SPORTS / HIGH SCHOOL SPORTS

No. 13 Catonsville boys soccer claims a timely 2-1 win at No. 11 Sparrows Point

'We can do anything as a group,' senior center back Elliot Richardson says



Catonsville's Dominic Brown, left, and Elliot Richardson keyed the Comets' 2-1 win at Sparrows Point in Baltimore County soccer play. (Glenn Graham/Staff)

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The bus was running behind and then got stuck in beltway traffic, making Catonsville boys soccer late for its important showdown at rival Sparrows Point on Thursday.

The Comets, defending Baltimore County champions, hurried off the bus and were permitted 10 minutes to warm up.

Impressively, it proved enough.

They were the team to settle into the big game quicker, putting in two early goals before valiantly protecting a one-goal lead throughout the second half.

Dominic Brown and Finn Tracht produced the first-half offense — each finishing with one goal and one assist — and senior center back Elliot Richardson led the late heroics on defense as No. 13 Catonsville secured a resilient 2-1 win over the No. 11 Pointers.

Now 8-1-1 overall and 4-1-1 in Baltimore County's Division I, the Comets are positioned for a return trip to the title game. Sparrows Point (6-2-1, 4-1-1) remains in the mix with Hereford and Dulaney.

"We knew this was it, if we lost this game, we wouldn't be going back to the county championship game," said Richardson, who alertly cleared a Pointers shot off the goal line in the final minutes to help protect the lead. "We knew we were going to have to give everything we had, and I think each of us did everything we could on the field today. This just shows our resilience, and we can do anything as a group."

Brown showed a lethal left foot in the game's 12th minute to set the tone. Out wide on the right side, he collected a ball from Tracht and made one decisive cut inside before unleashing a heavy strike that found the far post for a 1-0 advantage.

"Personally, I never hit a goal like that. It was amazing — felt great," Brown said.

Less than seven minutes later, Tracht headed home Brown's long throw for a 2-0 advantage.

The Pointers would get on track soon after, Liam Morris running on to a through ball from Lennon McNamara and getting behind the Comets' defense and then goalie David Czlonka to finish into an open net that cut the lead to 2-1.

The Comets protected the lead well with back-and-forth play until the home team made a significant late push to tie.

Dane Simonsen headed away a dangerous corner kick served in with 13:45 to play. And then McNamara hit a heavy shot from 14 yards that got past Czlonka, but Richardson had the far post covered to keep it out.

"It just came to me, and I got whatever I could on it," he said.

At the 10:55 mark, Owen Peiser got off a clean strike from inside the penalty area that banged off the left post.

"We changed formations, putting another forward up front and created a lot of chances and really pushed," Sparrows Point coach Joe Lambert said. "I thought we had one that was cleared off the line and then we hit another one off the post. ... Just a little unlucky."

Going into the game, Catonsville coach Brendan Kennedy emphasized it was an all-or-nothing game in terms of keeping in the mix to have a chance to defend the county championship game.

His Comets showed him plenty.

"We've got an amazing group, and it's really been about keeping that mental toughness, playing through things and staying strong, ready to go," he said. "We really hyped that up today, wanting to get back to that county championship as defending champs. This one was going to be a big dictator of that, pretty much it, so it was like let's come out strong and let's do it. They did."

Both teams have one remaining county game in their division on Tuesday afternoon. Sparrows Points travels to Dulaney at 4 p.m., and Catonsville visits Towson at 4:45.

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