
Girls Lacrosse

Bears ground Aviators 14-8 in title game

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MEDINA -- The Upper Arlington High School girls lacrosse team found a way to run through and not away from Cincinnati Sycamore, and the result was the program's fourth Division I state title since 2002.

The Bears scored the first five goals of the second half en route to a 14-8 victory over the Aviators last Saturday. Sycamore beat UA 9-7 in last year's final.

"This means everything," senior midfielder Nancy Baker said. "We've been working so hard. All the girls have been pouring their hearts into this and everyone on this team is amazing. Winning the championship just means the world to me.

"We knew it was going to be a rough game against Sycamore, but we wanted to take it to them. We went at it whole-hearted, and in the second half we just pulled away."

UA finished 21-2 and won its first state championship since 2005. Sycamore finished 19-2, with the other loss to UA 14-9 on May 3, ending a 34-game winning streak.

Attacker Lindsay Godard, who was named the tournament's Offensive Most Valuable Player, had four goals and three assists. Midfielder Kelly Mason had two goals and one assist, midfielder Caitlin Oberlin scored two goals and Baker, Erin Junk, Adriane Ghidotti and Lauren Hanover scored one goal.

"We knew our potential all along," first-year coach Lynda McCandlish, whose team closed the season with a 11-game win streak after losing to New Trier (Ill.) 11-4 on April 19. "Everybody stepped up and everybody played together. It was awesome.

"We've grown so much as the season went on. I am so proud of how the team developed. I think today showed that. We had complete control of the game the whole time."

The Bears had to find a way to contain Sycamore's Emile Hunter and Lily Ricci without leaving themselves vulnerable. Through 18 games, Hunter had 65 goals and 32 assists and Ricci had 44 goals and 22 assists. But the Aviators, who were averaging 16 goals a game, had seven other players with 10 or more goals.

Hunter and Ricci scored three goals in the final. Hannah Kelp and Danielle Ebstein scored one, Becca McLouth had two assists and Erin Doherty had an assist.

"Hunter is the emotional leader of that team," McCandlish said. "Holding her down is a big part of controlling their offense."

"Emile's a great player overall and Ricci's a big offensive threat as well," said Megan Knoop, who was named the Defensive Most Valuable Player. "You have to get in front of them and play their body. We put a lot of emphasis on slowing them down and not letting them move.

"In the end, everything ended up working out. Our goalie Kevyn Harer, who had six saves) deserves some of the credit. She played awesome through these games. Just as a team we played well. It's a great feeling."

Mason, Oberlin, Junk, Godard and Knoop were on the all-tournament team. Godard and Mason were named first-team All-Americans and Baker received honorable mention.

•**SEMIFINAL** -- UA scored the last four goals to beat Hudson 10-7 in a state semifinal last Friday.

Baker finished with four goals, Mason had two goals and an assist, Godard had one goal and one assist, Elizabeth Narwicz, Junk and Oberlin scored one goal and Ghidotti had one assist.

The Bears led 5-3 at halftime but Hudson scored four of the first five goals of the second half.

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