

Two Bobcats Lead Dynamo To Title

Written by Whitney Noble
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Carolina Dynamo coach Marc Nicholls admits his team doesn't always take the easiest route to a win, but it will find a way to get there. That was the case in

the final of the inaugural U.S. Adult Soccer Association National Amateur Championship at Macpherson Stadium.

The Dynamo dominated the first half, but could only manage one goal. FC Sonic (Pa.) scored late in the match to tie it. After a scoreless overtime, Carolina outscored the Sonic 3-2 in penalty kicks to come away with the championship.

"I think we played fantastic in the first half," Nicholls said. "You look at our performance and it wasn't up to our standards in the second half, but a lot of credit goes to (FC Sonic) for that.

"The word to describe us so far is resilient. We never seem to do things easy. I wish sometimes we would take a more comfortable path."

Dynamo goalkeeper Thomas Rusling, who plays at Lees-McRae, made five stops during the match and came up bigger in the shootout by saving three penalty kicks.

"As the keeper you can be the hero, but you can't be the villain," Rusling said. "It's not a true PK, so the pressure's off. It's guesswork really. You just pick your corner and go for it."

James Smith, who also plays at Lees-McRae, converted the decisive penalty kick.

"I made up my mind (the direction of the shot) when I was warming up," Smith said. "I never changed my mind and struck it hard enough. When there's a trophy up for grabs, you want to win. You've just got to win the game no matter how you do it; whether it's regular time, overtime or today with PKs."

After constantly attacking and possessing the ball early in the first half, the Dynamo scored the first goal in the 28th minute. Hakan Ilhan sent a high pass into the box. Alex Martinez controlled the ball, took a couple of dribbles to his left and launched a bullet of a shot into the lower left corner.

FC Sonic tied the score in the 84th minute. On the Pennsylvania club's third straight corner kick, there was a scramble for the ball in front of the goal and Tucker Sandercock converted a short pass from Tom Mustac to make it 1-1.

"They pressed us and took us out of our rhythm," Nicholls said. "You could see their equalizer was coming and they deserved. At that point, you say how much of a momentum-swing is that. But I thought we gathered ourselves quite well in overtime. I was disappointed it went to penalties, although we have this fantastic history in penalties."

Photo Courtesy: Thomas Rusling, LMC Athletics