

## Barlow hopes to relive history

### Barlow faces familiar foe Newtown in SWC final

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REDDING -- In 2005, the Joel Barlow boys soccer team couldn't beat Weston, Bethel or Newtown in the regular season.

But they managed to defeat them all when in counted, topping all three teams en route to the South-West Conference championship.

And now the 2007 Falcons are hoping history will find a way to repeat itself when they take on Newtown today at 7 p.m. at Joel Barlow High School.

Joel Barlow (12-2-4) couldn't figure out a way to top Brookfield, Bethel or Newtown this season, but that has changed thus far in the postseason.

The fifth-seeded Falcons have already topped the fourth-seeded Bobcats and top-seeded Wildcats, the only two teams to beat Barlow this season.

"Normally in life you don't get second chances," Joel Barlow senior captain Scott St. Cyr said. "But we've gotten one and we are

making the most of it."

Now they are circling the sixth-seeded Nighthawks (10-3-5), who battled Barlow to a scoreless tie in both teams' season openers and a 1-1 draw in conference play on Oct. 16.

Newtown reached the final thanks to senior goalie Dan Smith, who made two saves to lift the Nighthawks in penalty kick shootouts against third-seeded New Milford and second-seeded Pomperaug.

"It's another bogey team for us," Joel Barlow coach Paul Winstanley said of Newtown. "Brookfield beat us, we got them, Bethel beat us, we got them and we never beat Newtown. The only time we beat them is in the big games, let's hope that holds up."

And while both teams saw each other twice in the regular season, both teams will offer their adversaries plenty of surprises.

The Falcons are 7-0-2 in their last nine games and are getting excellent play from 2006 All-New England midfielder St. Cyr and All-State midfielder Dylan Stone.

The Falcons, who only have eight seniors on their roster, have also seen dramatic improvement from their underclassmen, particularly on defense. The Falcon defense, led by junior goalie Cody Hickok, has delivered nine shutouts this season, and Barlow has outscored its opponents 52-8.

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"They have been absolutely amazing," Stone said of his younger teammates. "They have been the key to our late season success."

But the two senior captains have set the tone, combining for a goal and two assists in the SWC tournament. St. Cyr has scored four goals and handed out 23 assists this year, while Stone has 11 goals and 11 assists on the year.

They are also a pair on a mission, chasing the conference and state titles, which eluded them by just one goal last season.

"This is what we've been chasing all year," St. Cyr said. "This is where we expected to be."

The same can't necessarily be said for Newtown.

The Nighthawks were at times unimpressive during the regular season and had difficulty scoring.

Newtown's young offense has only scored 39 goals this season, but managed to keep itself in most games with a stout defense, led by Smith and senior sweeper Mat de Brantes.

Despite their regular season struggles, the Nighthawks have now won four straight games and are looking like the team Newtown coach Brian Neumeyer expected would reach the SWC title game.

"This was our goal all season," Neumeyer said. "We didn't worry so much about the regular

season. We have a young group that was still learning so we set our goals in the postseason and not so much on the regular season right away. Now we are there and anything can happen."

The Nighthawks tied five games this year, and with Smith in net seemed to be well equipped for a playoff success, particularly in the shootout.

Now, to win the outright SWC crown, they will have to get it done on the field the old fashion way.

"We will need to get a shutout," Smith said when asked about how to beat Barlow. "The postseason is a new season. We are ready for (the SWC title game). This is what we've prepped for all season long."

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