

Triple crown

CSUN wins third consecutive WCHC title with 4-3 win over Long Beach State

ARTESIA, Calif. - In the end it came down to a one goal game yet again between CSUN and Long Beach State Sunday but this time the Matadors came out on top 4-3 to win their third consecutive West Coast Hockey Conference championship.

Freshman Zach Carnes scored the game winner at 9:12 of the third period during 4-on-4 play. Junior Quentin Abaya toe dragged into the slot from the right circle but lost the puck. Carnes was right there though to chip it past Tyler Gealy.

The Matadors have now claimed three straight conference titles for the first time in the club's 48-year history.

The game was a classic back-and-forth affair. Abaya opened the scoring at 15:49 of the first with a beautiful wrist shot top shelf goal from the left circle. Long Beach State answered back 1:30 later when Ryan Osterkamp forced a turnover deep in the Matadors end and beat senior Vincent Sepe with a wrist shot.

CSUN battled back from two deficits in the second. Luke Miller gave the 49ers their first lead at 17:16 with a wrist shot from the right circle. Just over five minutes later senior Eli Berengut tied the game at two with a wrist shot on the power play from the middle point. Long Beach State got the lead back at 7:36 when Austin Stanovich buried a rebound. But Berengut continued his monster game tying the score at three with 2:38 left in the middle frame. Berengut stole the puck in the high slot, skated in on a shorthanded breakaway and made no mistake. It was Berengut's team leading fourth shorthanded goal this season and his ninth career one.

Sepe earned the victory for the third consecutive year in the WCHC Final. His record now stands at 6-2 this season.

The Matadors won the special teams battle finishing 1-for-4 on the power play while Long Beach State went 0-for-4.

CSUN has tied Northern Arizona's WCHC record of four straight championship game appearances and three straight titles.

Five of the last six meetings against Long Beach State have been one goal games. The 49ers took both matchups in the regular season 4-3 at the Simi Valley Iceoplex and 3-2 at Lakewood Ice.

CSUN now awaits its fate as the final ranking of the season will come out on Thursday. The Matadors hope to qualify for the West Regional Tournament for the second time in three seasons.