

"The quiet assassin"

The story of the 1979 SIU Edwardsville soccer team

By Allan J. Lewis



DECEMBER 7, 1979:

There is a different feel to the celebration taking place as the sun sets on an 80 degree evening poolside at the hotel hosting the Southern Illinois University Edwardsville soccer team. It is different in many ways from the nights the team had spent throughout the season at places like Spanky's bar and Stagger Inn in Edwardsville two days prior to each game and again following victories. This could very well be the final social gathering the team enjoys together.

One game remains on the schedule. A National Championship game.

Earlier in the afternoon, SIUE defeated Penn State 2-1 in the days first NCAA Division I soccer national semifinal. Tim Guelker and Dave Hummert scored goals for the Cougars, a team loaded with talent from the St. Louis area. In fact, every SIUE starter hails from the Gateway city. Dan Canter tallied for the Nittany Lions in the losing effort in front of 4,500 fans at Tampa Bay's three year old 71,000 seat football stadium, known as "The Sombrero" to the locals. Most of the fans were admitted to the stadium for free due to lack of interest in this year's Final Four. Hummert's game-winning goal came as a surprise in the 75th minute of competition, from 22 yards out, connecting with the upper-right reaches of the net.

"We were the better team in the second half, they were better in the first," Penn State coach Walter Bahr was quoted as saying, despite Hummert's late tally nullifying his remarks.

Later in the day, fans watched a Clemson Tigers team, one with a rich soccer history accomplished in just 12 years of existence ease past Columbia University 4-0. The Cougars have a day off tomorrow before challenging those Tigers for the championship Sunday.

The Tigers had won the Atlantic Coast Conference eight times this decade. This is their third trip to the final four.

Although SIUE, a 22 year old university is fairly unknown nationally, its soccer program has thrived in recent years. In 1972, it captured the Division II National Championship.

In 1973, they made their way to Division I, reaching the second round of the NCAA tournament. In 1975, the school made it all the way to the Division I championship, only to lose 4-0 to San Francisco. SIUE avenged that loss, beating the Defending champion Dons 4-0 in the third round of this year's tournament. They reached the second round in 1976.

Most of the current roster was here in 1977. SIUE finished third in the nation. In 1978, a year Don Ebert said ended with his team "blowing it," and had it "stolen from them," SIUE lost a second-round contest 2-0 to Indiana.

Soccer is the only sport SIUE plays at the Division I level, representing Southern Illinois University as a whole. The original campus in Carbondale does not play soccer.

"We were *damn* good," Ebert said

Everyone had a feeling 1979 would be different. This was the year SIUE was going to put it all together. They were finally poised to win a championship. The national media does not decide champions. This is the player's job.

"It wasn't going to happen in 79,'" Ebert said. "The seeds were sown in 77.'" "

You may have seen palm trees sway along with a light breeze. Some of the players are diving into the pool as Smoke fills the air from a Weber grill. A potential soundtrack could have been Tom Petty's newest tape, *Damn the Torpedoes*, although even *the losers* would not prove to be a suitable soundtrack for the weekend. With the day off tomorrow to prepare for the championship, Coach Bob Guelker has allowed his team the evening to unwind. This is a tame celebration after the relief brought on by SIUE's earlier win. Cans of Busch and Pabst are cracked in moderation as teammates and family members take the time to converse poolside.

"You know *this is the last time we are going to ever be able to do something like this*," Ebert says to his friend and teammate Jeff Cacciatore.

"Yeah," Cacciatore whips back as he takes a sip from his beer.

"We have something special here. We just have to finish what we started," Ebert says. "You know, this team is going to blow up next season. A lot of us are going to the pros, so this is the only chance we have."

Although Bob Guelker has not yet explicitly been informed, Ebert, just a junior was dead-set on taking his game to the professional level. Pro scouts from the North American Soccer League have been present throughout the season at SIUE's games to get a glimpse of Ebert, Hummert, Dave Hundelt, Tim Clark, Tim Guelker, Bob Bozada and Joe Howe. Although many of the team's players still had collegiate eligibility at their disposal, Ebert and many others knew this was it for SIUE. Cacciatore is one of the few seniors on the team, but he is also being looked at as a professional prospect.

On a lesser team, any one of these players would be considered a superstar.

Ebert is SIUE's. The forward is a member of the United States Olympic team. He was informed Monday the New York Cosmos were planning on taking him with the first overall pick in the NASL draft. Whether the championship resulted in a win or loss, this was a special opportunity Ebert had to take advantage of. He felt guilty about not finishing college right away, but it was something he had to do. The draft takes place the day after the final.

This was a tight-knit team both on and off the field. They would push each other: whether to score a goal or to score a girl at a Spanky's on those nights 20 teammates took the town together.

"We were 20 everything. Everything we did was all 20 of us," Ebert said.

College and a love for soccer were not the only things this team shared. They were friends, some having been so longer than others. Being an exclusively St. Louisan outfit, many of the players shared a longer history, whether playing together or against one another from the pee-wee level, to club teams and in high school.

Even in celebration, the Cougars had to look ahead. The underlying factor remained. They would not be together like this ever again as players. "This bittersweet moment," as

Cacciatore called it was scheduled to culminate with a soccer game in less than 48 hours. The near-misses had to end with some resolve.

DECEMBER 9, 1979:

The sun has dawned on Tampa Stadium. Yesterday, SIUE spent the day resting, reviewing film and preparing a game-plan to oppose the Clemson Tigers.

Cacciatore had heard it all week. "Clemson has players from all corners of the world. How could a team with players based in St. Louis compete against the entire continent of Africa?" "There is no way they can compete against such an international power." "Clemson overwhelmed Columbia and SIUE barely escaped Penn State." As valid as the arguments were against them, the Cougars just needed to find a way to take care of their business, much left unfinished. At 5 foot 6, Cacciatore knew all too well about adversity in sports. As the little guy, he had to prove himself at every level. He said he "would not stop."

SIUE did not view itself as overmatched. In fact, they would go into the championship game feeling as though they were favored all along.

Guelker was not big on giving pre-game speeches. His role on the team was more as a role-model. A proven champion. A father. Guelker had coached five national championship teams at SIUE's biggest rival, Saint Louis University before taking his job 20 miles to the East.

The team listened intently as Guelker told his Cougars to just "take care of business." He said "Even though Clemson has the better players, we were number one for a while this season. It is time to prove yourselves."

Guelker was not a "rah-rah" type of coach. That approach would not play well with the very unique group SIUE had. He was a professional manager. While most college coaches take an in-your-face approach, this was not Guelker's style. He realized the talent on Clemson's side. Perhaps more importantly, he realized what was at his disposal. In the pre-game, Guelker told his team to get on them early. Make Clemson "bitch and moan." SIUE was already prepared for

what was to come. A powerful speech would go against the philosophy Guelker had developed for success at SIUE.

The team was reminded of the successful season they have had.

18 wins, two losses and three ties.

There was no secret formula. SIUE has to continue the solid plan that has brought them here.

Guelker had a great eye for recruiting talent. He was a soccer genius and instilled confidence furthering the talent of his teams. He knew how to assemble a group and get through the day-to-day aspects of running one. This particular team was on cruise control. Much of Guelker's work was done ahead of time. Everyone believed in the man because of his history. His calmness trickled down on his players. He was caring and believable. His thoroughness in approaching the game went as far as planning pre-game meals.

Much of the on-field preparation for SIUE was actually driven by Assistant Coach Rick Benben, who played at the school from 1969 through 1972. Benben was a man who related to the players on a more personal level, while providing additional counsel.

Perhaps this is why it didn't come as much of a disadvantage when Guelker had to miss the team's first two games of the season on a long West Coast swing while recovering from triple-bypass-heart surgery.

Benben also exhibited confidence in his team. While on the opening trip, which included games against UCLA, Santa Clara and San Francisco, he was interviewed by KMOX, and told its 50,000 watt listening audience what to expect from the Cougars. "We have a team capable of winning a championship." Although Benben's reasoning was questioned at the time, SIUE's play has come through to this point.

Now is the time for this point to continue.

Fans are shuffling into Tampa Stadium. As the case was yesterday, about 4,500 file in, putting the stadium at just about 8 percent capacity. The national anthem plays as both teams line up filled with a cluster of different emotions. Today is the championship. There is nervousness.

Confidence. Excitement. Knowing this will be the last college soccer game you will ever play. The towering press box of the Sombrero creates a shadow over the players from the 25 yard line to the East 40. It is a sun-soaked December afternoon in South Florida. Temperatures have peaked in the mid-80s.

