



Monday, November 18, 2002

OU men capture first Mid-Con title

The top seeded Oakland men's soccer team scored three goals in the second half en route to a 3-0 win over second seed Western Illinois to capture their first Mid-Continent Conference Tournament title Nov. 17 at Oakland Field. They also earn an automatic berth to the NCAA Men's Soccer Tournament. This marks the first time the host team has won the conference tournament.

This will be the team's first appearance in the NCAA Men's Soccer Tournament, and the first time an OU men's team is competing at an NCAA post-season tournament since the university moved to Division I athletics four years ago.

Tournament MVP, Shahar Ktovim (Holon, Israel) scored his second game-winning goal of the tournament in the 48th minute to help Oakland earn the win. The Golden Grizzlies (10-7-3) outshot Western Illinois 6-2 in the first half, but were unable to put any of their shots on goal heading into the wind.

With the wind at their back in the second half, the Golden Grizzlies blew by the Leathernecks with their three-goal performance. Philip Braathen (Oslo, Norway) set up Ktovim's header off of a cross from the left side. Ktovim beat Western Illinois goalkeeper Chris Frenz to the near post for his sixth goal of the season.

After assisting on the first goal, Braathen added the insurance goal in the 81st minute. Frenz appeared to make the save on Braathen's shot from 20 yards out, but it proved to be too much for him to handle as the ball escaped Frenz and trickled in for the score.

Frenz's goalkeeping woes continued six minutes later when Mark Thomas (Holywell, Wales) scored Oakland's final goal. Frenz had a beat on Thomas' shot to the near post from 10 yards out but once again could not hold on as the ball filtered into the goal. Oakland goalkeeper Jeff Wiese (Omaha, Neb.) made some big saves in the final 10 minutes of the game to preserve his shutout and got some help from his defense a couple times when they cleared the ball off of the goal line.

Wiese made six saves for his sixth shutout of the season, while Frenz had four for the Leathernecks. Oakland outshot Western Illinois 17-10 for the match.

"This team has never given up all season," said Oakland head coach Gary Parsons after the game. "We kept up the pressure all game. In the first half, we were going against the wind. All we wanted to do in the first half was come away with the tie. In the second half, we wanted to play a more high-pressure game since we had the wind at our back. We were able to take advantage of this and it got us three goals."

Along with being named Tournament MVP Ktovim also was selected to the All-Tournament Team. Also named to the All-Tournament Team were teammates Ryan Rzepka (Novi, Mich.), Anders Vollen (Oslo, Norway) and Chris Edwards (Glasgow, Scotland).

This is the first time the Golden Grizzlies have captured an outright regular season title as well as a Mid-Con Tournament Championship. They now are waiting to see who they will face in the first round of the NCAA Tournament.

SUMMARY

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