

Gauchos edge Bruins, capture men's soccer crown

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CBS SportsLine.com wire reports



ST. LOUIS -- UC-Santa Barbara coach Tim Vom Steeg started thinking about next year after the Gauchos started off slowly this season. His team had other ideas.



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Nick Perera had a goal and an assist and unseeded UC-Santa Barbara beat UCLA 2-1 Sunday to win the school's second national title and finish off a surprising postseason run.

The Gauchos began the season 7-6 and dropped some games that Vom Steeg thought his team should have won. He told his players to prepare for major changes if the season did not turn around immediately and the Gauchos (17-7-1) responded by losing just one of their final 12 games.

"I don't exaggerate," Vom Steeg said. "We were really done with this group. We thought this group wouldn't have what it takes to win a league championship, much less win a league playoff game, much less win a national

championship."

The title came less than a day after UC-Santa Barbara played 110 scoreless minutes in its semifinal victory over Wake Forest. The Gauchos, who won 4-3 in penalty kicks to advance to the championship game, showed no signs of fatigue against eighth-seeded UCLA, which won at UC-Santa Barbara 3-1 on Oct. 10.

Perera banged the Gauchos' first shot off the left post and into the UCLA goal to make it 1-0 less than three minutes into the game. Tyler Rosenlund carried the ball deep into the box before passing it back to an unmarked Perera, who had plenty of time to settle it and take the shot.

"I was standing right in the middle of the goal," Perera said. "So, it would have probably been harder



Eric Avila's goal gives UCSB a 2-0 lead in the second half.

(AP)

Mike Zaher. Defender Alfonso Motagalvan also knocked a ball headed into the goal aside to secure the victory.

The win gave UC-Santa Barbara its first national title since the school won the men's water polo championship in 1979.

"I know UCLA was going for their 100th national championship," Vom Steeg said. "For us this is a big deal. This is a big deal for our town. It's a big deal for our university."

UC-Santa Barbara finished with 15 shots, but only six on goal. UCLA had six on goal in its 11 attempts. Bruins coach Jorge Salcedo said not only was his team overconfident coming into the game because of its earlier victory over the Gauchos but it also played with little passion until the final 15 minutes.

"Today, was a bad day for us," he said. "We didn't play well. It was definitely bad timing to have a poor performance."

The two Southern California teams played four days after the first winter storm hit the St. Louis area bringing with it heavy snow, ice and freezing temperatures and forcing the postponement of the semifinals. The gametime temperature for the championship was 23.

AP NEWS

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to miss than it would have been to score."

The Gauchos took a 2-0 lead in the second half. Perera collected a pass in the UCLA box from Bryan Byrne and flicked the ball to an open Eric Avila, who slid it into the bottom left corner of the goal.

The Bruins (14-6-4) tried to rally in the final 15 minutes. Jason Leopoldo received a ball deep into the Gauchos' box in traffic and slipped it into the net to make it 2-1 with 11:04 left.

Less than two minutes after the goal, UC-Santa Barbara goalie Kyle Reynish had to dive to his right to tip aside a low shot from