

# Grand Island, Pioneer punch tickets to Class A girls soccer final

By [Marshall Haim](#) | Published October 28, 2017

Laura Schultz is in her first year on the Grand Island varsity soccer team. Her first ever goal for the Vikings varsity squad came at an opportune time Saturday afternoon at Williamsville North. Schultz saw a ball bounce off a Williamsville East defender after a corner kick in the second half, allowing her to net her first career varsity goal and the only goal in the Vikings' 1-0 win over Williamsville East. "I didn't know we would make it this far," Schultz, a junior, said. "I feel like we put everything into it. We put our heart and soul into it."

The win for Grand Island (18-1) puts them in the overall Class A final for the second straight season. It was their fourth straight Class A-1 final appearance, all coming against the Flames (17-2). The win, however, wasn't easy. Grand Island was without their leading scorer Brooke Amato and starting midfielder, Grace Stranahan, who broke her ankle in the Vikings' semifinal win Wednesday.

"They were phenomenal," Grand Island head coach Dave Bowman said. "They knew they could do this as a team. We're missing our leading scorer and, if not, our best midfielder and they still come out and beat another team that was 17-1. They did a great job. This was truly a great win."

Grand Island will face Pioneer in the overall Class A final on Tuesday at Williamsville North. The Panthers won the Class A-2 final over East Aurora, 4-1.

It is Pioneer's first sectional title in program history.

Both Pioneer and East Aurora were no strangers heading into their match Saturday. The Panthers and Blue Devils were playing for the third time on the season, meeting twice during the regular season in ECIC III. Pioneer won the first contest before both teams tied in their second meeting.

"East Aurora is such a competitive team. If you don't play your best game, you're not going to come out on top," Pioneer head coach Frank Asquith, who will be retiring at the end of the year, said. "It forced us to focus. We knew what we were going to be in for and we knew if we didn't put our best game on the field, we were going to come back second best."

Pioneer's Meghan Root scored Pioneer's first goal of the game in the first half before scoring her 45th goal of the season in the second half, scoring Pioneer's last goal.

"They played like veterans that have been there," she said. "That second half was awesome, I'm so proud of them. We've never had a sectional championship ever. We have banners in the gym that lists ECIC and sectional titles and we have none. We would always look up and say, 'We're going to get one one day.' It's so special to get to experience it with all these people that we grew up with in a small town."

Sierra Cass and Kaitlyn Eigenbrod were the other goal scorers for the Panthers (16-1-2). Grace Mooney scored for the Blue Devils (12-4-3).

"I feel like we've been coming together," Asquith said. "The kids tease me because I don't sleep well during the season. The last week or so I've been sleeping well. We've come together and they've matured as a squad. They were focused and on a mission. We were ready to get this done this year."