

Tampa Bay Times

WINNER OF 10 PULITZER PRIZES

District boys soccer: PHU tops East Lake in PKs for 5A-7 title



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Friday, January 23, 2015 11:22pm

EAST LAKE — From tough defense to cramping desperation, rivals Palm Harbor University and East played valiantly through regulation and two 10-minute overtime periods in the Class 5A, District 7 championship game. With no score, they extended the game as far as it could go — to the drama of penalty kicks.

The end came on the final kick of the first round Friday, when the Hurricanes' Ryan Cooksey hit a shot that sailed past the arms of diving Eagles goalkeeper Sean Caulfield to give PHU a 5-4 edge in penalty kicks and the title.

The Hurricanes (15-1-2) are in the playoffs for the first time since 2012 and won their first district title since '10.

Cooksey had the winner but PHU goalkeeper Hayden Grooms also came through in the clutch — again.

Grooms stopped East Lake's fifth penalty kick attempt, setting up Cooksey's winner. It was the second straight district game Grooms changed momentum. On Wednesday, he had the pivotal stop in penalty kicks as the Hurricanes beat Steinbrenner in the semifinals to avenge their only district loss.

"It's been an exhausting week, but it was worth it to win the title," Grooms said. "We played two games that went into double overtime. We were tired. But I think we just wanted it more at the end."

Grooms has overcome numerous injuries to become PHU's most valuable player in the district tournament.

In middle school, Grooms had a herniated disc and back spasms that prevented him from playing in seventh and eighth grade. The junior still is on medication and goes to physical therapy. He also suffered a torn meniscus this year that will most likely require surgery once the season ends.

"Hayden has had to get through a lot," Hurricanes coach Wipoj Huse said. "He's toughed it out, and has been so huge for us."

5A-8: Green Devils hold



DOUGLAS R. CLIFFORD | Times

Palm Harbor University's Hayden Grooms makes a save against East Lake during penalty kicks in the Hurricanes' win

ST. PETERSBURG — The Green Devils got goals from Jake Moore and Oswald Francis to hold off Bradenton Manatee 2-1 in the 5A-8 championship Friday.

Moore scored in the first five minutes, and Francis added his goal in the first minute of the second half, but the Green Devils had to get through several tense moments in a very chippy game.

"I knew Manatee was going to play us tough," Green Devils coach Rui Farias said. "They always play tough, and to their credit they came here to win."

Moore had an opportunity at a second goal in the first half but his shot from 10 yards was high and wide in gusty winds.

Manatee had opportunities in the first half — the best from a tricky ball on a 35-yard free kick by Nick Pennecacker that swirled in the wind and eventually was punched away.

"These windy games are tough, especially on the goalkeeper but we got good play there tonight," Farias said. "I knew even with the two-goal lead that it was going to come down to the end."

Francis' goal came after a cross kick into the box and he blasted it past the Manatee goalkeeper from close range.

The Hurricanes got on the board in stoppage time when Logan Thomasson emerged from a scramble in the box and scored from close. The Green Devils, however, kept the Hurricanes from another attack in the final minute.

4A-10: Northeast falls

ST. PETERSBURG — Northeast battled a flashy Palmetto team, and a blustery crosswind, to a truly bitter end.

Sophomore goalkeeper Michael Winsor commanded play, but the elusive Class 4A-10 title, and the home playoff game that comes with it, slipped away for the Vikings in a 1-0 overtime loss to the Tigers.

"We all knew this was it for the seniors," Winsor said. "We haven't won districts in the four years they've been here."

Palmetto freshman Candido Calvillo volleyed in classmate Alfredo Manriquez's perfect cross past a helpless Winsor for the winner 61/2 minutes into the extra frame.

It took that kind of play to beat Winsor as he stoned Palmetto (11-3-3) on four occasions, the biggest coming late in the first half when he closed out to smother the ball off of Julio Cantu's foot, then sprinted to snag Raul Loera's rebound try chest-high.

"Michael's last five games have been spectacular," Viking coach Tom Blauvelt said. "We want him to be more aggressive and (Friday) it was almost a little too much, but he played great."

A big save by Palmetto's Matt Simmonds robbed Njegos Drazic in the first half an Aleksandar Sljivic and Ervin Ikonovic authored opportunities for Northeast (14-5-4) in the wind-aided second half.

"You can't underestimate the effect of the wind on the game. It gets into your body and your head," Blauvelt said. "We got off to a slow start but when we had the wind at our back, we went for it."

Correspondents Chuck Frye and Corey Long contributed to this report.

. Up next

Region quarterfinals

7 p.m. Thursday

5A: East Lake at St. Petersburg

5A: Manatee at Palm Harbor University

4A: Northeast at East Bay

3A: Tarpon Springs at Jesuit

3A: Southeast at Boca Ciega

2A: Lakeland McKeel at St. Petersburg Catholic

2A: Clearwaer Central Catholic at Lake Placid

A: Calvary Christianat TBD*

A: TBD at Shorecrest*

*A-5 winner decided today

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