



Win over Chaminade capped rugged stretch run for state champ CBC

By Joe Lyons | Post-Dispatch | Posted: Monday, November 19, 2012 2:45 pm

It started with a 2-0 victory over De Smet, the reigning Class 3 soccer champion, in the District 8 semifinals and wrapped up Saturday night with a 2-0 victory over nationally-ranked Chaminade at Blue Springs South High in suburban Kansas City.

CBC's six-game run to the Class 3 soccer title had all sorts of twists and turns and ended up netting the Cadets their eighth title overall and their seventh under Terry Michler, the winningest boys high school soccer coach in America.

"I don't know that anyone's ever taken a tougher road to the title," said Michler, who has a record of 871-219-98 in 42 seasons with the Cadets. "All through the season, we made adjustments, using different shapes, formations and lineups. But all along the way, the results, sometimes with different guys in different spots, were pretty consistent."

CBC, which finished the regular season ranked second among STLhighschoolsports.com large schools, eliminated No. 5 DeSmet in the semifinals and then rallied on late goals from L.J. Adewumni and Dave Geerling to knock off third-ranked Marquette 4-2 for the district crown. Marquette (19-3) was the top seed in the district at CBC.

"Marquette was legit; they gave us all we could handle," Michler said following the win.

In sectionals, the Cadets were pushed again as Lafayette, the No. 4 seed in District 7, used a direct style to pressure the CBC defense. And it nearly worked. Again, the Cadets came up with a late game-winner from Adewumni for the 2-1 win.

CBC's magic ride to the title was nearly derailed by No. 7 Vianney in the quarterfinals. The Griffins, who had lost three previous games against the Cadets, went up 2-1 when an Adam Michel free kick deflected in with about 11 ½ minutes left in regulation.

But CBC found a way, getting late goals from Geerling and sophomore reserve Jake Meyerkord to survive.

"We still have a heartbeat," Michler said as he talked to his team following the dramatic win.

Next up was fellow soccer heavyweight Rockhurst in the semifinals. The Hawkllets, who lost 2-1 in overtime to CBC in the Art Firley Shootout in Jefferson City on Oct. 13, again pushed the Cadets to the limit. But with just under nine minutes to play, a long ball out of the back from Xhovani Dokaj set up fellow senior Adewumni for the breakaway goal. The Cadets then managed to hold off a furious late attack from Rockhurst to secure a spot in the finals.

In the title match against Chaminade, ranked No. 1 in the area and No. 6 by the National Soccer Coaches Association of America, the Cadets struck for first-half goals from sophomore Meyerkord (his fourth) and junior Max Keeley (his second) and then defended like crazy.

"They're an incredible attacking team," CBC senior goalkeeper Nathan Griffin said. "But the guys in front of me -- 'X' (Dokaj), Tommy Lee, A.J. Palazzolo, everybody -- did an unbelievable job of keeping Chaminade from getting open looks. And, as the game went on, you could just see the Chaminade guys getting more and more frustrated."

Added Michler: "We managed the game by playing smart. We won the first half by getting a couple of goals and won the second by playing some great defensive soccer. The game plan was to let Chaminade do all the passing it wanted to do; the key was making sure that we didn't let them get behind us.

"And when they did, Nate came up big with the stops we needed."

CBC (25-5-1) dropped a 1-0 conference game to visiting Chaminade (25-3-2) on Sept. 15.

"From the start of the season, everybody knew that Chaminade, because of the top guys returning, was the team to beat," Michler said. "From Day 1, we talked about being the best of the rest, working to make sure we'd be ready for Chaminade when we got another shot at them."

The Cadets, who lost seven players, including a second-team Post-Dispatch All-Metro defender, to the St. Louis Scott Gallagher Academy program before the start of the high school season, used a variety of lineups through the season while dealing with injuries. But Michler made sure CBC was always moving forward.

"Our first day of practice was literally the worst first day I've had in 42 years of coaching," the coach recalled. "To think back on that and to see where we've come, it's unbelievable. These guys weren't on the radar, but somehow, through a lot of hard work, desire and heart, they just kept finding ways to win, to survive and to move on."

At the heart of CBC's success was its seniors. Griffin was solid in goal, while Dokaj's play in the center of the backfield provided leadership, stability and a calmness that carried through the entire squad. The other senior captain, Joe Corbett, was a force in the midfield along with Craig McLaurine, and top scorer Adewumni came up with big play after big play down the stretch.

Senior Spencer Hollman came off the bench to provide a spark, while Brian Dryden backed up Griffin in goal.

Over the course of the season, however, Michler called on -- and got production from -- every man on the roster. In fact, the goal scorers in the final, Meyerkord and Keeley, were on the bench through much of the postseason run.

"Hunches can be a funny thing," said Michler, who is assisted by former CBC standout Randy Roy. "Jake comes in against Vianney because we needed a little extra speed up top and ends up scoring two of the biggest goals of the season for us. And the same happens for Max tonight. With this team, as much as any other, we did a lot of on-the-fly coaching, trying lots of different things to see if we could find something that worked. And I told the guys on the bench to stay sharp, to stay in the game, because there was no telling when they might get their chance."

Well, the Cadets got their chance and they clearly made the most of it.

CLASS 2 POWER

With a 2-1 win over Carthage on Saturday, St. Dominic captured its fourth Class 2 title. The Crusaders also won in 2004, 2008 and 2009.

St. Dominic finished as runner-up to Cape Girardeau Notre Dame in 2008.

"We don't have any superstars, but we have a bunch of guys who play hard and who play for each other," said St. Dominic coach Greg Koeller, noting this title was dedicated to junior Alex Brown, whose soccer career has been cut short due to concussion issues. "Alex is an all-state player and a kid who lives for the game. His speech before the game really inspired and motivated our guys."

Like CBC, St. Dominic is a team with a future. Senior starters Mark Steiniger, David McCoy, Sam Kluba and Collin Hennessy will be missed, as will reserve Frank Dalton. But the rest of the roster should be back in 2013.

"We feel real good about the program we've built," said Koeller, who also coached the St. Dominic girls to titles in 2007 and 2012. "I think the soccer players at St. Dominic have a real pride in the success we've enjoyed and they're willing to work hard to keep it going."

BACK-TO-BACK TITLES FOR CATHOLIC

Springfield Catholic, coached by St. Mary's High grad Tom Guinn, beat Southern Boone 1-0 to defend its Class 1 title.

The Irish have made five consecutive final four appearances, finishing third in 2008 and second in 2009 and 2010.

In two seasons under Guinn, who took over before the 2011 season for Vianney product Joe Kofron, Catholic is 57-4-1.