"Good afternoon and welcome to sunny Tampa Bay, Florida. Today's matchup pits Southern Illinois University Edwardsville 18-2 against the Clemson Tigers, 16-1-2. Both of these teams have been a force nationally throughout the season. SIUE's two losses had at one point dropped them out of the national rankings, although they have found a way to return and get this far into the tournament. Every slip this team made was really criticized. They don't garner the same respect as their opponents," a radio broadcast may have beckoned.

Conversations throughout the Sombrero's tan bleachers move along quite the same. No one is really giving this team a shot. "Why does SIUE deserve to be here?" "Where is this suburbia known as Edwardsville?" Nobody is for certain. As Clemson is, the Cougars are here. They hope to obtain a position forever engrained in lore. A win would mean a banner high in the NCAA's Indianapolis Hall of Champions. Ralph Korte Stadium in Edwardsville would be tagged a "field of dreams." This game will either result in shock or heartbreak for the Cougars, who do not doubt themselves. After all, SIUE has played a tough schedule. They have played in places like Busch Stadium in St. Louis. A relatively empty Tampa Stadium does not intimidate them in the least. They have six players who will inevitably end up being drafted into professional leagues. For this team, a name is the only thing holding it back. That name, Southern Illinois University Edwardsville is something they set out to make known on this very field. The lack of attention is something SIUE is familiar with. It is something they have had to play through all season long.

The venue for today's match does not impress SIUE's players as much as one would figure. It is a relatively new stadium, and home to the NFL's Tampa Bay Buccaneers. Boundaries and yard-markers remain evident on the field from the 9-5 Buccaneers last home contest, a 14-0 loss to the Chicago Bears in front of 69,508 last Sunday. Although it is a nice stadium, still relatively young, it's suitability for soccer is questionable. A 6 foot wall

separates the crowd from the field of play, which is directly underneath it with very little foul territory available to players on throw-in's and corner kicks. There is even less with cheerleaders, photographers, and journalists lining up along the beige barrier.

As we are set to begin, the PA system blares the starting lineups for today's match in echoing tones.

For SIUE: Ed Gettemeier is in goal. Tim Clark, Terry Trushel, Dave Hundelt and Pat Malloy patrol the backfield. Joe Howe, Bob Bozada, Tim Guelker, Jeff Cacciatore, Don Ebert and Matt Malloy are the forwards.

Mark Downar was the scheduled goalkeeper for SIUE, but Coach Guelker has opted to use Gettemeier instead. The Cougars have platooned the two freshmen throughout the season at that position. In 24 games, each will have evenly split duties at 12 games apiece.

For Clemson: John Bruens is in goal. Bobby Lue, Joe Awesu, Damian Odoh and Michael Gribbon are in the backfield. Arthur Ebunam, Marwan Kamaruddin, Vincent Chika, Nnamdi Nwokocha, Mo Tinsley and Obed Ariri are the forwards.

Ariri's presence in this game comes as somewhat a surprise. Ariri began his career at Clemson playing this game. Soccer brought him to America from Nigeria. Somewhere along the way, he adapted culturally to embrace the American-style form of football: the type the Buccaneers play here. His scholarship was reallocated, and he became the place-kicker for Clemson's football team, which is scheduled to play Baylor in the Peach Bowl later in the month. Ariri received special permission from his coaches to re-join the soccer team for the Final Four. His athleticism and sleek approach to the game potentially give him the role of a secret-weapon, a trump card for Clemson.

The teams Line up in formation directly in the center of the faded Buccaneers helmet painted onto mid-field. SIUE is positioned to get the contest underway with the opening kick upon winning the opening coin toss. The Cougars sport long white socks to compliment their short white pants and uniforms. Clemson: Orange tops and bottoms with black socks. Anticipation mounts. A dream will be realized in 90 minutes.

First Half

The kick summons the start of the game as SIUE begins to work their formation towards the near side of the field. Ebert quickly sends the ball into motion. It travels out of bounds and into the hands of the favorites while a roar resonates our surroundings.

As the ball is out of play we reflect. Guelker has been hard on this bunch, trying to establish a true national force. Ebert, the last man to touch the ball leads the team in scoring. At one point this season, Ebert was benched for mouthing off to a teammate at a meeting. Now he must be a piece of the team, rather than a puzzle.

"I was an idiot in college," Ebert said. "I was a very bad loser. I couldn't stand to lose. I was a very good teammate, but everyone who was not my teammate would hate me. I got upset at teammates, competitors and referees: Anyone who got in the way of winning. It was everything to me back then. There is no glory in second. You either won or lost. It consumed me. Winning was all I knew."

Clemson slowly works the ball in its own zone. They get the ball deep to Bruens who picks it up. He holds. He bounces it. He gears it forward. The ball is rocketed, low. To about the mid-field marker it flies: Over the white football lines primarily occupying these trenches. Thursday, orange soccer boundaries were marked on the field.

SIUE deflects the ball out past this orange. The equally orange Clemson brings it back in on a throw to Ariri.

Ariri's pass goes to another Tiger on the far side of the field and is deflected out of bounds and back to SIUE on a goal kick. Both teams now are already beginning to settle in and shed the butterflies. *Shedding spores along this rollercoaster ride.*

Gettemeier will punch it up the field. Cougars and Tigers tussle like their animal counterparts loose in the wild for the ball, equally loose. Matt Malloy trips someone in orange off the ball, the whistle halts the action. Clemson re-sets and boots the ball onward.

Matt Malloy, a junior for SIUE will be one of the players returning next season. He is not particularly a scoring threat, but more of a facilitator to Ebert running along the wings.

"We had always called him the quiet assassin," Ebert said. "He went up and down the wings. He never got tired. He was never a goal scorer."

With the ball on his toes, Malloy hustles down the field after SIUE regains possession, as he strides forward possessed and on a mission. Malloy is about 20 yards into his charge up the field's gut, but the ball is taken away from his grasp. Clemson recovers around the 45 yard marker. It is Eburnam to Gribbon. He works the far sideline and chucks it forward, out of the reach of an SIUE defender, but right into the trapping legs of another.

SIUE moves the ball up field. One pass followed by two more. Malloy gets it and makes a move. He shuffles between the legs of Gribbon, who is about ten yards from the target. He quickly recovers and shoots in out towards the stands, and momentarily out of danger.

The ball is played, and quickly the Cougars make their presence known with their first opportunity of the afternoon. The crowd collectively holds its breath.

The throw in goes towards the box - Tim Guelker, the son of SIUE's head coach jumps into the air and elevates the ball from his head. His shot does not have enough force, languidly drifting into the grasp of Bruens.

Guelker is thought of as the typical coaches' son. "He was tactical and sharp in his attack," Ebert said. "He doesn't always work as hard as he could, but he was committed and gifted."

The score is 0-0.

Clemson clears, but the Cougars regain the ball and move back into the zone. They attack West from the 30 yard marker like soldiers under the elder Guelker's command. Eburnam gives Tim Guelker a shove. The play is whistled dead and SIUE is awarded a free kick.

The stadium is buzzing through the early surge put on by SIUE, having controlled possession for the majority of the opening minutes. The kick by Guelker is in the box, Odoh heads it back out of play. It is out of danger for now. SIUE presses on with its viral attack in this war playing out beneath us.

In bounds it goes, again just as the case was a minute earlier the throw is positioned dead center in the scoring box. Malloy heads it softly into the air towards Ebert, who collides with a Clemson player in a bicycle-kick type fashion. The physics of this collision rocket the ball over the net and out of play once again. *It is these chances the challenger has to convert on to walk away as immortals and thus far they are getting a fair share of chances on Bruens.*

The score is 0-0.

The play remains non-continuous in the next sequence. In a lightning glance up the center of the field following Bruens clear to safety, an SIUE player is tripped on a sliding tackle, and the Cougars will again have a direct free-kick. Bozada takes it and punts it into the sky, as it hangs for a moment, landing on the head of a Clemson player who directs it behind the baseline and out of play in a defensive manner, although SIUE will now have an opportunity to attack with a corner kick.

Bozada is looked at as an orchestrator. He is a left footed distributor with a bomb of a shot. He is a solid compliment to Guelker.

Matt Malloy will take it as he eyes the ball underneath his frizzy bush of dark black hair. His face holds a determined tone underneath his mustache as he meticulously places the ball where he sees fit.

Instead of crossing it back into a scoring position, the ball is played short. It is played forward about a foot and back to Malloy. He throws it out towards Cacciatorre, as he works it left to right about 20 yards away from the netting his team hopes to conquer. Cacciatorre will deak his way through a flurry of defenders. His effort rolls softly and right into the sticky grasp of Bruens.

The score is 0-0.

Like a slingshot, Bruens catapults the ball up the far touchline to Ariri, as he runs a winded sprint towards the sideline. He trips on the ball. It flutters past the orange line. SIUE will throw positioned in front of the white fence embroidered with the NCAA shield and a banner for ESPN, the only cable sports television network, which launched in September and is providing today's telecast.

