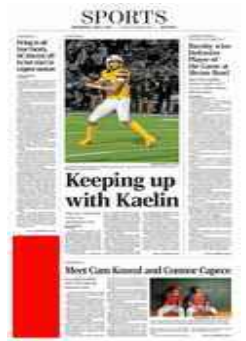


# Souerdyke, Macke win MVPs in Class A SONE Senior Soccer Showcase

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## PREP SOCCER

### Souerdyke, Macke win MVPs in Class A SONE Senior Soccer Showcase

Papio's Watkins completes long road

**PETER BURTNETT**  
The Times

Laina Souerdyke and Colin Macke both scored a brace and won MVP in the girls and boys games in the Class A Special Olympics Nebraska Soccer Senior Showcase at Ralston on Saturday, June 3.

In the girls game, Souerdyke scored 11 minutes before halftime, and added her second within the first five minutes of the second half. Scoring and being able to play *with* tough opponents as opposed to against was a welcome change.

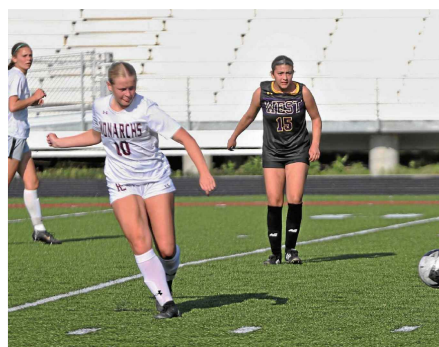
"Honestly, it was really exciting to be on like the other side of some of these girls instead of having to play against them," the Papillion-La Vista senior said with a laugh. "Super great group of girls, a lot of them are on my club team. So it was it wasn't brand new!"

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PETER BURTNETT PHOTOS, THE TIMES

Sarpy County was on display in the SONE Soccer Senior Showcase at Ralston on Saturday, June 3, 2023. From left to right: Wesley Eidenmiller (Bellevue East), Brett Perkins (Gretna), Donovan Williams (Omaha Bryan) and Cole Anderson (Papillion-La Vista South).



Papillion-La Vista's Laina Souerdyke (left) passes while Bellevue West's McKenna Blackburn looks on during the Class A girls Soccer Senior Showcase at Ralston on Saturday, June 3.



Gretna senior Anna Harris on the ball during the Class A girls Soccer Senior Showcase at Ralston on Saturday, June 3.



Papillion-La Vista South's Averie Hike in possession during the Class A girls Soccer Senior Showcase at Ralston on Saturday, June 3.

## Soccer

From 1

The familiarity was an important piece of Souerdyke's team — sponsored by Bland & Associates — winning the match 4-1. On the other side, Gretna three-peat state champions Ava Makovicka and Anna Harris suffering their first defeat in a Gretna uniform (each player wore their school's jersey for the last time) since the 2021 district final defeat to Millard North. McKenna Blackburn (Bellevue West) was also on the Cardscapes team, while Averie Hike (Papillion-La Vista South) added an assist in the Bland & Associates win and Sydney McManigal (Bellevue East) and Leslie Diaz (Omaha Bryan).

"Knowing how to play off of each other is huge. Because I think half of that club team anyways was new this year. So we had we already got over that bump of trying to figure out how each other played. And

just being able to show up as a team rather than a bunch of individual players is going to put us ahead."

The matches — which also included Class B games on Friday with three Plattview Trojans in the girls game (Eve Drummond, Ashley Lynch, Olivia Kohl) and two Omaha Gross Cougars (Sage Wehrbein, Cece Cronin), while Ty Orwig (The Platte) and Justin Campos and Owen Nolte (Omaha Gross) played in the boys game — raises money for Special Olympics Nebraska, with all proceeds going to the foundation.

"Hearing about the fundraisers that they're doing. Like it was great to hear. I was more than happy to be a part of it. It's a great cause they're doing great things here and it's soccer. I love soccer. No matter what, it's just more playing."

Winning MVP to cap a journey that started with recovering from an ACL tear and finished with the Monarchs' first trip to state since 2019 gave Souerdyke pride in her-

self.

"An award like that like makes me feel really proud of myself especially after coming back from an injury in this be like my first real season. I get it makes me feel really good and makes me feel really proud."

Even with goals that she "wasn't sure how" she would reach, Souerdyke added that her teammates — both at Papio and in club soccer — drove her to finish strong.

In the boys game, Sarpy County provided the fireworks in an explosive first half, led by Macke with a pair of goals and an assist to give his team a 3-1 lead at halftime.

"After a season like this, it's great. One last time (in a Titans jersey), I had a teammate with me, felt great."

That teammate was Cole Anderson, who headed home a goal in the second half as Specialtees Screenprinting cruised to a 6-2 win.

"It just marked a journey with us, being together (in) middle school,

coming up to the high school to train with the guys. Then finally it's our senior year and to end it with both of us getting a goal in the final game was amazing."

Macke, who will be attending Midland University, was joined on the scoresheet by not only Anderson, but by fellow Sarpy County players Brett Perkins and Tommy Sowinski (Gretna). With Sarpy players contributing on five of the eight goals, the sport in the county is on the come up.

"It's on the come up you know, great players are coming and everyone's just developing in the area and a lot of great players are gonna come up."

Another senior who has been on a journey is Papillion-La Vista goalkeeper Ethan Watkins. After missing the first half of the Monarchs season with a hyperextended knee, the Hastings commit returned to the field and earned a spot in the senior showcase, which was a goal of his since watching the showcase

as a freshman and sophomore.

"My love for the game kind of drove me to try and like push through rehab and try and get better because, I mean, it wasn't fun. I've done the same thing on both knees now," Watkins said. "So it wasn't fun, but I just wanted to get back out there and start playing with my boys. Like my high school is my family."

While on the bench, the Monarchs leader balanced helping out by coaching without taking away from head and assistant coaches.

"While I was off the field, I was trying to try to keep the boys as up as I could on the bench, trying to do my best to help coach but not step in the way of our other coaches. And then when I got back on the field, just kind of leading from the back to the front as the goalie."

Rounding out the Sarpy County participants were Paco Barajas and Donovan Williams (Omaha Bryan), Curtis Oberg (Gretna) and Wesley Eidenmiller (Bellevue East).