

SPORTS

Back-to-back section titles for Bradshaw soccer

By Jon Gudel - Sports Editor



Photos by Bryan Higashino - Bradshaw Christian won its second consecutive Sac-Joaquin Section soccer title and made its third straight appearance in the championship game. Denae Crump scored two second-half goals in a 3-0 win.

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Different team, same old story for Bradshaw Christian High School.

It doesn't seem to matter if it's football, basketball or soccer, the athletic department is quickly running out of space to hang Sac-Joaquin Section banners in its gymnasium. It's a good problem to have.

The varsity soccer team became the third Bradshaw athletic program to claim back-to-back section titles, doing so with a 3-0 shutout of Faith Christian of Yuba City in the Division VII title game last Saturday at Folsom High School.

It was the program's third consecutive section final appearance - all under head coach Michael Rangel. The previous two section final appearances, including a title last season, came as Division VI participants.

Bradshaw is only in its fourth varsity season.

"We have a special group of people at Bradshaw, starting with the athletic director (Mike Ruble) that sets a high bar," said the soft-spoken Rangel. "We have some key club players that have been playing together for a long time. A lot of these girls have been playing together for a long time."

Last season, Bradshaw initiated its two-year section title run with a 3-2 win over Forest Lake Christian in the Division VI championship game. They went 19-5 in 2009 and ended the season on an 11-game winning streak.

That late-season trend has been a staple of the Bradshaw program.

A year earlier, Bradshaw won 11 of its final 13 games before losing to Forest Lake Christian in overtime of the Division VI championship game.

Bradshaw, which ended the season on a 16-game winning streak this season, finished 19-5 overall and unbeaten at 10-0 in the Sacramento Metro Athletic League.

Only four teams qualified for the Division VII playoffs.

Bradshaw had no problem advancing to the section final after a 10-0 rout of Elliott Christian of Lodi in the semifinals.

It was the third meeting between Bradshaw and Faith Christian this season. Bradshaw swept the previous two league meetings by a combined 9-2 margin.

Both are members of the SMAL.

"We knew their strengths and weaknesses, which helped us a lot," admitted Rangel. "This was a league rivalry. Our girls were well prepared."

Ahead 1-0 in the second half, Bradshaw created necessary space with two quick goals from Denae Crump. She first scored off an assist from Jillian Otto with 17 minutes left in the half and then added a second goal just two minutes.

That was all the insurance Bradshaw needed.

They did not allow a goal in three consecutive games and seven of its final eight to conclude the season. Only Faith Christian's two goals in a 3-2 loss on May 6 prevented Bradshaw from recording five consecutive weeks of shutouts.

To that, Bradshaw felt comfortable even with a one-goal lead. Adding those two second-half goals only lessened worries of a possible stressful final minutes of regulation.

"We felt like sooner or later we thought we'd hit the back of the net," said Rangel, laughing.

Bradshaw will move to the newly constructed Sierra Delta League with the section realignment in the fall.

Athletic director Mike Ruble also said he expects the school's enrollment to increase from 230 to approximately 260 students.

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