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Vista Del Lago midfielder Alex Klos celebrates a game-tying goal off of a free kick in the final minutes of regulation play during the CIF Sac-Joaquin Division III girls soccer championship on Tuesday against Christian Brothers at Cosumnes River College in Sacramento. The Eagles won 8-7 on penalty kicks.

2/24/22

Prep girls' soccer: Vista del Lago wins section title

BY CAMERON SALERNO
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Redemption is a beautiful thing.

Vista del Lago High School girls' soccer player Kiera Spencer knows. After allowing an own goal in the first half Tuesday night to No. 2 seed Christian Brothers, Spencer made up for the mistake in a big way.

Spencer stepped up and delivered a strike to the top right corner Tuesday night at Co-sumnes River College in the Sac-Joaquin Section Division III championship game. Her kick clinched a blue banner for the No. 1 seed over a Capital Athletic League rival.

The Eagles won the penalty shootout 8-7 after the score ended in a 1-1 tie after double overtime. Marieke Ten Brink, Darcy Duncan, Alex Klos, Megan Gover, Anna Olsen, Maddison Brossart and Klaire Horton made their penalty kicks, in order. Vista del Lago goalie Kayli Cokley made a key save on Christian Brothers' goalie Grace Bettencourt to set the stage for Spencer.

"I was nervous," Spencer said on the penalty kick. "When my coach told me I make it and we win, I just imagined it and when I made it, it felt so good. I needed that because I was in my head a little bit. I knew I could do it."

Vista del Lago coach Kennedy Chongo was proud of how the final sequence played out. He's in his third year as head coach and is also a math teacher at the school. It's his first section title as a coach at the school.

"It's a lot of emotions in that moment," Chongo said. "I was confident because we practiced and trained for this moment. We're excited we won it."

He added, "Kiera (getting redemption) is what I'm most excited about. That own goal affected her the entire game. She was disappointed. There's no better feeling than her taking the game-winning penalty kick."

If it wasn't for the heroics of Alex Klos, the game would've never been extended. Klos sailed a free kick just out of the goalie's reach with only a few minutes remaining. Klos is



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Vista del Lago coach Kennedy Chongo talks to his team at halftime in the Sac-Joaquin Section Division III girls soccer championship against Christian Brothers on Tuesday. The team's victory was his first section title.

heading to Santa Clara to play soccer on scholarship. She signed her letter of intent last fall.

"She can do things like that," Chongo said of Klos. "She showed up at the right time. It was a perfect goal."

This is Vista del Lago's third section championship in school

history. The other championships came in 2012 in D-IV and in 2017 in D-III. The Eagles lost in 2019 in the section final to Sierra, so winning it this season is extra sweet.

"We have been a team that always knew we could get

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here," Chongo said. "A lot of times we haven't been able to go that far because of injuries and things come up. Our main goal was to stay healthy but even then there's only so much you can do as a coach. Winning it feels (amazing) because we have been trying to do this for a long time... This is a milestone. This is one of the things we wanted to accomplish. Being able to

play in the NorCal tournament is the icing on the cake. We are going to celebrate this tonight."

Vista del Lago (16-2-2) will await its seeding for the CIF Regional Soccer championships that start next Tuesday.

"As a senior, this is the last (run) we are going to have," Spencer said. "That's why we gave it our all. Playing in NorCals is going to be great. We're

not done yet."

Christian Brothers (15-2-5) will also advance to the tournament. All teams that play in a section championship game across the state automatically qualify for the regional tournament.

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