

NCHSAA 4A Men's Soccer Championship Match Post Game Quotes Nov. 17, 2023

Apex Friendship Head Coach Matt Pugliano

On missed opportunities

"We were talking at the end there and I thought tonight was a night of missed opportunities for us unfortunately for us. We got a couple fortunate bounces of the post, but tonight I don't think we showed as good of a team as we are."

We picked a poor night to have a bad game... to not play our best unfortunately. Then once you get to penalties it's a coin flip. It's unfortunate that it got that far. The boys never quit ... I didn't use a lot of subs, so you've got guys who were playing for 110 minutes and then penalties after that so that's just a testament to their character and their will for tonight."

On the second half

"After halftime we got away from our gameplan a little bit. I think we fell into what they wanted to do, we let them kind of dictate the terms of the game unfortunately."

We tried to get back to our passing and finding the width and once we were able to do that, I think that's where we were a little bit more successful. But they did a good job you know credit to them and their tenacity and they moved the ball a lot better than I was expecting which is a testament to them and again we didn't finish a couple of our chances that could've put them away same for them they could've put us away pretty quick but we made adjustments and I felt we kind of grew into the game a little bit more it's just unfortunate we couldn't put it away."

On the season

"It's unfortunate that we go out after such a great year, but to do this two years in a row and make a regional final then a state final, these guys have set the standard for our program and we're going to be back."

South Mecklenberg Head Coach Eric White

On the second half

"Once we got tight our defense was better and once, we won the ball we could keep it. We have to be able to keep the ball to be successful. I liked that we stayed on the front foot, but I don't like that we didn't finish. When we hit the post, we peppered it for sure. We hit every post, every crossbar they had, but you know we figured it out."

On his team's character

"They're a fantastic group and they're a resilient group. They didn't give up. There was an opportunity for them to give up early in the season and they didn't. They stuck with it and

believed in themselves, in me, and believed in everything we're trying to do here for our ultimate goal. Here they stand and they're state champions."

On MVP Paul Northcutt

"I don't care what you know all-conference, all-region, all-state, I don't care what any of that says, Paul Northcutt is the best goalkeeper in the state, and I'll keep saying that."

South Mecklenburg GK Paul Northcutt

On the second half

"It was definitely hard to get going in the first half. Our coach was able to calm us down and kind of talk us through what we were doing tactically wrong and get our heads in the right spot. We were on the front foot for most of the second half."

On the PK Shootout

"My mind is a clean slate in the sticks (in goal during PK). I know tendencies of some of the players, I know a couple of tricks, but at the end of the day it just comes down to mindset."

On his team

"We have an incredible group of guys. Always coming back hungry the next day no matter the outcome. Ever since we started lifting in January, we've been focused on this. Losing to Myers Park in the last game of the season was a tough one, but we didn't give up and we went 6-0 in the playoffs."