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## Title is second in three years

by JESSE FRANK

Long before the season started the Joel Barlow High boys varsity soccer team knew exactly what it wanted to accomplish.

A year ago the Falcons came up short of winning two championships, losing to Masuk in the South-West Conference finals and later to Suffield in the state Class M finals. They wanted to change that this season.

The Falcons went a long way towards easing the pain when they took on Newtown in the SWC finals last week. The fifth-seeded Falcons also wasted little time, scoring early and making the lead stand up for a 1-0 win in front of a raucous home crowd on Thursday, Nov. 1. The win was Barlow's sixth SWC title.

Many members of last year's team felt relieved to win the big game.

"Our goals were set going into the season. We wanted to get revenge for our losses in the state and SWC championships last year," said senior co-captain Scott St. Cyr. "We are only half way there, but this feels great."

The game's lone goal came only three minutes into the contest when junior Mike Flynn, fighting an ankle injury, put a perfect corner kick towards the goal, which was redirected in by St. Cyr. From this moment on sixth-seeded Newtown tightened up its defense, but the damage had been done.

This win was the second time in three years that Barlow has beaten Newtown in the SWC championship, a fact that tournament MVP Dylan Stone found particularly sweet.

"This is the best feeling ever," said Stone, also a co-captain. "This brings back memories from our win over Newtown two years ago. If all of us didn't step up we might not have won, but we certainly did."

This win improved Barlow's season record to 12-2-4 and coach Paul Winstanley recognizes the vast improvements that this team has made as the season has progressed.

"When we started out it was rough," said Winstanley. "However, we got some field vision and in the end everybody did what they had to do to bring home the championship."

In the 1-0 win, goalie Cody Hickock added to his record of 35 career shutouts. He credits much of this feat to the stellar play of his defense.

"We really gelled like a true team and I was really happy with how our defense played," he said. "Newtown put four men forward at the end of the game, but we got on the same page and stood strong."

Newtown's best chance to score came in the final five minutes as it pressed the ball forward. Numerous shots were kept out by Hickock with the assistance of his defense. Taylor Armstrong, Chris Ferullo, and Brian Kraekel gave the Falcons the strength they needed on the defensive side of the field to hold off Newtown's attack.

The Falcons start their run at the state tournament this week. Seeded seventh, their second round game is today (Thursday) at home at 2 p.m. against 10th seeded Bacon Academy.



**Sean Basak-Smith, right, contends with a Newtown opponent during the South-West Conference boys soccer championship on Thursday, Nov. 1. The Falcons won 1-0 for their second league title in the past three years. — Scott Mullin photo**

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