

# Men's Soccer Claims OVC Crown, Earns Automatic NCAA Bid

by Joe Pott

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EDWARDSVILLE – SIUE men's soccer secured its 24<sup>th</sup> NCAA Tournament berth Saturday after winning the inaugural Ohio Valley Conference Championship with a 1-0 win over Incarnate Word Saturday at Korte Stadium.

"It feels amazing," SIUE Head Coach [Cale Wassermann](#) said. "Incarnate Word pushed us to the final whistle, and it took a special goal to beat them."

SIUE will enter the tournament unbeaten at 16-0-3. The Cougars will learn their opponent and destination Monday afternoon when the bracket is revealed at 12:00 central time.

After scoring twice in the semifinal match, [Ignacio Abeal Pou](#) scored the lone goal in the title game and earned Tournament Most Valuable Player honors for his efforts.

Nacho blasted home the game winner from 21 yards away in the 27<sup>th</sup> minute. [Stephan Moreira](#) delivered the short pass across the top of the box after getting a pass back from [Jake Karolczak](#).

SIUE has won nine straight games, the longest current winning streak in Division I.

Abeal was joined on the All-Tournament team by goalkeeper [Sam Gomez](#), midfielder [Sam Layton](#) and defender [Aaron Crabtree](#).

SIUE is making its 14<sup>th</sup> appearance in the Division I tournament, and its third since the most recent return to Division I in 2008. The Cougars last appearance, in 2016, resulted in a run to the Sweet 16 where SIUE lost to eventual national runner-up Wake Forest.

"This is the icing on the cake," Wassermann said. "First the regular season and now the tournament, but we're not done yet."