



## Defenders advance

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by Barb Krohn

LOYALSOCK TOWNSHIP—Take that club soccer.

Warrior Run edged Heartland Athletic Conference Division II champion Central Columbia by a score of 1-0 in the District 4 Class AA semifinal Tuesday night courtesy of a volley by Zack Miller, a senior who hasn't played any kind of soccer since he was 12.

Warrior Run, now 15-5, will face Danville, the 2-1 winners over Lewisburg for the District championship on Thursday at a place and time to be determined. Only the winner of that game advances to the state tournament.

The tournament's No. 2 seed—The Blue Jays—ended their season.

To compound Miller's Cinderella story, the hoops player didn't even play preseason. He thought about it, but didn't act. It wasn't until another senior, Ben Diggan, joined the team late that Miller realized he might too.

"I'd never turn down a player," said Warrior Run coach Doug Bastian.

Miller stepped into the limelight Saturday, when he tallied the assist on Elias George's game-winning goal in the district quarterfinals. Miller had started for the Defenders on Senior Night, Tuesday was his second career start.

The goal came with a little over five minutes to play in the first half when Elias George sent a hard shot toward the goal.

"He kicked it off a player and I volleyed it in," said Miller.

"We finally found a second striker," said George. "He came through big today."

The second half was an intense affair with first Central and then Warrior Run trading dangerous scoring opportunities.

Bastian was most concerned with containing Tristan Snyder, the Blue Jays leading scorer and assigned senior Alex Wehr with the task of stopping him.

"It was my job to take him out of the game," said Wehr.

While Snyder did get some shots off, none were so dangerous that Defenders goalie Jason McWilliams couldn't handle them.

"Jason had a great game," said Bastian of his senior keeper.

Central kept pounding in the second half but as the clock was ticking down, Warrior Run's defense seemed to get more and more confident as the Defenders thwarted one offensive run after another.

"It got a little scary in the back," said center defender Chase Snyder. "But we've been working on marking all week and we stayed calm."

"Composure is really the key," said the Warrior Run coach. "When the other team was putting it to us we didn't try to do too much."

Bastian knew that if his team could score first on the Blue Jays, who have only given up five goals all year, they would have an opening to turn the tables on the team that had beaten them twice in the regular season.

"I told the boys all week the pressure is on them. If we got the first goal anything can happen."

Now in the Class AA finals for the first time in a long time, the Defenders want to keep it going.

"We finally broke our three-year streak of losing in the semifinals," said Snyder.

"We've been talking about it all year," said George. "Keep the marble in the jar and keep it rolling."

Miller is right there with the veterans.

"It's a lot of fun. They're a great group of guys."