



Sports

Giants win, clinch NCC title

Boys' soccer team also receives votes in top 20 poll

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Playing for the first time with state recognition, the Marion boys' soccer team struggled in the first half Tuesday afternoon against traditional rival Huntington North at Ballard Field.

The Vikings actually jumped ahead 1-0 in the first half until the Giants' Cory Deaton tied the match just 12.5 seconds before halftime.

Cortland Weatherspoon would give Marion a 2-1 victory with his second-half goal. The win clinched an outright North Central Conference championship for the Giants.

"I can look back and say we won the conference in my senior year," said Weatherspoon, who scored his 12th goal of the season. "It means everything."

Marion improved to 12-2 and remained unbeaten in six NCC matches with one remaining at home Saturday against Anderson. The other league teams each have at least two losses.

Huntington North (7-5-1, 2-4 NCC) was able to keep the Giants in check almost the entire first half. The Vikings' lone goal came 15 minutes into the match on Taylor Johnson's long shot from about 40 yards out.

"They were pretty competitive and really into it," Marion coach Jorge Berry said. "We were able to get back into it and knock one in just before halftime. Then we made adjustments with what we wanted to do.

"Huntington has been very competitive and has lost six one-goal matches," Berry added.

Nick Evans set up the winning score by centering the ball and passing to Giants' top goal scorer JaCoby Smith, who headed the ball to Weatherspoon.

Working one-on-one against a Vikings defender, Weatherspoon controlled Smith's pass with his thigh and dribbled the ball to the goal area, where he kicked the ball into the corner of the goal.

"The defender was riding me on my back, but I was able to take it (downfield) and shot it past the corner of the goal," Weatherspoon said.

Marion goalkeeper Riley Reese stopped nine of 10 Vikings shots. The Giants were credited with 11 shots on goal.



Marion's JaCoby Smith heads the ball from the goal during boys soccer action against Huntington North at Ballard Field on Tuesday afternoon. Rob Edwards / redwards@chronicle-tribune.com

The NCC title was Marion's fourth overall and third in the five years Berry has coached the Giants.

Marion also received votes in this week's state coaches' top 20 poll, a first for the program that started in 1985.

"It's the first time Marion has been recognized as a program by the state soccer coaches association," Berry said.

In the JV match, Nick Coryea scored both goals and led the Giants to a 2-1 victory.

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