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Panthers Settle For Fourth In CIS Championship Heartbreaker



Josh Lewis
Sports Reporter

Hollywood couldn't have scripted a more electrifying finish to Sunday's bronze medal game of the 2005 Canadian Interuniversity Sport soccer championships. The Trinity Western Spartans needed penalty kicks to defeat host team the UPEI Panthers 2-1. However the game's real story occurred in the 90th minute when Panthers keeper Shane Etchegary drove home the tying goal, sending the home crowd into a frenzy.

UPEI was awarded with a free kick in the game's dying moments and coach Lewis Page gave Etchegary the green light to join the play in a desperate attempt to tie the game. The move paid off as the kick was blocked, but UPEI maintained control and the keeper buried the ball behind Trinity goalie Chris Cecil to send the game into extra time. At least, that was what everyone thought. It was then announced that due to time restrictions the game would proceed directly to the shootout.

The hosts seemed destined for victory after Etchegary's miraculous goal, but it was not in the cards on this day. Panthers striker Ryan Anstey, fresh off CIS Player of the Year honours, took UPEI's first penalty and, shockingly, missed the net. TWU would score on its first four shots, and UPEI's fate was sealed when its fourth shooter, Jamie Marchbank, could not solve a diving Cecil.

Trinity forward Jason Flick opened the scoring in the 27th minute on a low shot to the left corner after a defensive breakdown by UPEI. The teams were evenly matched in the first half, with Trinity having a slight edge in possession and UPEI squandering several



Keeper Shane Etchegary is comforted by a teammate after UPEI's 2-1 shootout loss to Trinity Western.

Photo: Liam McKenna

scoring opportunities. The Panthers inability to finish would cost them the bronze medal. Anstey in particular was unable to pull the trigger on a handful of chances.

The second half included more of the same. Spectators were in for a treat as both teams had opportunities but could not find the back of the net. All hope had been just about lost when Etchegary delivered in the clutch with his heroic goal. The keeper was selected as UPEI's player of the game for his efforts.

What makes his effort even more astounding is that it marked the second time in two days that a keeper had scored a game-tying goal in the final seconds and both were surrendered by Trinity goalkeeper Cecil. Saturday's semi-final between Trinity Western and the Toronto Varsity Blues was sent to extra time when Toronto keeper Luciano Lombardi scored off of a corner kick with just seconds of injury time remaining. The

Blues won that game in a shootout to advance to the final.

UPEI had been relegated to the bronze medal game after a hard-fought 1-0 loss to the UBC Thunderbirds Saturday evening. Brian Reems' goal in the 65th minute would provide all the offense his team would need in a match dominated by the Thunderbirds. Keeper Srdjan Djekanovic secured the win with several outstanding saves in the second half, including a diving stop on a bullet by UPEI's Matt Thomson.

The Panthers advanced to Saturday's semi-final after a thrilling 3-2 victory over the Carleton Ravens. Martien Hakkers was the hero that day, heading in a corner kick in the 75th minute to break the tie and ignite the home crowd of nearly 1,000 fans. Anstey added two goals for the host side.

The loss closed the book on a fairytale season for UPEI's Anstey, who played his final game of CIS eligibility.

