BUFFALO NEWS STORY

- By Budd Bailey
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The final score read Grand Island - 5, Iroquois - 2.

Don't be fooled. The Section VI Class A championship game in boys soccer was no walk in the park for the Vikings, who improved their record to 20-0.

"We haven't played a team that could keep up that level of effort for a full game like that," Grand Island coach Frank Butcher said. "I'm happy we came out on top. Steven Pufpaff made some amazing saves, and we could have easily been down several times. We persevered."

In the second half of the doubleheader at Sweet Home High School on Tuesday night, I-Prep's offense proved unstoppable in an 8-2 win over Lackawanna to take the Class B title.

In the opener, consider that the Vikings had allowed only four goals in the entire season until Tuesday night's game, and gave up two goals to the Chiefs (8-9-3). The game was in doubt until the final minutes.

"We did some things differently," Iroquois coach George Glinsboecker said. "We knew we couldn't do the same things as last year's game" against GI in the same playoff round, "so we changed things up a bit. We gave them a different look. But we ran out of gas.

"I'm very proud of them. With a couple of breaks, maybe it goes a different way."

But John Griffin made his own break for Grand Island, scoring the game-winner with 14:46 left. The Vikings added a couple of more scores in the final few minutes - including another by Griffin - to put away the pesky Chiefs.

"You can't teach a kid to work hard," Butcher said about Griffin. "You can want him to work, you can tell him to work. But Johnny Griffin brings it for every game. He puts his head down and just goes.

"I don't want to say our games have been easy, but we haven't been in a battle like that. ... Games like this build our experience and build our character."

Grand Island, ranked first in the state, advanced to the Far West Regionals. It will be played Friday night at Sweet Home against a Section V opponent to be determined