

# Farmington wins district tournament title

## Falcons earn 3-2 triumph over Raiders

BY DAN O'MEARA  
STAFF WRITER

The team that plays best wins the big games, and Saturday that team was Farmington High School.

Having the final say in their rivalry with North Farmington, the Falcons are district as well as city champions in boys soccer.

Farmington gave an inspired performance and dominated the field, earning a 3-2 victory over the Raiders in the Division II tournament final at Redford Union.



STAFF PHOTO BY ELIZABETH CANNON

All smiles: Farmington players had reason to smile Saturday after winning the district title over rival North Farmington, 3-2. Nick Ramirez (4) and Chris Holton (3) lead the post-game celebration.

# Chiefs win Division I showdown

Nail-biter. How else can you describe a soccer match like Wednesday's Division I regional game between No. 1-ranked Livonia Stevenson and Plymouth Canton?

If number of nails lost while watching this game were figured into the scoring summary, Stevenson would have enjoyed a clear advantage.

That's because the Spartans had far more chances, far more penetrations deep into Canton's end.

But that's not what counts. All that matters is which team puts the ball into the net more often, and that statistic belonged to the Chiefs, 2-1.

Canton (16-5-1), the regional host, will meet Dearborn in the final at 3 p.m. Saturday. The winner advances to the semifinal game Wednesday at Brighton.

The game-winning goal was scored with just 1:51 left in the game, and it was classic Canton.

"We hustled down into the box, like we've been practicing," explained co-captain Scott Wright, who set up the game-winner. "I heard Jeff (Parent) call for it and sent it in."

Wright's centering pass, from the right wing, went past Parent to teammate Chris Houdek, who was bearing down on the left post. Houdek finished it.

The Spartans (17-2) scored first on a goal by Nick Ziobron midway in the first half. Canton's Steve Epley tied the score with 4:24 left in the half.

### SOCCER

"It was one of the best games we've played all year," coach Luke Juncaj said, adding the Falcons are believed to be the first Farmington school to win a district tournament. "It was the starters, the subs; everybody was having a great game."

Farmington's 4-3, double-overtime win over Dearborn Heights Crestwood in its first district game helped to motivate the Falcons for the final, according to Juncaj.

"I think the Crestwood game was a wake-up for us," he said. "We looked like a totally different team."

The Raiders had the momentum initially, but the Falcons, who were 12-5-3 heading into regional play Wednesday, rallied and later scored the all-important first goal.

Sophomore Andrew Buck put Farmington on top in the 15th minute with an assist from senior Tim Reis after a cross from the left dropped in front of the box.

The Falcons had it all going their way when sophomore Stephen Wayne made it 2-0 five minutes later, scoring on a scramble in front.

"To their credit, once they realized they had a fight on their hands, they really stiffened and came at us," North coach Ron Meteyer said. "They moved diagonally better than us, and they were winning all the 50-50 balls. By halftime we had dug ourselves a hole."

The Raiders narrowed the difference to one goal when senior Viktor Juncaj scored in the 30th minute on a 40-yard kick into the wind.

"It left his foot like a rocket, but the wind held it up and it dropped down into the goal," Meteyer said. "I think the goalie thought it was going to go over the top. It was kind of a funny goal, but funny ones count, too."

Farmington regained the two-goal advantage just a minute later. Wayne's free kick from 40 yards found its way into the upper-right corner of the net.

"There were several people in front of their goalie, and I don't think he ever saw it until it was in the goal," Juncaj said.

With a 3-1 halftime lead, the Falcons were full of confidence and encouraged by their first-

half performance.

"We controlled the game in North Farmington's end; we kept the pressure on their defense, and we had scoring chances," Juncaj said. "That was our strategy for the game, so they couldn't get much offense against us and it worked out very well."

Farmington continued to control the game and maintained its 3-1 lead until North junior Brian Horr scored with two minutes left in the game, intercepting a goalkick and firing a shot that deflected off a defender.

"In the second half, we still kept playing like we were down or it was a tie," Juncaj said. "We were able to keep the ball in their half, and they weren't able to develop any offense."

For the first five minutes of the game, North did a little better, and it took us a few minutes to settle down and play our game. But after that it was us all the way."

Senior goalie Tony Munaco played the first half for the Raiders, but he played the last month with an injured ankle and had reduced lateral movement,

according to Meteyer. Freshman Mike Buchwald was in goal the second half.

"Our defense was much more solid and the midfield played stronger in the second half," Meteyer said, adding The Raiders finished with the best record (14-5-2) in school history.

"(The Falcons) were very motivated and hungry for it. Farmington played well; I'll give them that."

Juncaj said the Farmington defense was spectacular, especially the play of Justin Gerwatoski and Jeff Frederick who marked North's leading scorers, Craig Hearn and Justin Street, respectively.

"We shut them down. Neither one was very effective in this game, and I think that was the

difference," Juncaj said.

"(Gerwatoski) has consistently done a good job on the best striker on the other team and has been a real key to our success."

Phil Gasparotto also had a great game as sweeper, he added, and Farmington goalie Matt Gasparotto made 10 saves.

The regular-season meeting between the Falcons and Raiders ended in a 4-4 draw. The game was played on a cold, rainy day that turned the field into a sloppy mess. The circumstances were much different Saturday.

"It was a perfect day and a dry field," Juncaj said. "The last time it was hard to tell who was the better team, but this game showed Farmington is the better team this year."

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apart," Juncaj said. "Those were the two times they were able to put the ball in the box and finish. After that our defense stopped playing."

"We played very well on defense this year. I don't know why it happened. We lost our composure; that's the best way to put it."

The Thunderbirds took the lead at 35:44 in the second half when Dan Kurtinits fired a line drive from a distance into the lower right corner.

He gave Edsel a two-goal lead at 29:41 with an even more impressive kick, which was more like a cannon shot. Gasparotto had little chance to stop the left-footed drive that rocketed into the net.

"(Lopez) gave us the momentum, and (Kurtinits) put it away for us," Robar said. "Those

are goals you don't count on, and when you get them you just ride it."

"He was unchallenged," Juncaj said. "People weren't doing their assignments at that time, and we kinda made it easy for them. Somebody should have been on him. He shouldn't have been able to get that many touches."

Edsel was in control most of the second half, but Ramirez had Farmington's best chance at 18:44.

He was wide open on the left side when he received the ball, but he had to hurry his shot as a defender rushed toward him. The ball grazed the crossbar and just made it over the top.

"If he could have made that, it would have changed the momentum again," Juncaj said. "We needed a goal in the second half after they did, and we just couldn't get that."

Whatever the Falcons tried to do, they were unable to sustain an attack or bring it to fruition. Farmington's fading hopes were dashed when Edsel's Jason Heibrar scored the final goal at 4:16.

"We're a much better team now," Robar said. "We have our share of losses, but we've worked hard on the little things and it's paying off."

"At this point in the season, I think our record works for us. It's a very deceiving record. We're playing better than our record shows."

"The boys expected to win this game and, after we got a 2-0 lead, figured it was going to happen and probably relaxed a little too much, which cost us the game," Juncaj said.

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