

# THE NEW JERSEY SOCCER GROUP

## Press Release



Millburn, NJ, July 22nd 2009

### Magic Stun Lancaster to reach Regional Final

Millburn's post-season run continued yesterday with a stunning regional semi-final victory at the Lancaster Inferno putting them into the Women's Premier Soccer League (WPSL) East Conference final. The Magic triumphed 5-4 on penalty kicks, after regulation and extra time finished 2-2.

Lancaster started brightly, and Erin Hench shot narrowly wide in the opening minutes before Katie Ryan broke free and almost registered for the Magic; Inferno keeper and WPSL player of the week Joy Shaiebly saving well to her right. The home team was stunned in the 8<sup>th</sup> minute, however, and Shaiebly could do nothing as Shira Averbuch opened the scoring. The Millburn midfielder met Katie Ryan's corner perfectly to power a header home and give Millburn the lead. Ryan and Leah Jerome were linking well down the right as Millburn counter-attacked effectively in front of a midfield well anchored by Kelly Feeney.

Just as Millburn seemed to be comfortable with dealing with Lancaster's pace offensively, they were punished by a set-piece in the 39<sup>th</sup> minute; Lia Fierro saving a free kick low to her right but helpless as Carly Brill powered home the rebound. After a scary couple of moments that saw the impressive Carly Bray scramble clear what seemed would be a definite Lancaster goal, Millburn's had the last word of the half on 44 minutes. Katie McDonnell drove the ball in from the right, and when it was only half cleared, Ryan drove it back across the goal for Amanda Malkiewicz to blast home, silence the home fans, and make the half-time score 2-1 in favor of the New Jersey team.



Tension build during shoot out

That lead was almost doubled within 30 seconds of the second half starting, Malkiewicz returning the favor to release Ryan, whose first shot was saved, and the defense scrambling to clear the follow-up. Millburn's profligacy was punished in the 48<sup>th</sup> minute, when Lancaster attacked down their left, and the cross was powerfully met by the impressive Hench to tie the score up at 2-2. The goal prompted the home team's best spell of the game as they threatened to overrun the Magic, but they were repelled by Lina Staropoli and Ashley Ventura guarding Fierro's goal. The Magic keeper also got plenty of action; one stop low to her left the pick of an impressive collection of saves. Millburn got back into the game as the half went on, Shenk and Katelin Blaine coming to terms with the wide threats for Lancaster, while Averbuch, Laura Kurash and Feeney were turning in epic performances in the midfield. As Millburn threatened the win, Averbuch hammered a free-kick against the crossbar before regulation time ended, and in the final seconds of extra time, Kurash came within inches of winning the game for Millburn, before the agony of penalties arrived. After the first four penalties for each team were scored, Fierro got down low to her right to make an outstanding save, and when Lina Staropoli completed Millburn's perfect five penalties, the celebrations could begin.

Magic Head Coach Andy Sones was understandably ecstatic after his teams' dramatic win, saying "we played an outstanding team today, and I don't think anyone expected us to win. We came with a plan, stuck to it, and it worked", he continued, "and now we'll face another challenge on Saturday". While unwilling to single out individuals in an outstanding team performance, Sones paid credit to his overall roster. "We came here with five starters missing", he said, and we got huge performances from two or three players who haven't seen a whole lot of time this year, including a couple of our younger players. It's testament to a strong roster and a good youth system, but it's also about an incredible strength of character from every single player who was on the field – they just refused to be beaten". Millburn's recent record reflects six wins in their last seven games, with this victory by some distance the sweetest in the second year team's short history. Depending on the result of Wednesday's semi-final, Millburn will either travel to Long Island or host New England in the East Final this Saturday, for a place in the national finals.

*Magic Line Up:* Lia Fierro, Biz Shenk, Katelin Blaine, Lina Staropoli, Ashley Ventura, Shira Averbuch, Kelly Feeney, Laura Kurash, Leah Jerome, Amanda Malkiewicz, Katie Ryan, *Subs:* Carly Bray (23), Katie McDonnell (35), Kerry Prime (60)

*Inferno:* Shaiebly, Brill, Myers, Pinfer, White, Hoffsmith, Weidner, Lamon, Hench, Musser, Gordon.

More about the Millburn Magic at  
More about the New Jersey Soccer Group at  
More about the WPSL at

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