

BUFFALO NEWS STORY

- By [Miguel Rodriguez](#) Published November 1, 2016

Grand Island and Newfane simply weren't going to be denied, regardless of the goalkeeping and defensive efforts of their respective opponents Tuesday night.

Both teams' quests for state championships continue.

Grand Island kept its nearly flawless season alive by defeating Amherst, 4-1, in the overall Section VI Class A final at Williamsville North's Spartans Stadium. Florida State-commit Madisyn Pezzino scored three goals to enable the Class A-1 champion Vikings to advance to Far West Regionals for the first time since 2010.

"It's been an awesome journey," said Pezzino, who now has 73 goals and increased her state career record goal total to 252. "I'm glad we're able to go further than we have in past years. I'm excited to see what happens next."

So too is Newfane. The Panthers' season to remember continues as the Class B-1 champions received two goals from Kayleigh Daniels in subduing B-2 champion Fredonia, 3-0, in the overall Class B final.

"It feels good," said Daniels, who has followed up last year's 18-goal campaign with 16 this season. "We have a lot of good players. We know how to work together. I just think it was a good game."

Both overall champions return to action Saturday against Rochester-area Section V champions at SUNY Geneseo. Newfane (16-2) faces Palmyra-Macedon at 4 p.m., while Grand Island (19-1) meets Spencerport at 6:30 p.m.

An estimated crowd of nearly 1,000 attended the state-qualifier doubleheader.

They saw Grand Island and Newfane use speed and skill to seize control of their respective games.

Grand Island outshot Class A-2 champion Amherst, 22-10, and had several chances to score first. The Vikings broke through with 19 minutes, six seconds left in the first half on Grace Stranahan's goal.

The Tigers did a fine job of slowing down Pezzino for the opening 44:26 of the first half. The 5-foot-9 senior uncorked a wicked shot from 20 yards with 34 seconds left to send the Vikings into halftime with a 2-0 lead.

Kayla Shutts (18 saves) did her best to keep it close in goal, including stopping Pezzino early in the second half on a breakaway. Pezzino's transition goal with 9:55 left made it 3-0. She added another with 1:37 remaining.

Quinn DiCicco scored for Amherst (14-5-1) with just over a minute left.

The Vikings haven't reached the state semifinals since 2005, the last of four straight final four appearances by the program.

"You want to work and get that state championship; that's the ultimate goal," GI coach Dave Bowman said. "At this level you're playing good teams, they have good goaltenders and good defense. It's just a matter of staying with the system and putting them away when you can."

That formula has worked well for a Newfane team that's scored 18 goals in four playoff games. Daniels has 10 of them as she's increased her season total for goals to 17.

She had a chance to build on the Panthers' 1-0 lead in the opening seconds of the second half. She took the kickoff, weaved around the Fredonia defense and uncorked a wicked shot that goalie Sophie Stevens leaped to stop.

Daniels found the back of the net later, however, making it 2-0 with 18:16 left as she outran a defender to a through ball and poked it into the net.

Just as the vocal Newfane fans started the "I believe that we will win" chant, Stevens struck again with 6:54 left. Lila Mauer's goal late in the first half proved to be the game-winner as the Panthers advanced to regionals for the third time and first time since 2012.

The Panthers, which has lost a pair of one-goal games in their previous regional appearances, came into the season hungry for success. Mission accomplished.

"We have a very mature team that plays together. We knew this had to be the year," Newfane coach Chelsea Buzynski said. "Like I told the girls this is the cake. Anything else after this is the icing."