ESPN was originally an idea of Bill Rasmussen, who was a television sports reporter for an NBC affiliate in Springfield, Mass. After being fired, Rasmussen went out to pursue his own business, conceiving the idea of a 24 hour cable sports network. The original focus of his network sought exclusive coverage of Connecticut sports. After realizing the cost of such a venture, he expanded his idea to the national level. Under the direction of Chet Simmons, ESPN launched with its first SportsCenter broadcast on Sept. 7, 1979.

The relatively new technology failed viewers at this point. Television viewers are witnessing a replay of the ball finding its way out of bounds; meanwhile, something slightly more relevant to the contest is happening.

We blink and miss.

The crowd erupts, the faces of the players change. Half excited, half stunned.

SIUE scores first.

What happened before our eyes occurred in a matter of seconds. Portions of the stadium celebrate. Others mourn. The throw in went right in towards the box. Tigers were caught cat-napping. Guelker had headed the throw in the direction of Matt Malloy: *the quiet assassin*; who had lain down his cleats and with a strike of authority had Bruens on the turf and all of North Carolina in ruins. This cold war ended abruptly. We have a goal.

The screams are echoing throughout the sombrero as the accomplice runs down the opposite end of the field. Fists held high in the air. His teammates follow suit, in jubilation. Six Cougars join together to share embrace. They celebrate the moment. The first goal has been scored. The team from Edwardsville has the lead.

Bruens slowly makes way to his feet in a moment of absolute frustration, with his team down. Immortality, after all is on the line. Bruens knows however, there are still 80 minutes of soccer to be played. The game is early. The goal is early. The fact remains; a tally mark has been planted on the scoreboard in permanent lore.

The score is Matt Malloy 1, Clemson 0.

"There ya go Matty; you show them how to do it!" Tim Guelker says as he breaks from his teammates who prepare to head back to work. They skip back to the center circle; all but Malloy, who automatically re-assumes his business-like posture. His dark mustache stares down Clemson, as he readjusts the high socks suffocating his shin guards. It was as if Malloy had not found the twine, the way he returned to his passive demeanor just seconds after triumph.

The fans, unlike the not-so-surprised Malloy are still buzzing from the preceding events and the unaffiliated are beginning to pledge their allegiance to Clemson's brave and unknown challenger.

"Initially you get relief, okay. We scored first," Benben said. "When a goal is scored like that early it takes away some of the early tension. The other team starts thinking holy shit, we better get going."

The whistle summons play to resume. Clemson holds possession. For 20 minutes, the two team's battle without many chances. SIUE seems to be trying to protect their lead while Clemson tries to keep the game from getting out of hand early. They continue efforts towards the all-important equalizer after Malloy's nimble strike.

The fire rages on.

This defensive game of keep away should change, it must change. It does change.

27 minutes of soccer have been played. A championship sits in the balance. Both teams know this. The mighty one-loss Tigers have been submitting to the Cougar's high ball tactics and clearing from danger for much of the contest's early duration. By the looks of it, Clemson could quickly

assume a worse reality. The Sombrero begins to rise and roar.

Suddenly, Malloy is streaking up the field. He traps the ball in stride from Bozada. Malloy is ripping the pitch to shreds in sheer determination and speed. He streaks: *not in the nude as SIUE was accustomed to earlier in the decade, but with the same opportunistic philosophy.* The ball is bouncing up and down on his cleats as he works his way through the box. It bounces along with his mustache. Suddenly, but not as lightning quick as his first strike, Malloy shows he has taken over the game. He continues his stride towards the goal while time stands idle for just but a moment.

The moment resumes.

The crowd is anticipating a second tally, reactions hinging on Malloy and his approach.

As if a spider delectably spinning a web from his feet Malloy strikes the ball. It glides through the box as Bruens lays out in desperation. *His feeble effort proves to be too little, too late.* The ball rolls into the finely woven twine on the far side. *Poosh.* It idles in the back of the net. Malloy jumps over the Clemson defender who's last ditch effort to tackle the ball from his grasp fell short. This is made known more-so by the triumphant pumping first delivered in mid-air by Malloy than the presence of the soccer ball tied up in the back of the net.

Those in orange stand in the bleachers ripe with disbelief, jeers are mixing side-by-side with the prevalent cheers. This emotion brought forth by the action can be felt throughout the Sombrero, as it melts in a swarm of red and orange, white and black cast amongst the shadows on the field.

The whole season has whittled down to these all-important moments, and one man has Clemson wearing high heels. One man has made these moments his own. Matt Malloy is the moment.

The quiet assassin strikes again.

The score is Matt Malloy 2, Clemson 0.

Suddenly the impossible seems possible. Bob Guelker victoriously raises his arms on the sideline, now exhibiting much better health than he had earlier in the season. Not even a Centuple bypass surgery could not overpower such command on a moment like this has.

Meanwhile, Malloy maintains the same cool attitude following his celebrated second tally. He is back to Calm. His fiber stands composed. *The quiet assassin.* Malloy's facial expression exhibits those of a man possessed, exerting utmost control to the situation at hand as the ball is sent back into play by Clemson upon the returning whistle. The persona of Malloy in such a time, such a place continues to impress as his unprecedented dominance becomes more evident.

The action resumes. The scoreboard does not lie.

Right away, the Cougars get the ball back on goal, but this time it is not an authoritative punch without refusal. Bruens clears.

Nwokocha, one of Clemson's Nigerian strikers takes the feed from Bruens about 30 yards from the net where Gettemeier stands by, watching and waiting as his team has kept the ball in the opposite end for a long while now. The freshmen untested. Gettemeier remains at ease as Pat Malloy intercepts Nwokocha's crossing feed, swallowing it whole and steering his engine up the field. Seconds later, Clemson picks him off as well, and the ball is forwarded back to Ariri.

Ariri makes a move, exerting his skills, bouncing the ball into the air twice, and spinning around a Cougar defender. More white jerseys remain to be tamed, however and not just a single move could prevent the defense from overcoming his prowess. Hundelt intercepts Ariri during his crossing effort to Abulum.

Boom.

Kamaruddin and Hundelt collide as lightweight wide-receivers and defensive backs often do on this very field. The foul goes on Clemson, and SIUE earns another direct free kick.

Ebert is fed the cross and traps it near the sideline, saving it from being engulfed by the end-line, pushing the ball from the corner flag inward. Gribben unintentionally has the ball go off his cleat and past the base-line; SIUE earns its second corner kick. The Cougars are still feeding off the momentum brought about by their early goals.

The score is Matt Malloy 2, Clemson 0.

Ebert propels the kick inward, bending it towards the box. Guelker plops his head on the ball, which ends up wide of the mark where a Tiger defender snatches it and danger is averted. The deficit remains two, although far from insurmountable.

Up and down the ball goes, each team had it and lost it in the flicker of an eye-lash towards the opposite side's faded 30 yard line. Hundelt throws in for the Cougars. Clemson gobbles the thrown pass, and up it goes, out on SIUE at the 22 yard line. Clemson is penetrating closer and closer, but to their dismay they are playing the wrong version of football on this day, and lacking in time of possession and living a loner lifestyle on the defensive end of the pitch. They are closer now, but will they stay?

The score is still Matt Malloy 2, Clemson 0.

The throw is direct and with purpose, up towards the goal area, but as the case has been, the Cougar defense holds and disposes the unwanted away from their property and Gettemeier once more.

Clemson is starting to become more and more visibly frustrated with the stubbornness put on by SIUE's defense. It remains unwavering and non sympathetic of their desire to be allowed a goal, or a *shot* on goal for that matter. You can see it in their faces. Rolling eyes and thumping hearts are the norm as the mantra on the sideline has got to still be in the "holy shit, we have to work harder" state of mind, as the action continues to circumnavigate the playing field with little retribution at hand for the mighty Tigers.

Ebert gets the lead pass ahead for SIUE, but it happens to be just a little far for him to handle and crosses the baseline. Clemson will have a goal-kick, but the goal protected by Gettemeier remains an unknown commodity.

Considering the defense SIUE has used to clamp onto the oppressed Tigers, crossing the plain on the opposite end seems as bleak as Jimmy Carter allowing oil imports back from Iran.

Cowbells ring at the Sombrero as Bruins meticulously places the ball on the far end of the extended box, pacing and firing.

Ding-a-ling-a-ling kaput.

Such nondescript middle-of-the-field play resumes, until the clock reads zero, the gun sounds and both teams go into the locker room, one dropping jaws and one dropping their heads in frustration.

