



# Heartbreaking Loss Ends Spectacular Soccer Season

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A postseason run that began in thrilling fashion earlier this week ended with a heartbreaker Wednesday evening as the undefeated Vineyard boys' soccer team fell 2-1 to Medway in sudden death overtime at the Massachusetts Interscholastic Athletics Association division three south sectional semifinals. The beautiful game is also a merciless one.

"It's sad that it had to end so soon," Vineyard head coach Damon Burke said after the game. "I really thought we had it."

After posting a 15-0-2 regular season record, the Vineyard was the top seed in the tournament and earned a bye in the first round. On Monday before a hometown crowd, they played the eight-seeded Scituate Sailors in near-freezing temperatures. Sophomore Jason Lages scored the game-winner with just 1:46 left in regulation, keeping the team's playoff hopes alive.

On Wednesday the Vineyard took on fifth seeded Medway in neutral territory at Canton High School. As

darkness settled on the artificial turf of the Canton field, two late busloads of Vineyard fans arrived 20 minutes into the game to bolster the already-sizeable crowd of parents, family members, friends and soccer alums. It was supposed to be one bus but the booster club had such a demand for seats they chartered another one to accommodate all the fans eager to cheer on their team, which had not lost a match since last year's section quarterfinals.

But the Medway Mustangs — last year's division two state runner-ups — came out blazing, setting the Vineyard into protective mode right from the start. The Mustang offense kept the ball around the Vineyard net in the first half, giving senior keeper Ben Wadleigh and defensemen Brandon Dwane, Alex Gordon-Beck and Ben Poole plenty to do. The four players proved a formidable defense, with Poole able to win nearly all of the headers that came his way and Wadleigh's goalie reflexes keeping Medway at bay, particularly in the 26th minute when he leapt to punch a high Medway shot that seemed guaranteed to go in.

Wadleigh, who ranked among the top 10 goalies in the state and closed the season with seven shutouts and a 0.53 goals against average, came into his own this season, taking the helm in net after two years of serving as backup goalie behind older players.

"We had a bit of an embarrassment of riches in the goalkeeper department [this year]," coach Burke said. Senior keeper David Dasilva, a member of the squad for all four years, and junior Matt Stone combined with Wadleigh for a 0.36 GAA. Neither Dasilva nor Stone allowed any goals this year. Wadleigh allowed just four in the regular season.

But in the 63rd minute of play, Medway scored on a breakaway run by Jake Warren, who blasted a shot to the right pocket. With the score 1-0 and Medway continuing to pressure the Vineyard with their physical play — the opposite of the Vineyard's possession-based, Barcelona-esque style — the team needed a goal of their own.

Six minutes later, junior Elie Jordi's long free kick from within Vineyard territory landed in the Medway box, where a scramble of players from both sides fought for possession. Senior Sam Entner raced in from 30 yards out to aim a perfect low strike and send the ball past Medway keeper Mike Bagnon. The crowd roared.

"Nine times out of 10 that doesn't work, but you have to run it out for the one time that [the ball] pops through, and Sam was there," coach Burke said. Entner, a two-year captain, has played on varsity for his entire high school career and "really, really led this year," the coach said. "His effort has always been incredible."

Entner's pregame speeches in the team huddle were full of intensity and belief in the squad, which proved invaluable especially when the season began. The players and coaches all thought this would be a rebuilding year, after losing 11 seniors to graduation. Instead they posted the best record a Vineyard team has ever had.

"They really came together this year," coach Burke said. "We play a fairly demanding style of soccer, intellectually. We force them to really know what's going on with every position on the field."

He noted the development of senior players Nemias Carlos and John Victor Gonsalves, two players who are "very solid attacking players" but "weren't that way when we got them." There is a lot of pointing and calling on the field. It's a selfless style of play exemplified by the grinding defensive midfield work of junior Noah Kleinhenz, the play-calling of co-captain Kane Araujo, and the grit of senior Evandro Medici, playing injured but refusing to quit in his final game.

"He absolutely insisted on being out there at the end, and was responsible for some of our best plays," coach Burke said. Medici was also a starter as a freshman, but did not play his sophomore year. He came

back, and “is a real warrior out there.”

The entire pace of the game changed after the Vineyard goal, with both teams stepping up the intensity and the crowd on its feet.

Chants of “We Love Lee” rained from the stands as junior co-captain Lee Faraca came off the field with an injury after a tough Medway tackle. Freshman Nevin Wallis, the lone ninth-grader on the team, stepped in and immediately made his presence felt by deploying pinpoint slide tackles and outpacing the Medway defense.

There are no nobodies on the Vineyard team. Each player’s name was yelled loudly by the fan squad, with cheers of “AGB!” [Alex Gordon-Beck], “Yannick [Gonsalves]!” and, “Jason! Jason!” whenever sophomore striker Jason Lages touched the ball. Lages led the Vineyard in scoring this season, notching more than half of the team’s total goals. Medway marked him throughout the game, holding back the scoring powerhouse.

An ankle injury to Medway’s Aidan Burke paused the game for 15 minutes during stoppage time, with the score still tied. The players stretched and went through warm-up exercises to fight off leg cramping.

The game went into overtime and was eventually decided by another breakaway. Medway’s Justin Kaplan scored a goal in the fourth minute of sudden death overtime. The Vineyarders seemed to fall as a unit.

“It’s one of those things where [you see] the heartache for the seniors,” coach Burke said. “Only one team can win their last game of the season.”

But in terms of high school soccer cycles, the Vineyard still looks strong for next year. Fourteen players will return including all but three of the starters.

On the bus ride back to Woods Hole, Coach Burke recalled that he looked over at the seniors and noticed a remarkable calm on Sam Entner’s face.

“He left it all out there. There was nothing more he could have done,” coach Burke said. “He doesn’t have any nagging questions to ask himself about whether or not he gave his all.”