

# Defense carries Episcopal Academy over Notre Dame

There will be a new Pennsylvania Independent Schools Athletic Association champion in field hockey. Episcopal Academy ended Notre Dame's two-year reign Wednesday afternoon.

The third-seeded Churchwomen relied on their defense for a 1-0 semifinal victory over the host Irish.

The win sends EA (13-2-2) into the final for the first time since 2016. The Churchwomen will take on top-seeded Germantown Academy in the championship game Tuesday afternoon (2:30) at Bryn Mawr College. The Patriots defeated fourth-seeded Hill School, 3-1, to earn a spot in the final for the second year in a row.

The Churchwomen, who are ranked No. 21 nationally by Maxfieldhockey.com, are going for their third title in the last five years. EA won back-to-back championships in 2014 and 2015. It will be the third meeting between EA and GA. The teams battled to a 2-2 tie at GA on Sept. 14. GA scored a 3-1 victory at EA on Oct. 12.

Macy Szukics converted a pass from Kelly Smith off a corner with 17 minutes left in the game to break a scoreless tie with ND. The story, though, was EA's defense. Lauren Devletian made three defensive saves. Sofia Acosta had one defensive save and goalie Caroline Kelly stopped 27 shots to hand Notre Dame its first shutout loss of the season.

It was EA's second straight victory over Notre Dame (18-3-1), which is No. 23 in the Maxfieldhockey.com top 25. The Churchwomen downed the Irish, 3-1 at home on Oct. 23. Notre Dame took a 3-2 win at home on Sept. 28.

"It was a hard-fought game," Episcopal Academy coach Gina

Buggy said. "Notre Dame played very well. They possessed the ball nicely and had some dangerous corner opportunities. Our defense was steady and strong, and our goalie played outstanding. Fortunately, we were able to capitalize on a beautiful goal."

Paige Kieft made four saves in goal for Notre Dame. The loss caps a season in which the Irish took down such powerhouse programs as Penn Manor, Villa Maria, Mount St. Joseph's and Downingtown West and was ranked No. 1 in the country for the first two weeks of the season.