Matt Malloy has two goals; Clemson's 11 have combined to net none. Into the tunnel the warriors flee. Clemson looking to change the course history is eager to present to the small, visiting commuter school playing out its entire existence on this field of champions. SIUE hopes to maintain advantage and dissolve the 45 minutes separating it from the parade. When it ends, and it will end, one team stands victorious. The other will be just a footnote.

The teams retreat to their respective locker rooms, and for 20 minutes, all of it reminiscent a blur; Bob Guelker is given the task of bringing his team back down to earth. SIUE's players exhibit excitement, taking off their jerseys to allow their bodies a breath. With a 2-0 lead, Guelker is not going to extraordinary measures. There is once again no moving speech. By now the Cougars know what got them to this point. Rehashing the obvious is oblivious. "This game is not over," Guelker may have told his team. "Keep consistent with the approach we have used all year. Do not feel like you have won the game yet. Finish it off."

"Everybody was excited going in. We thought if we kept up the effort we would win, but you know the game is not over. You can't allow an easy goal," Cacciatore said. Everyone was pumped up. There was a little premature celebrating, but once we got out everyone knew what they had to do."

Clemson knowingly has teeth. Their weapons are capable of snapping from the funk they have established. By no means does a two goal deficit draw them incapable. Three might be

the number, but two goals? Against a team as capable as Clemson? It remains to be seen.

Second half

The teams are about to reacquaint themselves with the stage. Fans do the same making their way through the dark, closed concourses of the Sombrero's lower bowl. Nwokocha and Ariri converse at the center-line, likely discussing strategies the Tigers will employ in the second half. This is a half they will use to try and erase the surprising two goal deficit they bear.

With the whistle comes the dawn of continuation. Clemson slowly develops an offensive flow. They have 45 minutes to resurrect their hopes, their dreams. These are year long aspirations assuming championship dreams.

Ebert thwarts Clemson's first effort up the field, breaking up the play like his team did so often in the opening half. Clemson will shortly re-assume ownership and continue. Chika hurls the ball forward to Nwokocha, but just out of his reach, and Clark's intercepting boot goes past the orange marker towards the sea of photographers on the near sideline.

Ebert comes up limping following the play. His legs burning from the action of the first half and the kick he had just taken to his knee. SIUE's trainer Bud Bidell has made his way onto the field, holding onto Ebert and helping him make his way to the turf. The menacing Ebert bends forward with Bidell, positioning his Adidas cleats into the air as Bidell stretches out his tired legs in three swift motions. Ebert is held up, given a slight tap on the rear and is sent back to the pitch. Bidell will hop back towards the bench, his job completed.

Ebert, still just a step slow and with his head down hobbles back towards the far side of the field, where play will soon continue.

The throw in for Clemson makes its way up the pitch, but is soon rejected and brought back out for SIUE. Bozada gets the ball up field. Matt Malloy has a hat-trick on his mind as he races towards it, but quickly Awesu comes to

Clemson's rescue and breaks up the play, fighting off an off-balance Malloy to kick the ball to a waiting Bruens who picks it up and rolls it safely in front for a boot back down the field.

Bruens points to the far side of the field, notifying his teammates where he plans to lead possession, and after one bounce on the hard turf he rises and delivers the ball high, driven by all the force his body could summon, the blast finally landing 60 yards later. Ariri takes a stranglehold on possession taking the bounce off his head before crossing to Nwokocha waiting. Hundelt flies into the picture as if saying "not so fast," to continue upon the defensive superiority we have seen from SIUE thus far. Kamaruddin however takes it right back for Clemson, this all just 25 yards away from Gettemeier, who remains untested. Malloy side-tackles the ball carrier, pushing the ball all the way back out towards mid-field. SIUE had done it again.

Cacciatore gains possession on his cleats heading up the field after gaining Malloy's tackling pass, working against one of Clemson's backs, quickly getting past and shooting, but Bruens safely captures it and sends it back where it came from, around the 40 yard marker. Ebunam takes the rocket and crosses to the left side, at the 20 yard line. Barnfield gets his foot on the ball for the first time in today's game and after shuffling the ball through his legs to avoid another defensive rejection from SIUE, he arches it upwards to the 10 for Chika who heads the ball towards Gettemeier for his first save of the game.

Both teams have now gotten shots in the second half, just three minutes anew.

The score is Matt Malloy 2, Clemson 0

Clemson has been more organized so far in the second half than its challenger, as the ball is quickly worked back into the corner on SIUE's side of the field. The Cougars swiftly assemble while getting the ball safely to Gettemeier for another clearing boot.

The shot goes straight up the middle, but just a little far for Cacciatore racing towards the ball, while Bruens does the same, the ball having traveled the length of the field; one goalie to another, Clemson maintains possession.

The score is Matt Malloy 2, Clemson 0.

Up it goes and Clemson goes with a tic, a tack and a pass off a toe, already moving past mid-field. Chika is all alone running an unwavering wind-sprint; Clemson needs to score soon to make this a competitive game once again. Chika dispenses the ball up the middle, it is too far for Ariri and Nwokocha is defended by Hundelt, who summons the ball free and up the middle, falling to the turf on Nwokocha's ensuing tackle.

Weeeeeeeeeeep the whistle blows, as Hundelt awkwardly bent backwards after being caught by Nwokocha's limbs. He circles the immediate part of the pasture; hopping on one leg to try and ease the pain before taking the free kick he has been awarded. The blonde warrior Hundelt grimaces as he stretches his right leg behind his back. All is well for the senior, and after a few seconds he is equipped to carry on, as the game does.

Once again, Clemson is unable to get its offense moving at a steady clip with Bozada intercepting their latest endeavor and passing it backwards to a sprawling and perhaps overdramatic Gettemeier, either driven by boredom or the mere technical possibility of the ball traveling past him for a corner-kick.

Immediately after the kick, and just 60 yards later Lue is whistled for a foul, tackling an SIUE player.

Referee Bob Sumter points to where the ball should be placed; right at the 30 yard line on the near side, about 15 yards in from the sideline. This is where Hundelt will play his hand, pushing it forward before an immediate rejection from Clemson's defense, sending the ball back out far to Clark, relaying to Gettemeier.

What happens next is an exact carbon copy of the previous play Gettemeier boots up field, there is but one move and a Clemson foul, resulting in a free kick for SIUE, this time about 20 yards farther from the goal than Hundelt's attempt. The ball is sent into motion.

Chika takes control of the ball for Clemson, and works it to the near side at the 18 yard line and tries to leave behind to Nwokocha, and in borrowing a football term in

honor of Tampa Bay Buccaneers quarterback Doug Williams it was incomplete through the end zone, resulting in a goal kick for SIUE.

Despite their loss to Chicago here a week ago, the Buccaneers are currently leading the NFC Central and looking forward to its first playoff birth in the NFL. As we play soccer in Tampa, the Bucs are playing in San Francisco this afternoon.

SIUE is off-sides on their next play. Clemson takes over.

Two passes go by and Nwokocha makes his way through two defenders, he takes a heavy strike towards the goal...beating Gettemeier, but it bounces off the goalpost and out of bounds. Nwokocha had Gettemeier beat but the difference was measured in mere centimeters, with the post providing a friendly savior for Gettemeier and SIUE. With nine minutes elapsed in the second half, Clemson has begun to show its teeth, although the triumphant attempt failed to tally, SIUE will have a goal kick.

The score remains Matt Malloy 2 Clemson 0.

"It is human nature when you are leading, especially in our sport to back off. You really don't need another goal," Benben said. "We just got to finish it out, but psychologically against good competition you are going to be more cautious in your attack."

Meanwhile, Hundelt is lying on the turf in pain following his defensive stand against Nwokocha. He is rolling his body over. His face covered as teammates, the referees and Bidell come to his aid. The follow through of Nwokocha's leg swinging off its axis had caught Hundelt just above his waist. Nuwakacha comes over to Hundelt in a gesture of sportsmanship, although his consideration is pushed aside as Bidell bounces Hundelt up and down, intentionally plopping his players rear hard against the turf in an unorthodox chiropractic measure, while Hundelt rolls over and returns to his footing, tucking his uniform back into his low-cut shorts, shaking his frizzy blonde hair, running his hand through it and motions to Nuwakacha "thanks, I'm fine," which he seems to be as the whistle starts play once more.

The comeback effort continues for the Tigers, who have perceptibly out-played SIUE since the break. Chika forwards the pass to Gribbon; he beats his defender, and tosses a lead pass in front of Gettemeier, where it headed out of play by an SIUE defender.

Ebunam will control the throw-in for Clemson, which goes long and straight into Gettemeier's non-hesitant grasp on the near-post, a play most teams will try and accomplish because it is hard for the goalkeeper to make his way towards that area in a flurry of foot traffic.

