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# Toros stick to script, eye storybook finish

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By Matt Lopez, Correspondent  
Posted: 11/23/2008 04:19:11 AM PST



Following a formula that has guided the Cal State Dominguez Hills men's soccer team all season proved to be the difference for the Toros again Saturday night in the NCAA Division II quarterfinals.

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CSDH (19-2-4) once again rode the shoulders of its aggressive defense, which Coach Joe Flanagan calls the backbone of his team, and sprinkled in a couple of opportunistic goals to beat Midwestern (Texas) State, 2-1, at Toro Stadium.

The win over Midwestern State (19-3) means the Toros can start booking airline tickets to Florida after advancing to the NCAA semifinals in Tampa.

"It's a great feeling to get back there," Flanagan said. "That's been our goal and I've always said that once you've been there, getting back is one of the hardest things to do."

CSDH's defense asserted itself early and controlled the midfield as it has done throughout the playoffs and for much of the regular season.

Goalkeeper Miguel Benitez was five minutes away from his third consecutive shutout of the playoffs before a goal by Nick Auditore in the 85th minute.

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"I had to bounce back right after that and not give up another one," Benitez said.

Midwestern State finished with eight shots on goal but was unable to capitalize thanks to CSDH's stingy defense and Benitez, a former Bishop Montgomery star who recorded seven saves and drew strong praise.

"He had a great night," Flanagan said. "He was the key for us tonight. He has been a

\_\_\_\_\_ difference maker all season."

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\_\_\_\_\_ With the teams locked in a scoreless tie at halftime, CSDH got on the board in the 48th minute when Jordan Rover scored off an assist from Scott Mariano and Chris Perkins.

Rover returned the favor to Mariano in the 63rd minute of the game when he sent a pass from the deep right side of the field to Mariano who easily found the net.

"The defense overcommitted and I just saw the ball waiting for me in the middle of

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the field," Mariano said.

The NCAA semifinals will take place Thursday, Dec.4 and the Toros will face either Tusculum of Tennessee or Tampa, Fla.

CSDH has not been to the semifinals since 2001, when it was defeated by Tampa in the championship game, trying to defend its NCAA championship from the previous season.

It will be Flanagan's third trip to the semifinals but the first for this group of players.

"It's a feeling of euphoria to get there," Benitez said.

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