



Kenmore's Alyssa Dollendorf (8) scores the game-winning goal in double overtime of the Section VI final against Williamsville.
Harry Scull Jr./Buffalo News

GIRLS HIGH SCHOOL HOCKEY

Dollendorf sends Kenmore girls hockey team to states

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Published: February 7, 2013, 12:13 AM

Updated: February 7, 2013, 12:13 AM

Just when it seemed like Wednesday night's Section VI girls hockey final between two evenly matched teams would play on long into the night, senior Alyssa Dollendorf made sure that didn't happen.

Kenmore couldn't be more thrilled about that.

Dollendorf's goal at 1:06 of the second overtime propelled Kenmore into its first state tournament as it defeated a more-than-game Williamsville crew, 2-1, before an estimated 500 at the Northtown Center in Amherst.

Dollendorf quickly potted a shot through the legs of Williamsville goalie Theresa Meosky off a nifty wrap-around feed from Jill Battista as Kenmore won its second straight sectional title, this one at the expense of Williamsville, which held a 36-23 edge in shots.

"I'm still in shock," Dollendorf said. "I feel like it was this crazy dream. Words can't even describe what it feels to do this."

“I’m overjoyed,” said winning goalie Lauren Pray, who made 35 saves. “This is why you play.”

Kenmore will face Section VII champion Beekmantown at 8 p.m. Friday in Canton. The winner will play either Section III champion Alexandria Bay or X-Potsdam for the unofficial state championship at noon Saturday in Canton. Because there are only four sections in the state which offer girls hockey, the state tournament isn’t considered an official New York State Public High School Athletic Association event like the boys. There needs to be six sectional participants in order for it to be an official NYSPHSAA event.

Yeah, try telling that to members of Kenmore.

“It’s just great to be here and have an opportunity like this,” Dollendorf said. “There are girls all over the country who don’t have the opportunity to play in leagues like this and win championships like this.”

“It means the world to the girls,” coach Jeff Orlowski said. “Last year, we won the title and the season just ended.”

It ended because sectionals happened at the end of the Western New York Federation postseason tournament and state playoffs. Section VI adjusted the schedule last June so that it could send its champion to states this season and also crown an overall Federation champion. The Federation playoffs, which will include unbeaten Monsignor Martin Association, begin next week.

It’s fitting the sectional final went to double overtime considering how evenly matched the two teams were and their history (Kenmore won the regular-season series 2-1).

Williamsville looked like it would get sweet revenge, dominating play in the third period and outshooting its foe, 11-2. Rachel Grampp connected on one of Williamsville’s early shots, tying the game, 1-1, with 9:26 left in regulation with an unassisted tally off a goal-mouth scramble. Williamsville had its share of chances to win it after that but Pray, a sophomore, didn’t let that happen.

“I just kept calm and just played like it was a normal game,” Pray said. “I tried not to put too much pressure on myself.”

“Anytime you’re in double overtime it can go either way but the goaltending, Lauren, she made some great saves in the third period,” said Williamsville coach Rick Hopkins. “I’m proud of my girls. They rallied back.”

After the teams played a pretty even first and most of the second period, Kenmore took a 1-0 lead with 5:05 left in the second period when Kaeli Mathias’ screen shot from the left circle found the top far corner. That goal came minutes after Pray made a fine reflex pad/skate save on a nifty redirection by Alexis Skibitsky

“She’s a great goalie. She’s one of the best in the league,” said Dollendorf.

Battista set up the winning play by making a nifty toe drag to give a Williamsville defenseman the slip. Battista’s wraparound found a driving Dollendorf, and now Kenmore has a chance to make the type of championship history the Kenmore East boys’ team did last year in winning the state title.

“They talked about wanting to repeat so we could have a chance at winning a state championship this year,” Orlowski said. “The girls play with heart. I don’t know how else to say it.”

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