Clemson again is the team getting to the loose balls this half, bringing possession right back into the area of SIUE's defense. Nwokocha is flagged for a foul, pushing Clark from behind after stealing away his possession, likely out of frustration, so SIUE will attempt to bring the ball back once more. All momentum is now in the hands of Clemson, despite the comfortable lead Malloy's ample footwork has provided for his squad.

Soccer is a game about exploiting defense and finding holes, something Clemson does very well, and does here after regaining the ball following Clark's kick.

Racing up the field is Clemson and the pass goes off the inside sole of the marching orange and towards the goal area, anticipation mounting in the stands. Nwokocha now has it. He holds it and waits for his defender to draw closer before backpedaling a pass to Tinsley on the side, he fires...yet misses high off the crossbar.

The Clemson faithful in the crowd whimper and groan following the buildup to Tinsley's rocketing attempt, half out of their chairs before slamming back down in unison. Once more, the Tigers were *that* close, knocking on the door of the nagging neighbor with every opportunity. They have proclaimed ownership on the second half, but are still without a goal, and although their recent efforts have been valiant, the scoreboard remains locked in stationary.

The score is Matt Malloy 2 Clemson 0.

How did that shot *not* go in the net? One would ask themselves after such a strong opportunity, with the upper reaches of the goal out of those of Gettemeier. A dent has not been made, but Clemson continues to build on its strong

comeback efforts, while collectively remaining just short, and in some cases high of the target.

A relieved Gettemeier clears his area, SIUE trying to maintain possession after another long boot, something they have been unsuccessful in achieving during the latter stages of this championship bout. The ball goes forward to the quick-fused Ebert, who trips over it and Cammorutin of Clemson, spilling onto the turf to the resounding blast of the whistle, before getting up, approaching his defender with a resounding "fuck you" in his face and walking away.

Ebert does not get far before the referee summons him back to Kamaruddin's location, greeting the Clemson player with a yellow card to amend the previous confrontation, as Ebert walks away from the official with a nod of satisfaction.

SIUE quickly loses the possession they gained as a result of the foul, and just as speedily, Nwokocha has possession once more, working 30 yards from Gettemeier. His ball is forced up field and spat back out by the Cougars, but Chika forwards it to Kamaruddin. It goes from Kamaruddin to Tinsley. Tinsley to Eburnam. Into the air and out of bounds behind the goal.

There are 33 minutes left to play in regulation after the boot up-field by Gettemeier, something we have become accustomed to in this half. We have also adapted to Clemson winning all of the battles for loose balls, something they achieve again on the ensuing kick, although the ball ends up back in Gettemeier's grasp on the other end after a clearing pass went too far for the Tigers.

Clemson's flawlessness quickly dissipates. On the other end Odoh makes a mistake trying to clear. SIUE looks to have a break. Ebert races down field with the ball at the 18 yard line. He makes a crossing pass to an open Malloy... but it is taken away by Chika and freed from exile. The hats remain in the stands.

The score is Matt Malloy 2, Clemson 0.

It goes right back to SIUE after Awesu's pass forward drifts to about the 50 yard-line without an orange jersey in sight. Clark recovers and sends it back in for the Cougars. The team seemingly well on their way to a championship, beginning to regain momentum after a 10

minute period filled with shots out of an orange trebuchet. They have survived the immediate storm, or so it seems to this point. Ebert heads the ball into the penalty area, but Bruens scoops the ball and denies imminent danger.

Clemson will streak directly through the heart of the field. Kamaruddin gets the ball all the way to the faded 10 yard line with Nwokocha taking a shot, although a half-hearted one and Gettemeier easily takes embrace.

In the shadow of SIUE's cheerleaders on the far sideline, Gettemeier once again hammers the ball downfield to the tone of cowbells and the echoing boot he creates. Play is immediately drawn to a halt after Ebunam goes down as a result of a collision at the 45 yard-line with an SIUE player. He gets up immediately however, and play resumes. Bozada draws a foul about 10 seconds after the re-start, issuing a free-kick to Clemson. This is how the call on the field is ruled. Soon after, the head referee changes his mind, saying the ball was out of bounds, awarding a throw in to SIUE. And so it is.

The Cougars throw it in fast, up the field to a streaking Ebert, making his way past two defenders while booting forward to Malloy, surrounded by two defenders who converge onto the ball to reprimand danger after Malloy cut through the center just a second too soon as Odoh intercepts.

Odoh gets the ball to Gribbon working the near sideline. He centers a pass onto the boots of Chika who tosses it towards the middle where SIUE takes it away. Clemson gets it back. Tinsley puts up a lead ball towards the box and the faded "T" of "Tampa Bay" marked in the end zone, where Clark stalls danger, and SIUE is awarded a free-kick.

The score is Matt Malloy 2, Clemson 0.

Clemson takes away the ball and gets it inside the 30 yard line, and will have it again on a throw in after SIUE clears out of bounds. Clemson does the same on a header following the throw, so the Cougars control custody.

Ebert works the ball along his foot and the sideline before punching it ahead to about the 35 yard line, where Clemson regains it. Cacciatore makes a pesky play to the ball, taking it away from the feet of Ebunam and back to the Cougars, who re-set their offensive formation working at

about mid-field. Malloy punches it forward, Bruens collects.

Oasuh is the ball carrier now, sprinting in full stride clear of defenders after Bruens sent out a short dump his way. The pass from Oasuh goes through multiple legs on a diagonal course to Chika, who is fouled by Malloy, awarding a free-kick to Gribbon. Gribben tosses to Tinsley, who heads the ball *just wide* of the goal. SIUE will get a goal kick on Clemson's third qualitative opportunity this half.

The score is Matt Malloy 2, Clemson 0.

The shot is spiraled upwards, Lue gives a foot to the face of Ebert, and the Cougars get yet another free-kick. Kamaruddin takes possession for Clemson; his long service ball is sent out of bounds.

The ball pulses off of legs. It bounces, going up and down, in every direction, off white and orange, until Nwokocha manages to work it free and roll an effort onto the goal. Gettemeier collects a save. Soon, the ball finds its way back into his grasp on another slow rolling effort by Clemson. Another boot will be forthcoming to the rhythms of cowbell for Gettemeier.

Quickly the ball goes to Bruens in the other goal area, he spits it back out immediately to the 30 yard line for his teammates to set forth another effort in what has been a frustrating afternoon, trailing by two goals with half of the second stanza already expired.

Nwokocha is intercepted by Trushel, who takes it the other way. Odoh takes him out with a sliding tackle and the whistle blows once more. The referee takes Odoh aside, standing helpless and frustrated, as the official grabs a yellow card, holding it to the sky signifying a warning. Five Clemson players stand around the official, waving their hands, wondering why in the heat of the action, in a championship with emotion boiling over, with sweat dripping off every inch and into the earth why such a call is merited. Either way, they disassemble, walking away in frustration.

The action continues back and forth; time a commodity for the Tigers. They are still behind two goals. They get the ball trapped, along the sideline to Oasuh, who stops, pulls

up, tosses it towards the goal area and Nwokocha and Gettemeier collide on a heading attempt, bringing the whistle to a blow. Clemson is once more close, but unable to score.

The score is Matt Malloy 2, Clemson 0.

Clemson regains possession after their latest chance and tries to penetrate. The teams go back and forth. Nwokocha collides with Gettemeier again at the top of the goal box, yielding another whistle. Gettemeier lies on the soil after the tie-up. Bidell comes to the rescue, unmerited, as Gettemeier comes back to his feet with approval from the crowd.

On the re-set of play, Cacciatore works the ball once more out of potential danger. SIUE plays to mid-field. Hundelt puts it ahead into the box. Bruens comes out of his goal area to make the save. Clemson cannot get past Malloy on its next try. Back and forth we go, SIUE playing with the confidence of a champion now, but they will be tested in the upcoming moments. SIUE's penalty summons a free-kick, to be taken just 16 yards from the goal for Clemson, as the Cougars build a human wall at the top of the scoring area to try and hold back the Tigers and their attack.

The wall holds on the kick. It ricochets back to Clemson on the offensive attack. Clemson maintains a strong effort to keep the ball in the box, but a collision will award SIUE another free-kick.

The score is still Matt Malloy 2, Clemson 0.

Gettemeier takes his time in the box before beckoning a booming punt towards Clemson's 35 yard line with less than 20 minutes to play in this tilt. Clemson takes the ball back, and attacks once more, with a 5 on 4 man advantage streaking towards Gettemeier. Kamaruddin will try and pass it forward, but the goalkeeper is there, making a diving stop, holding the ball with a smothering grasp. Control to SIUE. As Gettemeier gets up he says something about the opportunity to Nwokocha standing just feet from him on the ground, quickly getting up and booting the ball forward.

