

# Ruhland's late goal lifts Cougars, 1-0

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The Kettle Run and Fauquier girls soccer teams waged a scoreless war for most of Tuesday's Evergreen semifinal in Nokesville.

With regular season champion Brentsville already securing the region's first region playoff berth, the teams were essentially playing for the glory of continuing their season and earning the district's second region playoff spot.

A feeling of tension characterized the cross town rivalry, but as the game ticked down, the No. 2-seeded Cougars mustered the goal they needed from Megan Ruhland to eliminate the No. 3 Falcons, 1-0.

The win sent Kettle Run (12-3-1) onto Thursday's district final against Brentsville, but more importantly, qualified them for the region tournament Monday. The Cougars host Briar Woods in the regional first round game at 7 p.m.

Fauquier ended 8-7-1.

Kettle Run — which defeated FHS 2-0 and tied them 0-0 in the regular season — continued its superb season by controlling possession most of the night, keeping Fauquier in their own defensive end.

As the first half was winding down, Cougar sophomore Ivana Szwejkowski made a run down the right, beating three players before being brought down inside the box. What seemed like an obvious penalty kick to Cougar players and fans was not called by the referee. The half ended 0-0.

The second half was mostly controlled by Kettle Run. Senior defender Samantha Johnson propelled two free kicks that tested the Falcons. One went inches over the goal, the other was headed for the side netting, forcing the goalie make a save.

"The passing was really good, but we just had a hard time finding the net," said Kettle Run senior Emily Delsignore.

Hungry for a goal, Kettle Run continued to test the Fauquier defense, led by right winger Szwejkowski.

"We struggled offensively, having over 25 shots that couldn't hit the back of the net," said Kettle Run coach Steve Smith. "But we stuck with it and we were able to get one at the end."



Photo by Adam Goings

**FOOTRACE:** Fauquier sophomore striker Caity Ashley rushes the ball upfield in early season game against Brentsville.

The winning goal came with 3:42 left on a cross from Szwejkowski that hit the Falcon keeper in the hands and bounced into the middle of the box. Ruhland was well-placed and headed the ball into the right side.

The Cougars walked off the field pleased and relieved to have survived. While Kettle Run had problems converting chances earlier this season, they have racked up goals in recent wins over Handley, Warren County and Liberty, and looked dangerous Tuesday despite the narrow margin of victory.

One constant is the Kettle Run defense, which fueled the offense Tuesday. Fauquier simply didn't get much going on its offensive end.

"Our defense is the top defense in the district, giving up only four goals and that is something they take real pride in," said Smith.

Smith knows Monday's game against Briar Woods (12-4-2), out of the Dulles District will be a challenge.

"They are very good," he said.