goal-scoring opportunities. Our team in general gave them very little space to clear the ball, and controlled possession nicely. The boys showed great poise under pressure."

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