



Wolfpack, Spartans get big semifinal tests

- Adam Carrington
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Whitefield Academy may be the defending Class A state champions but it will be hosting a Paideia team today in the state semifinals that has won three state championships in the last five years.

The two teams opened the 2018 season with Paideia winning a 4-3 decision. Whitefield coach Steve Hellier is expecting this game to play out the same way, but with the hopes that the Wolfpack come away with the higher score.

“It’s going to be a complete tossup,” Hellier said. “The team that gets the breaks and executes the best and gets a bounce or two will be the team that ends up walking away the winner.”

Hellier also talked about the importance of reducing or perhaps eliminating mistakes against Paideia while taking advantage of any mistakes the Pythons make. Over the last three games, Whitefield (16-5) has played stellar de-fense, allowing only one goal in its three playoff wins over Galloway, Hebron Christian and Savannah Country Day while combining for 13.

Goalkeeper John Matherne and defenders Jakob Burkett, Simon Sengson, Casey Torres and Clayton MacLemore were behind Whitefield’s 2-0 shutout over Savannah Country Day. The Wolfpack took advantage of an own-goal by Savannah in the first half

while Matt Soud provided the insurance goal with just over 10 minutes to play in the game.

If there is one thing the Wolfpack need to do well, it is finishing chances. A few slipped away in their quarterfinal game.

“We’re getting a lot of good opportunities at goal, but we’re struggling to finish at the moment,” Hellier said.

While Whitefield Academy is attempting to defend its state championship, Campbell is just two games away from its first in Class AAAAAAA. The Region 2AAAAAAA champions will be on the road at Lambert.

Campbell seems to be peaking at the right time after losing five of its last six games to end the regular season.

“I’m excited for the boys and for the school,” Campbell coach Troy Connolly said. “To have the opportunity to still be playing for (a state title) is a big deal. The players know it. The staff knows it, and everyone is super supportive.”

The Spartans (10-8) are aware that Lambert will likely put multiple defenders on Angel Gonzalez, their leading scorer with 25 goals on the season.

Gonzalez scored four goals in Campbell’s 5-1 win over South Gwinnett on Saturday in the quarterfinals, and added two more in Campbell’s 3-1 win over Camden County in the first round.

“From what I know about Lambert, they are very organized,” Connolly said. “They will be a tough team to beat. I don’t think they have a weak player at any position. If we can get our weapons going, I don’t think there is a team we can’t beat.”