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Nov 1, 2007

Upset wins advance Barlow

by JESSE FRANK

On paper the Joel Barlow High boys soccer team may be the fifth seed out of eight in the South-West Conference playoffs. What happens on the field, however, is what has counted so far.

The Falcons are playing like a much higher ranked team, evidenced by their performance, which has carried over from the regular season. While on their quest for the SWC title, they have also avenged themselves against teams that had beaten them earlier in the season.

This was the situation in the quarterfinals on Monday at fourth-seeded Brookfield, a team that beat the Falcons 2-0 a few weeks earlier. This time they came out and played with a strong purpose, sitting on the winning side of this score when time expired.

Besides being able to score this time, the Falcons played flawless defense, highlighted especially by the play of sophomore Chris Ferullo. Cody Hickok also had another strong game in goal, adding to the Barlow shutout record he set earlier in the season.

Offensively, the winners were led by Dylan Stone and Alex VanSteinburgh, each scoring a goal in the first half as Barlow looked like a different team from the first meeting of the year between the two opponents.

It was not the only upset the Falcons would pull off in the tournament. An even greater challenge awaited them the next day when they faced top-seeded Bethel.

The undefeated Wildcats had also defeated the Falcons during the regular season. But with a little bit of luck anything could happen. And it did.

Late in the game the Wildcats inadvertently sent the ball into their own net while attempting to clear it. This was the break the Falcons needed as they knocked the Wildcats from the ranks of the unbeaten at Pomperaug High.

The number one ranked team in Class L, Bethel still struggled with Barlow's balanced attack. The Falcons dominated time of possession and had numerous opportunities in the first half; however, the halftime score was 0-0.

Motivated by a packed house, Barlow came out in the second half with lots of energy. The game remained scoreless until the last eight minutes, when Stone took a free kick. Attempting to clear the ball, a Bethel player instead headed it into his own net

While Bethel did manage many quality opportunities, Hickock stood strong in goal. The efforts of seniors Aaron Kaufman, Scott St. Cyr, Stone, and Taylor Armstrong ensured that the Falcons held on to win.

The 1-0 victory sets up tonight's (Thursday's) SWC championship at Barlow at 7. They will take on Newtown, which defeated Pomperaug 2-1 on penalty kicks in the other semifinal. Barlow and Newtown tied in their previous two matchups this season.



Alex Pelzar takes control of the ball during the Joel Barlow High boys soccer team's South-West Conference semifinal game against Bethel on Tuesday. The Falcons upset the top-ranked Wildcats 1-0 to advance to the finals for the fourth straight season. — Rocco Paul Valluzzo photo

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