

# Hayes' brace creates 'unbelievable' win for Radnor

**HERSHEY** – The operative word for Eliot Hayes Tuesday night was “unbelievable.” Three times on the turf at HersheyPark Stadium, the Radnor midfielder dropped the “u” word, one for each goal the Raiders scored.

And the combination that Hayes offered on his two goals was a perfect blend of the textbook and the exceptional. Some might say, unbelievably so.

Hayes scored twice, including the game-winner in the 76th minute, as Radnor overturned a two-goal deficit to notch a 3-2 win over District 3 champion Cumberland Valley in the first round of the PIAA Class 4A tournament.

The Raiders advance to Saturday's quarterfinals against District 6 champion State College, which toppled Norwin in overtime, 2-1. That game is at a site and time to be determined.

*Radnor goal!! It's Big Eliot Hayes off the corner. Controversially won but Hayes finishes it. 3-2. 4:51 left.*  
[pic.twitter.com/Ynxl0y0Ql5](https://pic.twitter.com/Ynxl0y0Ql5)

– Matthew De George (@sportsdoctormd) [November 7, 2018](#)

Radnor (18-3-2) is in that position because of Hayes. His winner in the 76th was by the book. The 6-4 midfielder rose at the near post to get his head on a perfect Jackson Birtwistle corner-kick delivery to the edge of the six-yard box. With Bobby Hydrisko setting the screen (read: fortuitously whiffing on a back-heel attempt) on the line, Hayes powered the ball through the bodies and into the net.

"All our corners were going high, which I like because I'm taller than mostly everyone," Hayes said. "So I saw the ball come in and I jumped for it and I headed it. It was headed toward the goal and I flicked it in. And Bobby was here to let the ball go past him, which was great because the goalie didn't know what was going on. It was unbelievable."

Though the more consequential goal on the score sheet, Hayes wouldn't have been in position to pound home the winner if not for, well, Hayes at the end of the first half. The Eagles (17-5) were running roughshod over the Raiders early with two goals in a 14-minute span. Dominik Nitecki netted the first on a superb passage of play that included his original shot getting blocked after the Eagles strung together a dozen passes. Then Nitecki played a magical cross-field ball from the right wing to the left channel for younger brother Patrick to sting a shot against the grain and make it 2-0 in the 27th.

But Radnor regrouped. It switched up its midfield formation to flatten out with three central mids, stopping Cumberland Valley from picking its way up the field level by level. And it summoned the toughness that results from the crucible of playbacks to nab District 1's fifth and final states bid.

"We're dogs. We come back, we fight," Hydrisko said. "We know what it's like to come back, so we never lose hope."

Hayes helped that effort three minutes from half with a picture-perfect volley against the run of play. Peter Miller walled off his marker and laid the ball off to Hayes to take an uncertain touch, then blast a volley over Matt Zambetti.

The difference at halftime between a 2-0 hole and a 2-1 deficit was monstrous.

"It was crucial," Hyrdisko said. "I said to the team, we needed a goal before half, and he came through."

"It showed that we were in the game," Hayes said. "Two-

nothing, if they get a goal, it's 3-0 and that's pretty much game over if we come out slow in the second half. But that one goal boosts us. We know we can score, we know that was our first shot on target, so we know that shots will lead to goals, and we took that and ran with it in the second half."

*Henry Cooke a save off the second shot from a free kick. Still 2-2. 20 minutes left. CV pushing hard again.*  
[pic.twitter.com/QgheNkmM75](https://pic.twitter.com/QgheNkmM75)

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They reinforced the point three minutes after the break. Bennett Mueller, the 6-4 center back, got a head on Birtwistle's corner that Zambetti spilled, but Hydrisko planted himself on the doorstep to toe it home. From 2-0 to 2-2, just like that.

Play evened out from there, with both teams chasing the winner in regulation. Henry Cooke, who came in for the second half, made four saves, none particularly challenging. And Radnor massed for another challenge from a set piece.

When they got it, Hayes obliged. And the result was, you guessed it ...

"We drive two hours out to HersheyPark Stadium and play a team that just won their district title and to come back from 2-0 down, it's great for the school," Hayes said. "It's unbelievable for the team."