

Hawken vs. St. Thomas Aquinas

What: Division III regional final

When: 3, today

Where: Kent Roosevelt

Directions: Take Interstate 271 south to 480 east. I-480 becomes Route 14 in Streetsboro. Proceed on 14 to Route 43 and turn right. Take 43 into downtown Kent, and the high school is on the right. Parking for the soccer facility is available by the middle school.

Records: Hawken 18-1-1, St. Thomas Aquinas 8-7-5

What's next: The winner advances to a state semifinal at 7 p.m. Tuesday against Milbury Lake or Toledo Ottawa Hills at a site to be determined.

Ohio high school soccer, meet Cinderella.

St. Thomas Aquinas came into the postseason with a 4-7-5 record, but here they are in the Elite Eight authoring perhaps the underdog story of the tournament.

When you're in that role, it can be said you have nothing to lose. Nevertheless, the red and white of Hawken is not what you want to see while playing that role.

The Hawks appear poised for another charge at Columbus led by Spencer Mischka, Jake McKay and Avery Mainardi.

It appears the only things that could stand in the way of Hawken advancing here would be a combination of overconfidence and a yeoman's effort by the Knights, and Coach Dani Giulvezan would never stand for the first one.

High school boys soccer: Hawken ends run of Aquinas

KENT The St. Thomas Aquinas boys soccer team's postseason magic carpet ride came to an end Saturday in the Division III regional finals at Kent Roosevelt High School. Gates Mills Hawken beat the Knights, 3-0, ending Aquinas' shutout streak at six.

Spencer Mischka scored all three goals as the Hawks (19-1-1) defeated the Knights (8-8-5) in the regional finals for the second straight year.

"Mischka was a man among boys out there," Aquinas head coach Damien Marchione said. "When he was out there, he was the game. He dictated the tempo and he dictated the pace of the game. He made the game move how he wanted it to. He's an excellent player."

Hawken advances to the state semifinals Tuesday at Bay Village High School. Hawken head coach Dani Giulvezan wasn't surprised by Mischka's play.

"Spencer played big at a big time," Giulvezan said. "He is a very classy person and he has a very good shot. Everybody saw that today. He's a very important player for us."

The loss was not without its bright spots for Aquinas. Goalkeeper Brandon Johnstin made nine saves, including several spectacular stops.

"Brandon had a phenomenal game," Marchione said. "He made numerous world-class saves. He's definitely a player to watch in the future. He's only a sophomore."

Several young players for Aquinas got valuable postseason experience. Johnstin was one of six sophomores that started for the Knights.

"It's really, really important to be in these games because these guys are young," Marchione said. "It's going to be huge going into next season and the season after that. We aren't going to be shaken playing in games like this because we've got the experience. Next year when we try to work our way back to this game, we'll be a veteran, experienced team even though we still will be fairly young. We're very excited about the future."

Despite the bitter ending, the season will be remembered as a positive one by Marchione.

"This team far and away exceeded all expectations," Marchione said. "All of us thought we could win the district again and that was one of our goals at the beginning of the year. To say that we would be in the final eight in the state, though, would have been pushing it earlier on, being that we graduated so many players.

"As the season wore on, though, the younger guys that were on the JV last year developed into the system. And we made a couple of adjustments toward the end of the year and we finished up 6-1-1."

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