

Brick Memorial athlete turns rough memory into an act of sportsmanship

November 16, 2023

When the Brick Memorial girls soccer team traveled to Middletown South for the championship of the NJSIAA Central Jersey, Group 3 tournament on Nov. 6, it brought back some unpleasant memories for the players, including one in particular.

The game happened to be rematch of the 2022 sectional final, also played at Middletown South, which the home team won, 3-2, on a goal in the second overtime period.

Giselle Lizardi was a Brick Memorial sophomore put into a difficult position that day. As a backup goalkeeper who played in just a handful of games throughout the season, she was suddenly thrust into a pressure-packed situation of having to enter in net when the starter was injured late in the second half.

High school sports are all about learning life lessons, and when Middletown South scored the clincher, it left a feeling with Giselle that will be very hard to forget.

“Knowing I was the one who that got scored on, I kept thinking what I could have done better,” she said. “I kept reliving it, thinking I could have done something different.”

Fast forward to the current season, where Giselle evolved into Brick Memorial’s junior starter in goal. And ultimately it led to that return game at Middletown South, with a sectional championship again on the line almost a year to the day of last year’s defeat.



Giselle Lizardi in goal during the Central Jersey Group 3 final

Photo credit: Robert Badders Photography



PRESENTED BY



***Brick Memorial girls soccer player
Giselle Lizardi***

“We definitely remembered last year,” she said of the rematch. “And I remembered how I felt after.”

Sure enough, this year’s game was tied, 1-1, through 80 minutes of intense regulation play. The first 10 minute overtime were scoreless, but Brick Memorial won it, 2-1, after Chloe Gellici connected in the 92nd minute.

The release of emotion on the Brick Memorial side was incredible. Not only did they turn the tables on last year’s defeat, it was also the first sectional championship for the program since 2008.

While the team converged immediately on Gellici near the goalmouth to celebrate, Lizardi had the longest, and perhaps happiest, run to get there.

Full of emotion, she reached the crowd of teammates and joined in the celebration - until she noticed something several yards away.

One of the Middletown South defenders, a player that was in the vicinity of the game-ending goal, was lying on the ground, feeling the full emotional effects of the heartbreaking defeat.

Lizardi, understanding full well how she felt on the same field in the same situation a year earlier, left the celebration to console the Middletown South player.

“I went to celebrate with my team, but once I saw her, I knew there would be time to do that later,” she said. “I took it hard last year, so I knew exactly how she felt. I went over and told her that she played great, and that it was an overall great game. It was going back and forth and one team just had to be the one to come out with a win”

It was a selfless and mature act that is worthy of a salute as part of the NJSIAA Sportsmanship Series, presented by JAG Physical Therapy.



Giselle Lizardi celebrating with her teammates after the Central Jersey Group 3 final

Photo credit: Robert Badders Photography



Giselle Lizardi (circled) leaves the Brick Memorial championship celebration to console a Middletown South player

Photo credit: Brick Memorial Girls Soccer

It was also something that didn't surprise Brick Memorial Coach Billy Caruso.

“It was 100 percent in character for her,” he said. “Her dad was my son’s travel baseball coach, so I’ve known her since she was a little girl. She’s the most genuinely nice person. There was even one moment in that game where she came out hard to get to a ball, and before she punted it, she turned to the other girl to ask if she was okay. She’s a great, great kid. And at that moment at the end, she knew exactly how that girl felt. She stopped her celebration to try to help her out.”

The scene also played out Giselle’s own view of the concept of sportsmanship.

“I was hugging a few of my teammates, and then as I was hugging one of my friends who came onto the field, I said ‘Hold on, I’ll come back later.” she recalled.

“At the end of the day, no matter how far you make it in sports, it doesn’t come down to how well you played. They won’t remember an awesome game you played, they’ll remember how well you acted on and off the field,” she said. “That’s very important to me.”



Photo credit: Brick Memorial Girls Soccer