

Boys soccer: Mayeux nets game-winner for Clippers

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DOVER — Picking up its first win of the season on Wednesday was a relief for the Portsmouth High School boys soccer team, but what transpired on Friday against rival St. Thomas Aquinas should leave the Clippers brimming with confidence.

With St. Thomas leading 1-0 late in the second half, Portsmouth's Nick Mackey tied the score and Alex Mayeux provided the game-winning goal with five minutes left to stun the Saints, 2-1, in Division II action.

Portsmouth (2-2) was coming off a 4-0 victory over Manchester West, after dropping its first two games of the season to Oyster River and Hollis-Brookline.

"I'm really proud of the team," Portsmouth coach Martin Carter said. "They were really quiet at halftime and I said to them that I was concerned. They went out and kept fighting and got back into the game."

Portsmouth shook off St. Thomas' early advantage in the second half and carried play the rest of the way, leading to Mackey's goal with 13 minutes remaining. His shot from 18 yards out went over the head of St. Thomas goalie Benjamin Mardin and tied the game at 1-1.

"Honestly, I wasn't even going to shoot first and then I just had it open and I shot it over the goalie's head," Mackey said. "It was a loose ball that deflected off (Zach Hansler) and went right to my feet."

Portsmouth continued to control possession and Ramiro Drovetta's shot was saved by Mardin with 7:25 remaining. The Clippers regrouped and Shawn Swist collected the ball and dumped it off to Mayeux, who buried it from 9 yards out for a 2-1 lead.

"Shawn thankfully dropped it off to me and I've just got to work on not blasting it over (the net) like I do a lot," Mayeux said. "I've never had that opportunity to score the game-winner before, so it's a great feeling."

St. Thomas (1-3) took a 1-0 lead when Jon Nartiff's kick found its way past Portsmouth goalkeeper Thomas Adler (nine saves) with 9:19 left in the half. The Clippers nearly tied it six minutes later when Mardin (11 saves) was out of position, but defender Aaron Dubois stepped in front of the net to block Hansler's shot.

The Saints came out quickly in the second half and almost went up by two goals when Nartiff's shot from a few feet away hit the crossbar.

St. Thomas coach Scott Suleski said it was a tough game to lose, especially after the Saints hit the post three times. However, he credited Portsmouth's play in the second half.

"We dominated in the first half, we just couldn't finish," Suleski said. "Portsmouth came out strong in the second half and things happened in front of the net, and we just couldn't capitalize again."

Portsmouth is scheduled to host Souhegan on Monday.

"It feels awesome," Mackey said. "We have a good feeling now that we're winning. We've won these past two games and it feels great. We've started off a lot better than we have in the past few years."

Friday was the second of five straight home games for the Saints, who picked up their only win, 2-1, in the season opener against Oyster River. St. Thomas hosts Coe-Brown on Tuesday.

"Portsmouth is a very good team and we had our chances and didn't finish," Suleski said. "If you don't finish, you're not going to win."