

Clinton holds off Southwestern Randolph in 2A Championship Match

November 22, 2024

MATTHEWS – The Clinton Darkhorses won the program's second North Carolina High School Athletic Association Men's Soccer Championship on Friday night with a 3-1 win against the Southwestern Randolph Cougars at the Mecklenburg Sportsplex.

The Darkhorses took the lead in the 17th minute as Holden Spell scored the opening goal off an assist from Chris Zeleya but the Cougars quickly leveled the score thanks to a goal from Fernando Hernandez just 27 seconds later. Jonathan Lopez-Degollado supplied the assist for the equalizer.

In the 37th minute, Clinton's Brandt Sumner slotted one into the bottom left corner to give the Darkhorses the lead going into halftime. Sumner, a junior midfielder, was named the Most Valuable Player for his efforts on the night.

Eight minutes into the second half, Clinton senior David Paz gave his team a two-goal lead as he gathered a ball in the middle of the box and fired it past Cougar keeper Jonathan Perez-Dominguez. Perez-Dominguez had a solid night in goal despite the loss as he tallied nine saves.

Clinton ended the night with a slight edge in possession 53-47 and had five more shots on target than the Cougars. Though slightly off target, Hernandez had two great looks in the second half as the Cougars attempted to rally but he rattled the crossbar on both attempts.

The Darkhorses, who finished the season 28-2, are now 2-1 all time in NCHSAA Championship matches and avenged a loss in penalty kicks to Charles D. Owen in the 2022 title game in Greensboro.

Southwestern Randolph finished the year 25-3 and made their debut in the NCHSAA Championship match.

The NCHSAA is committed to recognizing outstanding sportsmanship in each of our State Championship events. The Association has partnered with the North Carolina Farm Bureau to award a pair of Sportsmanship Awards at each championship event, recognizing players who have demonstrated the ideals of outstanding character and sportsmanship throughout the 2024 season. The winners of the 2A Men's Soccer NC Farm Bureau Sportsmanship Awards were Ryan Freeman from Clinton and Daniel Arellano from Southwestern Randolph.