



Christian Brothers' Jilian Franzola, left, helps goalkeeper Tara Larson block a shot during the Falcons' 2-0 victory over Ponderosa on Saturday at Folsom High School.

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Paul Kitagaki Jr.

Christian Brothers built like a winner

By Quwan Spears
BEE STAFF WRITER

Consider the Christian Brothers building project complete. The cement has been laid, the walls erected and the roof fitted.

A depleted team just three years ago, the Falcons are now one of the best in the Sac-Joquin Section, winning the Division II championship with a 2-0 victory over Ponderosa on Saturday at Folsom High School.

St. Francis captured the Division I crown with a 4-0 victory over Stockton-St. Mary's in the second match of a doubleheader.

"This was indeed a tremendous project," said senior Leslie Campbell, a Christian Brothers midfielder. "We didn't have much during my freshman year. We put down the foundation my sophomore year. (We) got the framework up last year, and this year everything came together."

What stands now is a strong girls soccer program that many believe will be around for a while.

Consider fourth-year Falcons coach Tony Perez the architect. He not only turned the program around but guided the Falcons to their first girls soccer section title in school history.

"Coach instilled in us a greater commitment and developed a strong connection within the team over the years," said Marina Baham, a junior striker. "In my opinion, that was key."

Campbell scored in the 28th minute, and Carla Vellutini added another goal late in the second half as the Falcons (20-2-1) won their 12th consecutive match and made up for a heartbreaking 4-3 loss to Rocklin in the first round of the playoffs last season.

More importantly, the Sierra Valley Conference champions won the rubber match against their league rivals.

Christian Brothers' 2-1 victory on April 29 ended Ponderosa's 14-game unbeaten streak, and Saturday's triumph dethroned the Bruins (15-2-3) as section champions.

"At the beginning of the season, we wanted to get here," Perez said. "This season wasn't about winning league. We did that last year (the Falcons and Ponderosa were co-champions). This year was about getting into the playoffs and winning it all, and we accomplished our goal."

So did St. Francis.

The Troubadours won their seventh title overall and fourth in five years with a stellar performance in handing the Rams (29-1-2) their only loss.

After emotional and physically draining overtime victories over Folsom in the semifinals and Davis in the quarterfinals, both of which ended in penalty kicks, Troubadours coach Zack Masters wondered if his team had anything left for the title match.

The Troubadours (18-2-3) played focused, aggressively and energized. They outshot St. Mary's 24-6 and played stellar defense while senior Amanda Sanchez controlled the midfield.

Katie Ulan, Barbara Blocker, Meghann Sadler and McKenna-Louise McKetty each scored as the Troubadours avenged a 3-2 loss to the Rams on March 31 and ended the season unbeaten in their last 13 matches.

"I totally expected a letdown," Masters said. "But the way the team played today is a testament to the players' heart, character and resiliency. They played well, proving why they are such a great team."

And for the second consecutive season, the best.

In the other section championships, all played at Lincoln High in Stockton: Sierra retained its Division III championship with a 2-0 win against Manteca, Hughson beat Summerville 2-1 in overtime in Division IV, and Modesto Christian completed a 25-0 season with a 2-0 victory over defending section champion Central Catholic.

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