Play continues with Clemson controlling possession after SIUE failed to bring the ball out. Two passes for Clemson and Tinsley is breaking forward. He falls to the ground

with the ball sandwiched between his legs. Players on both teams are fighting for it. Finally, it comes loose and is kicked towards the sideline as the game continues to develop with more of a physical undertone. Finesse has fallen to physicality. The referees are loosening up and just letting the boys play. After all, in about 15 minutes we will have a new NCAA's champion, the victor dethroning San Francisco.

The score is Matt Malloy 2, Clemson 0.

Chika has the ball. He races to the near sideline and crosses it all the way through the box where players from each team converge, but fail to acquire its title. It comes back out to the 10 yard line for Oasuh. Pressure is mounting. Oasuh chips it forward. Ariri hits a header...floating forward...swish...goal Clemson. The ball was chipped in towards the net, four players went up, two on each team trying to connect on the ball with their heads to direct it in their desired direction with Ariri converting, tossing it forward towards the high corner of the post with Gettemeier diving to his left, right arm elevated trying to heroically knock the ball out of harms way. The effort was short. Oasuh runs behind the duntrodden Gettemeier to collect his leathery prize, running down the length of the field with it in his grasp victoriously. Like a hunting dog with a raccoon. Clemson holds all of the momentum, and only trails by a goal. All of a sudden, the Sombrero hosts a competitive soccer game once more. Time will continue to collapse on the Tiger's hope, but the course has been set. Direction is once again assumed.

The score is Matt Malloy 2, Clemson 1.

All attention is now squarely centered on the pitch. The game is once more what it is, what every true championship deserves. Competitiveness reigns true.

The Tigers look energized, while SIUE appears to be entering an alter-realization of panic. Heads are down for SIUE while bobbing for Clemson. *We should be in for a feverish finish.* Gettemeier stands towing the line underneath the crossbar, biting his tongue, hands on his hips atop his yellow goalkeeper uniform bearing the number one and breathing heavily.

Chants resonate throughout the crowd, and hope is beckoning. CLEM-SON! CLEM-SON! CLEM-SON!

The crowd on the side of the Tiger has risen from the ashes and clings to its estranged hope. Cowbells are ringing once more as fans swallowed by the Sombrero are screaming. Play is resuming.

SIUE starts out playing a little more tentative, clinging to their lead, just as Clemson fans are onto the front portions of their seats. SIUE's fans as nervous about the lead as their team seems attempting to work the ball up-field. The first pass is dumped too far ahead of its target, as Clemson makes their first stride towards tying the game up once more. Rocketing forward, bouncing along the heads of two players. The pressure is being implied by Clemson as SIUE clears and fouls at the 48 yard line. Oasuh gets rewarded the free-kick. Cacciatorre weaves in and out, taking it out from below and delivers the ball from momentary danger.

But Clemson regains. They work it in from the 20. Tinsley lofts it on goal...Gettemeier grabs hold. The Tigers are now establishing a workload representative to the pace they have been comfortable in all season. Ariri gets it to Nwokocha, who sheds Hundelt and walks away in disappointment as his effort slides wide of Gettemeier and out of bounds.

The score is Matt Malloy 2, Clemson 1.

15 minutes separate SIUE from its first Division I national championship. The Tigers hope remains strong following their first goal. We play on, as Nwokocha dribbles past the 30 yard marker through traffic, he takes a shot... but Gettemeier lies out to collect another save. Nuwakacha's shot comes as somewhat a surprise, trying to trick Gettemeier by using a quick half-powered boot towards the corner of the net between two Cougar defenders rather than taking the ball deeper into SIUE's zone.

The score is Matt Malloy 2, Clemson 1.

Clemson gets another free kick after a foul following Gettemeier's clear of the zone. The ball is quickly summoned into SIUE territory by the Tigers, searching for their equalizer as time runs scarce. Chika is intercepted

by Cacciatore, but he fails to dump the ball off elsewhere. Lue controls. He tosses it high and wide, to Oasuh in an attempt to infiltrate the goal area, but his shot sails high and wide of the net, giving Gettemeier another goal kick.

Tim Guelker has re-entered the game for Bozada.

Gettemeier boots it forward but immediately Clemson has gotten possession, and shuffles towards Cougar territory, continuing to hold a significant advantage throughout the second half in time of possession. The Cougars try clinging onto their championship ambitions. Just 13 and half a minute remain. Malloy brings the ball out of danger once more. Clemson is back at it however. SIUE cannot escape, or so it seems. The underdog's Concentration remains in relapse, while Gettemeier collects another save. Both sides' fans are equally concerned and standing.

The score is Matt Malloy 2, Clemson 1.

Prior to sending the ball back skyward, Gettemeier stalls, pacing his goal area. SIUE needs time to catch its breath. Understandably so, it seems.

Gettemeier kicks downfield, A few moves by Cacciatore and the ball plants itself alongside Malloy's cleat. Malloy forwards it to Ebert, and SIUE is working on a rare second-half chance in opposing territory. Ebert shields the ball from Lue and kicks it back out to Pat Malloy. Malloy floats it to his brother Matt. Weeeeep. The play is whistled off-sides, with Malloy all alone in the open ahead of the nearest defender. The officials remain awake to the obvious. Clemson will toss it in. Now it clears. The ball shifts up the gut of the field and back into opposing territory. Where you would assume it belongs watching this half.

Clark casually glides the ball to Gettemeier. He collects, and dispatches after another brief tactic in time management. Cacciatore along to Ebert. Ebert along to Malloy. Chika takes it away and Clemson begins to work in the opposite direction, time becoming an all-important tangible antagonist towards their effort. Odoh, Ebunam, Tinsley, Ebunam in that order with the ball following the interception. Clemson is attacking once more. Strong. The ball is rocketed in the box to Ariri. Ariri traps. Ariri

shuffles. Ariri overpowers his defender, but Malloy is there. Stopped, or so it seemed. The ball somehow finds its way onto the feet of Kamaruddin. He lines it up, aims... fires... and is high. The ball soars over the net; SIUE still maintains its lead. They are still holding on.

They are *just* holding on, as Pat Malloy is down on the turf.

The score is Matt Malloy 2, Clemson 1.

Clemson's coach and founding father of soccer Dr. I.M. Ibrahim paces the sidelines along with his reserves, moving his stance towards his knees and biting his fingernails as his team has fallen short on another opportunity to match SIUE on the scoreboard.

Meanwhile, the brother of the afternoon's early hero, Matt Malloy, the culprit on both Cougar tallies, lays flat on the turf allowing a teammate to stretch his leg out. Whether this is a legitimate injury or just a tactic to allow precious seconds of breath, and a momentum shift, so valuable to Clemson and equally disposable for the leading underdog in this battle remains to be seen. Nonetheless, Bidell once more comes from the sideline, equally deserving of a potential spot in tournament lore as his players, having kept his Cougars on the field after numerous spills in a physical contest. The coach, Bob Guelker has made his way onto the field as well to aid his player; the clock has now been blown dead, also an adjective which can be used to describe the legs of SIUE's players.

Guelker hovers over his player as the trainer Bidell continues rubbing Malloy's calve muscle, unhappy with the officials for the tackle forcing him to the turf. This break in the action is providing both teams with an opportunity to catch up with the moment, Clemson needing a goal to tie, SIUE a goal to ultimately become a champion.

Pat limps his way towards the sideline, wanting to go on and finish the game from this point on, but he is physically incapable of doing so at the moment. Return is almost inevitable, stressing his value to the team on the defensive end. A territory invaluable in protection. Pat also left the game yesterday against Penn State with ankle problems, and today results in the same. Bidell offers to

assist Pat to the sideline but he refuses assistance.
Bozada re-enters the game with 10:35 remaining.

"Pat Malloy and our defenders were studs," Ebert said. "We never gave up goals. Teams had to earn everything."

They are truly being tested now.

The score is Matt Malloy 2, Clemson 1.

Play moves on.

Kamaruddin breaks through traffic for Clemson, the ball jarred loose from a Tim Guelker slide-tackle. The ball finds its way back to Oasuh's boot. He takes a long shot prior to reaching the box, but it sails high above Gettemeier and into the empty bleachers behind the net.

The score is Matt Malloy 2, Clemson 1.

The play from Gettemeier goes short, where Tinsley intercepts for Clemson. Odoh flings a header to Awesu, Tigers still working on finding twine for the second time. Time remains of the essence. Ariri gets hold of the ball, quick pass to Nwokocha, who catches Hundelt out of position, but his header sails high above the netting once more.

Two tries for Clemson. Two near misses above the net for Clemson.

The score is Matt Malloy 2, Clemson 1.

