

SAC Saints upend UCC Blues 10-2 in CISAA Lacrosse Semi-Final

Anselmo Rego fired five goals and Brendan Wright added four more to lead the SAC Saints to a decisive 10-2 CISAA semi-final victory over the UCC Blues at the Yuill Family Sports Complex on Wednesday afternoon.

Remarkably, Rego scored his five goals in the first half before being ejected early in the third quarter for what SAC Head Coach Joe Commisso described as "back-to-back 2-minute penalties. Subsequently, that is too many penalties in field lacrosse."

It was, indeed, a penalty-filled affair. After UCC's sniper Luke Boyden cut SAC's lead to five at 7:50 of the third quarter, the Blues enjoyed a four-man advantage on a 6-on-2 power play and the game started to shift in the visitors' favour. Coach Commisso called his team's spirited defensive stand early in the second half the highlight of the contest.

"The best aspect of today's win was killing a 6-on-2 penalty. We were four men down and Campbell Ellis played incredibly in goal. Ellis's reflexive skills were evident in two-point blank saves that preserved his team's 7-2 lead during the Saints' quarter of chronic shorthandedness. In addition to applauding the acrobatics of his netminder, Coach Commisso praised the efforts of "Nic Belmonte who was 100% in the draw circle" and "the goal-scoring of Rego, Wright, and Ferrante."

Belmonte, who played aggressively in the midfield from the opening whistle, was also tossed from the hard-hitting contest in the fourth quarter with the Saints leading 8-2. Coach Commisso explained the reason for his key face-off man's banishment to the sidelines: "Belmonte was ejected for too many penalties, as well."

By contrast, Brendan Wright managed to stay on the field for the entire game and continued his productive season for the Saints by scoring four goals—two in the first half and two in the second half. Nick Ferrante tallied SAC's tenth goal with six minutes remaining in the game to provide the margin of victory.

SAC opened the scoring three minutes into the game when Rego evaded two UCC defenders and beat Blues goaltender Nik Kindbom to set the tone for the afternoon.

After Treyson Santos Stewart tied it 1-1 on a nice give-and-go by the Blues, Wright's howitzer from fifteen feet bulged the upper corner of the UCC net and restored the Saints' lead.

Rego scored his second of the afternoon in the last minute of the first quarter and collected his hat trick three minutes into the second quarter on a spinning, sensational individual effort to give SAC a 4-1 lead. Ninety seconds later, Wright's shooting acumen was on full display during his second goal. Wright's submarine shot found the back of the net and compelled UCC's Head Coach Max Perren—who also serves as the Head Coach of Team Ontario's U18 Lacrosse team—to call a timeout to stem the rising red tide. At that point in the game, SAC had outshot UCC 21-5 and only the heroics of Blues netminder Kindbom kept the game close.

With 2:25 to go in the first half, Rego elevated at the edge of the UCC crease to cash in his fourth goal to increase SAC's lead to 6-1. Less than two minutes later, he struck again with a nice bounce shot that got behind Kindbom to stake the Saints to a commanding 7-1 half-time lead.

After his team's semi-final victory, Coach Commisso commented on the keys to both defend his team's 2022 championship and beat St. Michael's College in the 2023 CISAA title game in Toronto: "We need to play physical and communicate on defense in order to win. They have a ton of skilled scorers, but we have really beaten ourselves on mistakes in the past two league games against SMC. We are geared up for a hard-nosed championship game at St. Mike's!?"

By Jim Stewart