

MELHS soccer celebrated Senior Night with 5-0 triumph over Staunton, begin regional play

by Colin Feeney, Contributing Sports Writer
October 8 2018 5:40 AM







EDWARDSVILLE – Metro-East Lutheran's boys soccer team celebrated its Senior Night on Thursday at Knights Field, starting with a pre-game ceremony honoring the six seniors on the club – Christian Brown, Logan McDaniel, captain Brent Woolsey, Andrew Masters, Noah Landers and Nolan Gutjahr – and then got a double brace from Landers (four goals) as the Knights exploded in the second half by scoring four times in a 5-0 win over Staunton.

Metro-East finishes the regular season at 10-11 and will go into the IHSA Class 1A playoffs with much confidence as they open on Wednesday at Breese Central.

The shutout win was the perfect way to celebrate Senior Night, according to Knights first-year coach Dwight Kerlin.

“Yeah, it’s wonderful,” Kerlin said. “I couldn’t have a better outgoing for the seniors this year. They’ve been working their butts off this year, and come and play the second half the way we played and made some great connections and some great goals. I’m ecstatic for them.”

The Knights seem to be peaking at exactly the right time.

“Yeah, you know, if we’re going to peak at the right time, this is the time to peak,” Kerlin said. “We’re going into regionals, and I’m feeling pretty good. If we can play this way, play our game, who knows what will happen.”

Kerlin had much praise for his senior class.

“Bottom line is that they are all great young men,” Kerlin said. “Their work ethic and their camaraderie are just above and beyond. They really lead this team this year, and me, being a first-year coach, they just took the reins and helped lead this team. We’ve got only 15 guys, so we’ve got to play freshmen and sophomores, and they did everything they could to help those guys come along as well.”

And Kerlin learned a few things from his senior class as well.

“I couldn’t have asked for a better group of seniors for my first year,” Kerlin said, “and they taught me a lot this year too, just about perseverance.”

After the opening kickoff, the play concentrated around midfield, with both sides having a few good opportunities. The breakthrough came in the 36th minute when Landers hit a shot from distance that beat Bulldog goalie J.J. Brandt to the far post to give the Knights a 1-0 lead. Near the end of the half, Trevor Pickerell had a glorious chance in close, but the Staunton defense stood tall and stopped the chance, keeping the score 1-0 as the halftime siren sounded.

Metro-East doubled their lead from the penalty spot in the 52nd minute, starting when Landers was tripped inside the box. Landers stepped up and buried the ensuing penalty in the lower right corner to make it 2-0. Ten minutes later, McDaniel made a brilliant run that split the Bulldog defense, then fed a wide-open Erik Broekmeier, who shot hit the underside of the bar and went in to extend the lead to 3-0.

Landers got his hat-trick in the 66th minute when he got a nice through ball and slotted it home to make it 4-0. The Bulldogs had a glorious chance of their own in the 69th, as Connor Anderson broke through the middle, but saw his shot ring off the post and bounce away, preserving the lead. In the 74th minute, Staunton’s Brendan Schoen had an ambitious shot from distance just dip over the bar, the last good chance on the night for the Bulldogs. In the 77th, Landers made a great run and got his shot to deflect off the post and in the back of the net to make the final 5-0. Brown recorded the clean sheet for the Knights.

The Knights received the number six seed in the Breese Central Regional, where they'll play the host Cougars on Wednesday afternoon at 4 p.m. A win will put them in the final next Friday afternoon, where they could play Lebanon, Roxana or Breese Mater Dei. Metro-East played Central at home on Aug. 30, where the Knights dropped a tough decision to the Cougars 2-1 after extra time. Kerlin is definitely looking ahead to the rematch.

"We played a tough game against them here; we lost 2-1 in double overtime," Kerlin said. "They scored with about 20 seconds to go; it ended up being a golden goal for the most part. But you know, we played well that game, and we're a lot better team now than we were then, and I think if we play the way we're capable of playing, we'll come out on top."

And Kerlin thanked the fans and families of the players for their support during his first year as coach.

"Just grateful for the all the fans, and the support that all the families have given me this year, being my first year," Kerlin said. "It's been a tremendous experience."



[Dan Brannan also contributed to this story.](#)