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Prep upsets Landon in another lacrosse classic

Gribbin scores game-winner in overtime in IAC final

by Dan Greenberg | Staff Writers

Georgetown Prep-Landon. Landon-Georgetown Prep.

Whichever way allegiances lie in one of the country's most intense and respected prep lacrosse rivalries, Saturday's Interstate Athletic Conference Championship game was a classic.

The Little Hoyas twice rallied from three-goal deficits and senior midfielder Bobby Gribbin scored with 1 minute, 56 seconds remaining in overtime to lift the blue and gray to a thrilling 7-6 upset victory.

"They said we were supposed to lose by seven," Gribbin said. "So when we came out and heard that, that just fueled the fire."

The decisive goal was scored in highlight fashion. Following a timeout with 2:12 remaining in the extra session, Gribbin (three goals, two assists) and the rest of his teammates executed the designed play to perfection. He came off a pick, got checked by multiple defenders, but still was able to blister a rocket shot past goalie Alex Joyce before falling to the ground.

"When I was a freshman on varsity, that was the first play I learned," Gribbin said. "I just come off the pick, tried to get a little hedge so the goalie moves and shoot it. ... It just felt great when it went in."

His coach agreed.

"It's not a great coaching strategy to give it to your best player," Hoyas helmsman Kevin Giblin said with a grin. "Bobby Gribbin's something special, isn't he?"

The goal allowed the Hoyas to clinch the IAC crown outright. It was the first time the conference championship was decided exclusively by the postseason tournament victor. The regular-season champion -- Landon -- was not recognized.

Entering the contest, the top-seeded Bears (19-3) were riding an 18-game winning streak and were heavily favored over the Hoyas (18-3) by virtue of a 10-5 regular-season triumph April 20.

"All year long we kept scrapping and fighting and got no respect out of a lot of rankings," Giblin said. "We play a hell of a schedule, but I'm just happy for the kids."

The contest started slowly as neither team wanted to make a mistake, but it would be the Bears that struck first. On an errant clearing attempt, Tommy Minkle intercepted the ball and found Pat Keena wide open in front of the net for a goal at 5:56 of the opening quarter. Peter Laco and Hank Brown then scored to give the Bears a 3-0 lead at 9:13 of the second. But after that, the Hoyas' defense tightened.

Cory Dobyms (three goals, two assists) got the Hoyas on the board midway through the second with a highlight reel play. He backed his defender down, spun back and found a wide open net.

Early in the third, Liam Giblin scored off an assist from Dobyms to cut the deficit to 3-2, but the Bears answered with tallies from Charlie Schnider and Laco.

Dobyns then scored two quick goals to pull the Hoyas within one again, 5-4, entering the final 12 minutes of regulation.

The momentum continued into the fourth as Gribbin tied it at 6:34 and Joel Blockowicz gave the Hoyas their first lead, 6-5, of the afternoon at 2:45. Laco then forced overtime by completing a hat trick with just 63 seconds remaining.

"Seniors, baby," Giblin said of the combined six-goal performance from Gribbin, Dobyns and Blockowicz. "We saved our best for last. That's the object in this league. You got to play your best at the end. We are the champions. There's no splitting it."

- Good Counsel nearly made history of its own, falling one quarter short of winning its first-ever Washington Catholic Athletic Conference championship.

The Falcons took a three-goal lead in the second half and led entering the fourth quarter May 9 against Gonzaga, but the defending champions came from behind to win their second WCAC title game in a row, 10-8, at University of Maryland's Ludwig Field.

"Of the 10 goals we had at the beginning of the year, we accomplished at least nine of them; winning this game wasn't even one of them," Good Counsel senior Brendan Durkin said.

Its D.C. competition had one of its finest teams ever, taking both Prep and Landon to the wire and defeating Bullis; traditionally, the WCAC has never played at the level of IAC programs. Additionally, the Purple Eagles won all 11 of their league games this spring.

But the Falcons made them fight tooth-and-nail for number 11.

Spectacular individual efforts by Brendan Durkin, Luke Poulos, Graham Dabbs and Nick Buonomo staked the Falcons to an 8-5, third-quarter lead, with just 17 minutes standing in the way of an historic accomplishment. The Eagles scored the last five goals of the game, however, including one from nearly 100 yards away by defender Matt Borda that gained national attention.

"Honestly, Ryken was the big hump for us to get over," Brendan Durkin said. "The only goal we didn't accomplish was beating an IAC team, but it was a great season."

The campaign also included a thrashing of archrival DeMatha, a team Good Counsel's senior class has never beaten, and the program had only topped once in the 2000s.

"We're changing the culture at Good Counsel," Matt Durkin said.

- Highlights from the first two rounds of the Maryland Public Secondary Schools Athletic Association tournament included Walter Johnson's 18-5 victory over Whitman, with attackman J.P. Brennan scoring six goals, to set up a Monday rematch with 4A/3A West Region top seed Sherwood.

The Warriors posted a shutout against B-CC in their first playoff matchup, Churchill won its 12th game in a row by beating Blake, while Seneca Valley, led by Montgomery County's leading goal-scorer Drew Borsody, advanced to the 3A/2A West Region semifinals with victories over Northwood and Rockville.

Finally, Watkins Mill won its ninth game of the season Thursday at Gaithersburg, 7-3, in the first round of the 4A/3A North playoffs. Though it lost to second-seeded Linganore on Saturday, the Wolverines won more games than in their previous three seasons, combined.

"We scrimmaged them last year and they smashed us," Watkins Mill sophomore Shane Soghomonian said.

"Playing together so much in the offseason made a huge difference."

kzakour@gazette.net; dgreenberg@gazette.net