The keep-away attempt continues for the Cougars. Reeling. Cacciatorre clears deep into the opposite zone. Clemson breaks the play up around the 30 yard line. Bruens is still quietly patrolling his net on the opposite end, his name much without mention in the second half. The ball rests planted on Nwokocha's heel, attempting to offer company to the lonely goal. His beaming shot it is deflected off the knee of an SIUE player and back to Kamaruddin. The Tigers continue applying more pressure, as desperation evolves as an accompaniment for occasion. Kamaruddin takes a shot... beating Gettemeier... but wide.

This time, *inches* wide.

The score is Matt Malloy 2, Clemson 1.

Clemson chances mounting.

Protection of this lead remains daunting for the commuting little guy. Momentum rides squarely on Tiger heels. SIUE is hanging on for life. Clemson is pressuring. They have the ball again. It is still in the zone. Still in the SIUE defensive zone. Gettemeier's fingers are shaking beneath the protection of his leather Adidas goaltender gloves. The pressure continues to mount and the field is undoubtedly slanted. Bozada clears from the 18, but SIUE is still not safe in this stance, or in any sense. Clemson is continuing to render SIUE senseless. The noise inside Gettemeier's head has drowned out and the smell of championship grass is now just a distance memory outside the moment. This moment. Sweat palpitates across his forehead. The chances are not ending. Clemson isn't going anywhere. The desperate search for a tying marker resumes. The frustration no longer exists and all Clemson knows is desperation, with time growing ever shorter.

The Stadium clock dwindles as less than seven minutes of regulation remain to decide a champion. An immortal standing. The next 10 minutes will put of these teams alongside Magic Johnson and Michigan State, the triumphant among this season's NCAA basketball tournament and Cal State Fullerton, the victors of the College World Series here in the soccer variety of each.

The score is Matt Malloy 2, Clemson 1.

Playing on, Chika forwards it into the box. SIUE breaks the play up as it is sent back out to center. Gribbon ensues frantic chase for the ball and Clemson attacks again. Their relentless act of desperation continues on as Odoh breaks free. Clemson throwing everything they have at SIUE. All 11 men on the field for Clemson have resorted to becoming forwards. There is no need to hold back anyone on defense when SIUE cannot manage any forward motion on offense. Tinsley crosses it off to Nwokocha. Nwokocha tries to cross, but Clark intercepts and clears. SIUE has been able to thwart many offensive efforts, but cannot create any of its own.

The ball remains with Clemson. Odoh hammers possession back deep in the zone. Awesu is working the ball deep towards

the corner, just about three yards from the flag; suddenly he floats the ball into the box.

It is bendiiiiiiing...

Bending in front of Gettemeier. It flies towards Nwokocha and is headed into the net. Clemson has tied the game at two goals a piece with time continuing to grow short. The Tiger's have come back, alleviating a two goal deficit, now a distant memory. These warriors find themselves knotted.

Cougars 2. Tigers 2.

Everything has shifted in this contest. The crowd on Clemson's side is exuberant and in shock, which is the only feeling alive with SIUE's fans. Numb in the Florida heat.

Gettemeier stands there at his goal line, still starring down his defenders in disbelief. "DAMNIT!!" he screams, spitting on the turf behind him, grabbing the ball from the netting, hurling it forward towards the official. Confetti is flying out of the Clemson cheering section. Oasuh, who garnered the assist on the play, is taking a victory lap around the pitch, arms held open before jumping into the embrace of a teammate.

Clemson has knotted the action as SIUE players walk heads down towards the center-line. There is still time left in regulation. Clemson owns this moment. They have owned this half. Although SIUE is involved in a tie game, the play on the field has significantly hinted towards a differing result. The emotions had by players from both teams have switched from one extreme to the other. That remains its beauty. Clemson was down and out - going through the motions, heading home silently to having a glimmer of hope. They then entered desperation and now laud jubilation.

After overcoming nervousness early, SIUE was playing with confidence and the spirit of a champion. Heads were high. Nothing was able to overtake them. Following this emotional high, SIUE dropped into a motherly state, trying to protect their lead like a new-born child. After failing to do so, they now rest in a state of worry.

Tigers 2. Cougars 2.

"I still don't know how it happened," Cacciatore said.

The clock reads 7:00 exactly remaining in the second half.

In the event of a tie, these teams will play sudden death overtime-which would go on for four 15 minute sessions before the overtime periods are shortened to five minutes and unlimited.

SIUE kicks off from the center-line, starting play in a brand new game. One very short, with a prize that lasts a lifetime waiting.

The Cougars re-start with an aggressive nature. We have not seen from them in some time. They started to play casual in protection of their lead, and may be better off with competition starring them down. Desperation often times yields results. This will be their true test. Man on man. They immediately work the ball up the center of the field on a long pass from Guelker to Matt Malloy. He takes a shot on goal...but Bruens collects it for the easy save.

A name lost in Clemson's rebuttal has shown his company once more.

The score is Matt Malloy 2, Clemson 2.

Less than a minute from the re-start SIUE is showing signs of life. Maybe the Cougars have found a way to re-stimulate its dormant second-half offense after all. Bruens takes the ball out to the eight yard line and the end of the goal area he is allowed to use his hands in before backpedalling in the box and sending the ball to mid-field. Cacciatore controls the ball for SIUE. He crosses between his legs beating a defender and connects on a short pass to Hundelt who takes a shot with Bruens waiting. SIUE is not leaving any chance untaken at this point, garnering two shots on net in the first minute of play following Nwokocha's tying goal.

Play is halted with Oasuh cramped on the turf after taking a knee from Hundelt's knee at the 10 yard line. The trainer comes to assist.

The score is Matt Malloy 2, Clemson 2.

Shortly, we resume on a drop-ball, where Clemson regains possession and Guelker fouls Kamaruddin. A free-kick will

follow for Clemson just 12 yards from Gettemeier as time continues to evaporate from the clock. This will be a truly important kick for Nwokocha with 5:09 to play

The score is Matt Malloy 2, Clemson 2.

SIUE has a wall built in front of the goal area much like they had to do earlier in the contest. Nwokocha lines up. Hand high in the air. He is ready.

The following kick does not imply readiness however. Nwokocha fires the ball directly at the goal. It is blocked by SIUE's wall of defenders, deflecting off a Clemson player and out of bounds. SIUE has a goal-kick, which Gettemeier delivers.

The score is Matt Malloy 2, Clemson 2.

SIUE fights away possession after Clemson takes it deep into the zone. Clark is tangled up with Ariri. He finally clears, but to an enemy in Odoh. Clemson starts to attack again. Kamaruddin has the ball; Howe intercepts and runs away for SIUE. Howe passes to Pat Malloy, who is back into the action after falling victim to injury early on. Pat attempts to cross to his brother, who is tackled around mid-field by Oasuh, summoning a whistle and giving SIUE a free-kick. It will be all-important with less than four minutes remaining.

Matt is undeniably upset with the play, jarring at his opponent.

No cards are issued, but the referee asks both players to settle down, as we approach the final moments of play.

The score is Matt Malloy 2, Clemson 2.

For now it stands.

Ebert will take the free kick at the 45 yard line on the defensive side of the field. The whistle allows him to get play started once he is prepared. His boot goes long. The ball is hanging in the air, approaching the penalty box. Both teams stare at it floating along, waiting for the moment to go at it with their heads. It bounces off of Tim Guelker tied up with a Clemson player and floats even higher.

Malloy floats higher.

Suspended in air is Malloy. Frozen, he positions his head on the ball, directing it towards the goal...

And it is a goal.

MATT MALLOY 3, CLEMSON 2.

SIUE just went half the length of the field, Malloy beating Bruens.

"He barely got a head on it and it kind of looped in," Cacciatore said. "We were dragging."

3:41 stands on the clock. The lead is back with the Cougars.

During this idle moment, Malloy had risen over his defender, showing just a little more will for possession, knocking it into the netting and while the ball is tied up within its embrace the score is no longer that way. Malloy is emotionally charged at this point, hugging each of his teammates as they cross his path. In 3 minutes and 41 seconds Matt Malloy could stand a hero among Clemson's Nigerian giants.

A Clemson defender had tried to make a last-second effort to safely escort the ball from its final destination, heading it on his own, but just a little bit further into the goal instead, as Malloy's headwork had crossed the plain of the net by this point. The Edwardsville fans in attendance are back to the emotional state enjoyed much earlier in the afternoon. The celebration can almost begin. They can feel it, as victorious energy pulsates through the Sombrero.

The Clemson fans who watched their team dominate for much of the second half hold their heads in disbelief. Hearts are knotted below stomach intestines and underneath heavy rocks placed upon them by those on the field bearing the alias Cougars.

