



# Harvard-Westlake girls' soccer wins Div. II final over Beckman

By Erik Boal Staff Writer

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DOWNEY - It was Richard Simms' birthday Saturday night, so Donilyn Hunter-Sallustio and Haley Boysen started the festivities early and gave the Harvard-Westlake of Studio City girls' soccer coach a present he's waited five years to unwrap: a Southern Section championship plaque.

Hunter-Sallustio scored 51 seconds into the Div. II final against No. 3 Beckman of Irvine and Boysen produced the deciding goal in the 29th minute, leading the top-seeded Wolverines to a 2-1 victory at Warren High and their first title since sharing the Div. IV crown in 2002.

Although Harvard-Westlake (21-1-3) won the Southern California Div. II regional title last season, Simms hadn't had much to celebrate in his first two Southern Section finals appearances, suffering a 2-1 loss to Upland in the 2006 Div. I final before surrendering a first-minute goal and falling to Saugus by the identical score in last year's Div. II championship.

But the clutch efforts of Hunter-Sallustio and Boysen, combined with a few timely second-half saves from Reba Magier and the tenacious

defense of Leah Merkle and KC Cord ensured Harvard-Westlake wouldn't experience similar disappointment again.

"We knew we had to just go out and do it. We had no other choice. Like Doni said, 'Refuse to lose,'" Merkle said. "You could tell everybody really wanted it. We started off really fast and we had so much adrenaline and that just kept pushing us and allowed us to play our game."

Beckman (20-3-1), making its first appearance in a title match, scored the first postseason goal against Harvard-Westlake when Autumn Altamirano placed a shot in the upper right corner in the 32nd minute. Unfortunately for the Patriots, the damage had already been done.

"When two seniors score in a final, you can't ask for much more," Simms said. "It was a typical Doni goal, just getting a toe on the ball and finding a way to get it in, and it was a typical Haley goal as well, because there was nothing typical about it. It was a sensational goal. She stepped up in a big situation and led this team and that's what makes her such a special player."

Alex Venegas took a pass down the right sideline off the opening kickoff and crossed the ball into the penalty area, which skipped past Katie Speidel before landing at the feet of Hunter-Sallustio, whose right-footed shot spun inside the right post while fans were still filing in.

"It seemed like it was going in slow motion. I

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was like, 'Just go in.' But I would've never expected that. It happened out of nowhere," said Hunter-Sallustio, who returned to the lineup Feb. 10 after being sidelined with a partially torn ACL in her left knee since Dec. 18.

"Last year, we thought we had it. We didn't expect to lose. But we had that experience and we knew there was no way that was going to happen again."

Boysen, a USC signee, scored after receiving a pass from Cami Chapus, beating two defenders and drilling a shot inside the far post for a 2-0 lead.

"We definitely needed to win this to not have that gap in the history (of our program)," Boysen said. "It feels amazing to know that we'll have that banner hanging in our gym forever so I can always come back and see it."

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