

BRUIN SPORTS

ST. JOSEPH BRUINS 4, SACRED HEART CRUSADERS 2

WE ARE THE CHAMPIONS!

*Pearson:
Collins' play
critical for
St. Joe win*

The Bruins were leading the Sacred Heart Crusaders 3-2 for the state championship in soccer with 3 minutes to go.



JOE PEARSON
sports editor

Senior Reed Collins had a free kick that could seal the St. Joe Bruins victory and win the championship. The ball was set on the 16 yard line, 26 yards from the goal.

Collins stood calm and seemed unaware of the pressure – unlike his team members and a large group of Bruin fans who braved the rain to watch the biggest game of the year.

He stepped back, inhaled slowly and ran forward. With his powerful right foot, Collins kicked the ball into the bottom right corner of the goal, over the wall of defending Crusaders and past a diving goalkeeper.

Fans, coaches and players erupted in cheers. Collins' kick ensured the Bruins their first state championship since 2011.

LOVE OF SPORTS

This moment was 18 years in the making. Ever since he could walk, Collins has loved sports and competition – especially soccer.

“My passion has been sports since I was little,” Collins said. “Whatever it was, I wanted to get on a field and play.”

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Photo by Sydney Shoemaker/The Bear Facts

Bruin soccer players celebrate winning the state championship on Saturday, Feb. 17, by defeating the Sacred Heart Crusaders.

*Boys take
first state
title since
2011*

By JOE PEARSON
The Bear Facts

The St. Joseph boys soccer team is once again the state champion.

The Bruins defeated the Sacred Heart Crusaders 4-2 on Saturday, Feb. 17, at Ridgeland High School – taking the state championship for the first time in seven years.

The win capped a remarkable season for the Bruins that ended with a 20-4 record and an eighth state title for head soccer Coach Dwayne Demmin.

“The seniors and I talked about a state championship from Day 1,” senior Reed Collins said. “We knew if we bought in, we could win a title. And that is exactly what happened.”

Sophomore Aidan Lipovetsky struck first for the Bruins. He knocked in a beautiful goal on a Collins assist early in the first half, making the game 1-0 Bruins.

After the Crusaders tied the game, Collins scored a goal to regain the lead for the Bruins. The Bruins went into the half leading by a score of 2-1.

When the second half started it was another senior, Rodney Self, who stretched the lead for the Bruins. With about 20 minutes to go in the game, the Bruins had a corner kick.

Demmin and assistant coach Tripp Harkins signaled a front post run for Self. Lipovetsky made the corner kick, and Self came around and tapped the ball in the bottom left corner of the goal, just past the outstretched arms of

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Looking back on a memorable Bruin boys soccer season

BY RODNEY SELF

The Bear Facts

The St. Joseph Catholic School Bruin boys soccer team crossed many milestones on the way to the state championship. Here is a look back at some of key games from a great season.

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Bruins vs. Pearl, Bill Raphael Field, Thursday, Nov. 16, 2017: The Bruins earned their second victory against a major 6A high school in Mississippi with this memorable home stand. The Bruins defeated the Pearl

High School Pirates 3-1.

Six days earlier, the Bruins earned a 7-1 victory against the Murrah High School Mustangs. These two victories gave the Bruins a 5-0 start and high hopes for the season ahead.

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Bruins at Terry, Terry High School, Tuesday, Nov. 28, 2017: One week after downing the Pearl Pirates, the Bruins extended their opening win streak to 6 by defeating the Terry Bulldogs on the road 4-0. This marked the Bruins' third win against a 6A public high school in Mississippi – a remark-

able feat for a 2A private school.

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Bruins vs St. Andrews, Bill Raphael Field, Thursday, Jan. 11, 2018: The Bruins already lost to arch-rival St. Andrew's 2-1 on the road on Monday Dec. 4, 2017. The team had no intention of losing at home. Unfortunately, the Bruins fell again. The second loss lit a fire in the Bruins that never let up. The team never lost another game.

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North State Championship, Bru-

ins vs. St. Andrew's at Ridgeland High School, Wednesday, Feb. 14, 2018: This was the re-match the Bruins had been waiting for.

And this time, the North State Championship and a trip to the state championship game was at stake. And this time the Bruins bested the Saints 3-1.

The Bruins won just one of three games against the Saints this season, but the single win was the won the mattered.

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State Championship Bruins vs. Sacred Heart Catholic School at Ridge-

land High School, Saturday, Feb. 17, 2018: The entire season came down to this game – two of Mississippi's top Catholic high schools facing off against each other for the state championship in boys soccer.

Despite a tight, tough, hard-fought game, the Sacred Heart Crusaders from Hattiesburg fell to the Bruins 4-2. The final game for the Bruins' 2017-2018 soccer season was exactly what they had been preparing for their entire season.

It also set the stage for the 2018-2019 season that starts next fall as the boys will be eyeing a repeat as state champions.

Lady Bruins vow to return next year for another title run

By BIANCA McCARTY

The Bear Facts

The Bruins and Tupelo Christian were tied at 1.

With 2 minutes to go, senior Emma Dotson – who had just returned from heart surgery – stepped onto the field. The Lady Bruins had the ball and moved it down the sideline.

She took the ball, ran past a defender, took a shot into the back of the net and broke the tie. The goal sealed the game for the Bruins, advancing them the North State Championship.

The Feb. 10 road game was the highlight of the playoffs for the Bruin girls team. Three days later on Tuesday, Feb. 13, the team lost the North State championship to St. Andrew's and ended the year 10-8-1.

“We’ve had a group of people who have been together for a while and have been able to grow and have that camaraderie and team bonding,” Dotson said.

The 2017-2018 girls soccer team had six seniors, including Dotson. The team may not have gone on to the state championship, but players said they walked away this year with a great experience.

“This is a family that I will keep with me forever, and I hope to carry my skills of caring and leadership into the future as I go off to college.”

– Katie Joseph,
senior soccer player

“One of the biggest things I’ve (learned) was how to be a leader – and not only in telling people where to be on the field, but taking care of my team as well,” senior Katie Joseph said.

“This is a family that I will keep with me forever,” she said, “and I hope to carry my skills of caring and leadership into the future as I go off to college.”

Losing so many seniors may cause problems next season, but the team is confident that younger players can

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Photo by Walker Gosa/The Bear Facts

Freshman Mary Hazel Bellan battles for a ball against a St. Andrew's defender in the North State Championship game. The girls beat Tupelo Christian to advance to the North State, but fell to arch-rival St. Andrew's 3-1.