The *quiet assassin* has struck once more. The hat trick is complete.

"He could score goals, but Matt? Three? That doesn't happen very often," Cacciatore said. "It was a surprise. He broke out."

It is back to work for Malloy and the Cougars, as the referee summons the participants to the center of the field to re-start, as Malloy wears a wide smile underneath his dark mustache. The man who has been all business throughout the contest is playing the part once more, but is not doing as good of job at hiding his emotions as before. He has all three of his team's goals and time is now more important than ever, especially for Clemson. 3:41 remains.

The score is Matt Malloy 3, Clemson 2.

Matt Malloy is the moment, a moment which will shortly resume, only through closing motions. Does Clemson have time to regenerate the pressure they clamped their opponents down to with reckless authority once more, having ended just five minutes ago? SIUE has had the best of them since Nwokocha's tying goal. Matt Malloy will not lose this game. Can he?

This small commuter school bravely challenging college soccer's Nigerian heavyweight for a championship is prevailing. Nothing can stop Matt Malloy and the Southern Illinois University Edwardsville Cougars. They are 3 minutes and 41 seconds away from their own moment. A moment they will share forever in infamy.

Play resumes after Guelker is helped off of the field.

The score is Matt Malloy 3, Clemson 2.

Chika barrels forward on the re-start, but SIUE quickly takes the ball away. They work it back deep into Clemson's zone. Clemson was last to touch the ball. Corner kick to SIUE.

Malloy gets it in, bending the ball to the 10 yard line for Cacciatore. Chika is there, he clears to mid-field. Clark is the only player there. He pushes it back forward. SIUE is doing everything they can to ensure the game remains the way it is. 2:45 is left on the clock. Malloy has the ball. Awesu intercepts, but kicks it back to SIUE. Ebert is hit from behind by Barnfield. Free kick SIUE. 2:04 to play.

Everything since Malloy's third tally has been on the Clemson side of the field.

SIUE continues to hold on.

The Cougars continue with the ball. Keeping it away from Clemson. Another penalty is called on the Tigers; Bozada is taken to the turf.

1:31 is on the clock.

During the break in the action, the public address announcer tells the crowd Matt Malloy, *the silent assassin* has been named the offensive player of the tournament, Much to Clemson's dismay and to the applauding delight of SIUE's fans. As Bozada gets up from the grass he applauds his teammate as well.

The defensive player of the tournament is also announced: It is Clark. The crowd gives its approval.

The free kick is tossed past the baseline, melting seconds. Clemson hurries up its ensuing goal kick.

1:09 is on the clock.

SIUE works the ball back into Clemson territory. The result is all but final. Clemson simply does not have the time to mount an attack. Ebert takes a hold of the ball and takes it in with his team offside. Less than a minute remains. SIUE is playing keep away. Cacciatorre gets the ball to the middle of the field for Bozada. He kicks it high into the air and out of play.

:23 are on the clock.

This is it.

Awesu gets it up field. Pat Malloy heads it out of danger. Clemson has the ball. They are 80 yards from Gettemeier. There are less than 10 seconds on the clock.

The TV announcers start counting down:

7 seconds. 6 seconds. It looks like SIU Edwardsville is going to win it! Weeeeeeeeeeeep

The horn sounds.

The Cougars are national soccer CHAMPIONS.

And look at this wild celebration. Southern Illinois of Edwardsville, the National N.C.A.A. Division I champions.

SIUE's bench clears. The dream has been realized.

Photographers from across the country make their way onto the field to catch a glimpse of the newly crowned champions in celebration. The New York Times is here. The Alettle is here. SIUE's Chancellor Buzz Shaw and Athletic Director Ed Bigham are looking for someone to hug. Confetti streams through the air as Mrs. Guelker greets her husband and Benben on the sidelines. Legendary NCAA soccer coach Jerry Yeagley of Indiana made a point to congratulate the Cougar coaching staff as well.

"We were sharing it with all the folks in the department who had played a big part in supporting us," Benben said. "Mr. Clark and Mr. Bozada had their faces painted and it was a special moment. This was a reality. We wanted big huggers."

The last words before ESPN cut its broadcast: *"Quite a human interest story for Bob Guelker, their veteran coach."*

"The comeback we made today is the mark of a true champion. What we did in this game is just like the comeback we made this season," Guelker said in the post-game.

The celebration exhibited exhaustion. SIUE was relieved, and all smiles, but many of the players were in no physical shape to go on much longer, baking in the December Florida sun.

"It was very satisfying, thinking back to all the work we put into it," Cacciatorre said. I was really too tired to hoot and holler. I couldn't do that. I just congratulated everyone I saw and kind of felt relieved. I was really exhausted. It was a satisfying feeling you don't forget."

The time had come for SIUE to accept its championship plaque; a reminder to this day on display in its Vadalabene Center.

Guelker, still weak from his off-season surgery, but high in spirits wheeled his way to the podium, mistakenly being identified as the coach of the Clemson Tigers by the Public Address announcer. Guelker turned around with a raised eyebrow, pointed towards the Sombrero's towering press-box to utter CLEMSON, mocking the mistake. Upon lifting his prize, his players would lift him. All 11 of SIUE's starters: Ed Gettemeier, Tim Clark, Terry Trushel, Dave Hundelt, Pat Malloy, Joe Howe, Bob Bozada, Tim Guelker, Jeff Cacciatore, Don Ebert and Matt Malloy summoned what little strength they had left to carry Guelker off the field. This was a true championship moment, one unprecedented by most people in the preseason, safe for what Benben had told KMOX and the players unwavering belief in their own ability.

"Then we were all whisked away," Ebert said.

Afterward

SIUE's championship team had already fallen apart.

"I left the stadium already thinking about who to get to replace these guys," Benben said.

Ebert did not travel back to Edwardsville with the Cougars, where a podium and ceremony was waiting in the Morris University Center. Instead, the junior was on his way to a press conference podium in New York, where he would be introduced as the Cosmo's first round draft pick. With his underclassman status, Ebert had to petition the league to reconsider him as a professional prospect, a plea which was accepted. Ebert's remark during the press conference serves as a reminder of what kind of player he was for SIUE, and throughout his professional career.

"I don't expect to play right away," Ebert said. "My position is striker, like Giorgio Chinaliga. I have played that position since the second grade."

Ebert was signed to an amateur contract so he could continue to play for the U.S. Olympic team at the 1980 Moscow games.

Five other SIUE players did not return to school.

Cacciatorre, a senior stayed in Florida to celebrate before flying back to Edwardsville. After two weeks, Cacciatorre was back in Florida, taken with the No. 14 pick in the NASL draft by Ft. Lauderdale.

In the second round, Clark and Bozada were taken by Minnesota. Hundelt was chosen by Seattle and Hummert went to Los Angeles.

The next season, SIUE would not advance past the first round of the NCAA tournament, losing to Southern Methodist 2-0.

What made the 1979 SIUE team different, their unity and commitment to winning was the culprit tearing them apart in the end.

SIUE's last appearance in the Division I NCAA tournament came in 1982, as a national semifinalist. In 1995, the soccer team was demoted back to Division II with the rest of the schools athletic programs.

In 2005, SIUE established an Intercollegiate Athletics Task Force made up of students, faculty, staff, community leaders and alumni to study the future of the schools athletic programs as it relates to a "strategic plan." The group considered three options: enhancing further participation in Division II, combining D-II status with some Division I programs, (much like it had been doing with men's soccer from 1973 until 1995) and participating at the D-I level in all sports. The final report released in 2007 suggested the latter, giving SIUE the go-ahead to pursue D-I status. The Southern Illinois University Board of Trustees approved the measure, as did the NCAA. SIUE left the Great Lakes Valley Conference (Division II) in 2007, and was later accepted as a member of the Ohio Valley Conference in July. The transitioning process includes an exploratory year, where SIUE still competed in D-II sports, three years as a D-I independent: playing without a conference schedule or the possibility of postseason play and one probationary year where the school is allowed conference play, but no post-season play. In 2012-2013, SIUE's athletic department will be a full-fledged member of D-I. Two of SIUE's programs, one men's and one women's are allowed to be "fast-tracked," and compete for championship events as soon as the 2010-2011 season. Given its rich history, men's soccer was a unanimous decision to be fast-

tracked. Because the OVC does not sponsor men's soccer, SIUE sought membership in the Missouri Valley Conference, and was accepted as an affiliate member in December 2008.

In its two independent seasons, the SIUE Cougars now led by Head Coach Kevin Kalish finished 5-8-1 and 5-9-3. Given improvement, the team will be eligible to return to the tournament next season. Following the same philosophy Guelker used to be successful, 22 of the 26 players on the current roster are from the St. Louis area.