

Rockets win state semifinal!

Match #22: Bay Rockets vs. Lake Catholic Cougars

Date: Tuesday, November 10, 2009

Temperature: mid-50's

Skies: dark and damp

Wind: cool breeze

Location: Brush High School Stadium, Lyndhurst, Ohio

Result: Bay (1)- Lake Catholic (0) (4-2 shootout)

This Division II State Semi-Final match brought together two teams from Northeastern Ohio, the Bay Rockets and the Lake Catholic Cougars. Although they suffered four regular season losses and gave up 24 goals coming into this state semi-final, Lake Catholic had quality wins in the playoffs against Chagrin Falls, Walsh Jesuit, and Cardinal Mooney. This was to be a well-earned victory for either side.

The first half opened with fairly even possession by both teams. The ball moved quickly around the pitch as each team was looking for an opportunity to play the long ball and then build their attack. Bay was first to strike with a chance on the goal frame, but the Rockets couldn't finish. A few minutes before the half, Lake Catholic had a good opportunity from a ball played into the penalty area from a sideline cross, but Bay was able to clear it out from danger to keep the half-time scoreless.

It was shortly after the half that Bay was on the attack. Junior Alec Petro received a pass in the penalty area. He quickly laid it off to Sam Dickinson who slotted it into the goal, but the assistant referee called the play offside, and the goal was disallowed. The rest of the second half featured solid defense by both teams with neither side getting a good attempt on frame. That is until senior goalkeeper Nate McDonald made one of his dependable diving saves to deny a Cougar striker from scoring with less than ten minutes to go.

The second half ended with neither team scoring. Bay's defenders kept the Cougars from getting into the danger area all match, as most of their shots were hastily taken from 35-40 yards out without much of a threat on goal.

In the first sudden victory fifteen-minute overtime, good hard play continued by both sides. Bay continued to try to work the ball down the sidelines, but got very few crosses off. Lake Catholic played the ball through their midfield, but their attack stalled far away from goal. Bay's midfielders Petro, junior Will Irvine, senior Shane Williams, and junior Eric Linhart won the battle for balls played in the air consistently enough to deny the Cougars from organizing their attack. It was 0-0 at the end of the first overtime.

In the second sudden victory overtime, good play continued, but both teams seemed to rely on their defense. The best chances to score for both teams were from set pieces. Bay defended several corner kicks by Lake Catholic, and the Cougars had to defend against long throw-ins from Bay senior Dan Spiesz. Again, no goals were scored which leads us to the shootout.

In the penalty kick shootout, it's best of five. If that ends in a tie, then the shootout goes into sudden death. Lake Catholic's first taker put his shot just to McDonald's right to put Lake

Catholic up 1-0. Bay's Spiesz slowly walked up to the spot, and put his shot past the goalkeeper to make the score 1-1. Lake Catholic's second taker took a shot to McDonald's right that he blocked from his knees. Following that miss, junior Kenan Sayir took his shot to the left of Lake Catholic's goalkeeper, who got his finger tips on it, but it didn't prevent the ball from hitting the back of the net, and Bay went up 2-1.

In the third round, McDonald couldn't stop Lake Catholic's taker, while Bay's junior Tony Passalacqua followed with a low, hard shot that the goalkeeper had no chance to stop to put Bay ahead 3-2. In the fourth round, McDonald made another stop from his knees going to his right. Bay's Linhart calmly followed with the game clincher to give the Rockets a 4-2 shootout victory and earned them their fifth trip to the state final match since 1969

Bay will face Columbus St. Francis DeSales who beat Bexley, also in shootout. The game will be played Friday, November 13th at 3:30 PM at Columbus Crew Stadium in Columbus, Ohio.