

HT girls finally solve the Irish

By Ryan Glassman
SPECIAL TO THE BEAVER

Only when the final whistle sounded could Holy Trinity Titans head coach Peter Bonfiglio let out a huge sigh of relief.

After his squad's three previous attempts at capturing the Halton senior girls' AAAA title ended in defeat at the hands of the Notre Dame Fighting Irish, Bonfiglio's Titans finally got it right Thursday, beating their archrivals 1-0 at Bronte Athletic Field.

"This is the first time we've been Halton champs," the elated head coach said after the game. "We always play Notre Dame and I've got so much respect for their coaching staff and players.

"I know some of the players, I've known (Notre Dame head coach) Casey (Downey) for years. We've played each other four times in the last nine years, so finally we got them."

With just a few minutes remaining in the second half, the Titans' Emma Mezgec fired a long-range strike into the back of the Fighting Irish net and Holy Trinity never looked back.

"She probably has one of the best shots on our team," Bonfiglio said. "I just remember I saw the ball coming to her and I screamed 'Hit it' and she did."

Considering the shortage of scoring chances for either club during the afternoon, Mezgec knew one goal would likely be the difference and was thrilled to deliver the game-winner.

"It's always been tight against Notre Dame, but its good to pull out with the win," she said.

Both teams had identical 6-0-2 records coming into Thursday's championship match, but Downey's Fighting Irish simply couldn't muster anything offensively.

"Our strength is being able to string a lot of passes together and build on the attack and we just couldn't get our game together today," he said.

After defeating Holy Trinity three previous times in the Halton final, Notre Dame is now in somewhat unfamiliar territory as the No. 2 seed as the GHAC (Golden Horseshoe Athletic Conference) playoffs begin tomorrow (Thursday).

"Last year, we beat (the Titans) with a fairly late goal 1-0 and we both advanced to OFSAA," Downey said. "We were hoping to do the same thing today, but we now have to focus on next week and put today behind us."

Holy Trinity will host the Hamilton Catholic finalist at 1 p.m. while Notre Dame will play the Hamilton Catholic champion at the same time at McMaster University.

"We've played each other four times in the last nine years (in the Halton final), so finally we got them."

■ *Holy Trinity coach Peter Bonfiglio*

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FINALLY: Emily Mezgec (centre) celebrates with Holy Trinity Titans teammates Brianna Cuzzolino (left) and Colleen Chong after scoring what proved to be the winning goal in a 1-0 win over Notre Dame in Thursday's Halton senior girls' AAAA soccer final.

Blakelock blanked in AAA final

BURLINGTON — Corpus Christi Longhorns head coach Rob Biturajac still remembers last season's Halton senior boys' soccer final and what it cost his club.

A 2-0 defeat at the hands of the St. Thomas Aquinas Raiders at Sherwood Forest Park meant not only no regional title for the orange and white but also no possibility of gaining an OFSAA berth.

"We left the field with a bad feeling," recalled the head coach.

On Thursday, almost one year later, the Longhorns found themselves in the same final on the exact same field. The only difference this time was the feeling at the end as Corpus Christi defeated the T.A. Blakelock Tigers 2-0 to claim the Halton AAA championship and finally put last season's ending behind them for good.

"It was our goal from the beginning of the year to come to the Halton final and win," Biturajac said. "Our guys came out with great heart and hustle and we really wanted it from the opening whistle. We created numerous chances and we executed on those chances in the second half."

Nearly 10 minutes into the last half, Longhorns forward Nicholas Mejia headed the ball past Tigers goalie Andrew Zamora after getting a cross from teammate Brandon Solomon to give Corpus Christi a 1-0 lead.

"(Solomon) crossed it in and as the ball was coming back, I headed it," Mejia

said. "I saw the keeper off-footed and he couldn't get back to it and it went in."

From that moment on, Biturajac knew his squad had the ability to withstand whatever Blakelock threw at it.

"When Nicholas scored, it was the result we wanted," he said. "We know we're a very strong defensive team.

"We've been in this position before, we've played some big games and we were confident we could seal out the game."

Minutes after his first goal, Mejia nearly made it 2-0 on a breakaway, but Zamora stopped his attempt with a right kick save.

But towards the end of the second half, the Longhorns striker helped set up the insurance tally, feeding forward Michael Lopes who put Corpus Christi up two.

Tigers head coach Ken Butler said his team just couldn't produce enough quality chances to compete with the Longhorns.

"We created a lot less than we normally do," he said. "I think their skill showed today and we might have had a little less ball possession and when we did have the ball possession, we couldn't break down that last 25 or 30 yards and penetrate the box.

"We couldn't break them down and we ended up turning the ball over and that cost us in our attack because we didn't generate more than one opportunity today."

— *Ryan Glassman, Special to the Beaver*



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THAT'S A STRETCH: T.A. Blakelock's Tyler Green (right) tries to control the ball against Corpus Christi's Silent Nyamushanya during Thursday's Halton senior boys' AAA final in Burlington. Blakelock fell 2-0 to the Longhorns.