

State champions: Myers' second-half kick lifts Brighton to 5A crown

By Sarah Thomas
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Prior to her free kick, Sydney Myers huddled for a moment with teammate Jayde Jones.

They were trading strategy. They were refocusing.

It was a moment of calm before the senior midfielder sent a shot over the wall of Viewmont defenders and the outstretched hand of Viking goalkeeper Haley Johnson. The ball landed inside the upper-left corner of the goal for the only score in the 5A state championship match, giving the Bengals the 1-0 victory over Viewmont.

"It was the opportunity of a lifetime, really," Myers said at Rio Tinto Stadium Friday evening after accepting the championship trophy.

"She had a free kick shortly before that," Myers said of her conversation with Jones. "We were making sure we were focused together and we knew we had this game — getting each other settled down."

Myers scored in the 64th minute after teammate Nadia Gomes drew a foul on the edge of the penalty area. The Bengals then held on during a furious Viewmont rally. It was her fifth goal of the season.

"I've taken that free kick a hundred times," she said. "That's my main goal: Get that free kick mastered. Finally one of them



Brighton girls celebrate immediately after the Bengals won the state title.

went in. I take it all the time, but it finally went in this game."

Brighton coach Mark Stoker knew Myers would make something happen with that shot.

"Syd's a special athlete," he said. "That left foot of her', she can put that in, curl it in, any time of the day. She really is a specialist when it comes to that."

The Vikings, who were playing in their fourth state championship game in as many

years, kept Brighton at a distance for much of the first half, using a game plan Stoker acknowledged was difficult for his team to overcome.

"Viewmont's an excellent competitor; they really had a great game strategy to lock us down in the middle," he said. "It was a tough battle; it was absolutely a tough battle."

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BRIGHTON SOCCER: Bengals 1, Viewmont 0



TOP LEFT: Nadia Gomes. TOP RIGHT: Brighton celebrates with its fans. **LOWER LEFT:** The Bengals rush the field. **LOWER RIGHT: Mia Mazur and Stephanie Ringwood**

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Sydney Myers

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The Bengals created multiple opportunities to score throughout the second half, an effort that kept Viewmont's Johnson active in the net. Just two minutes before Myers' goal, the senior goalkeeper made a diving stop and came up holding her left shoulder. The Viewmont coaching staff was called onto the field and Johnson was forced to exit the game until the next available substitution.

Less than a minute after leaving, Johnson, who had suffered a separated shoulder, replaced junior

Rachel Pitt and finished the match. As soon as the clock hit zero, the Viewmont team trainer met Johnson at midfield and put her arm in a sling.

"I have to really congratulate that goalkeeper,"

Stoker said. "She had some phenomenal saves and made it very challenging for us the whole game."

Johnson finished the season with 11 shutouts and the Vikings, the No. 2 seed from Region 1, were led on offense by the play of Abbie Flandro, who recorded 11 goals.

Brighton, the second-place team from Region 3, was led by Gomes' 12 goals. Tamaryn Braun earned the shutout Friday and totaled 4 1/2 on the season.

"It's the most incredible feeling ever," Myers said of winning the 5A championship. "Going back to freshman year when we won, this is 10 times better. It's our senior year; this is our last game ever together. I can't even tell you how great it feels."