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Matt Price

*Seattle University*

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# Sounders Make History

Matt Price, Sports & Opinion Editor

The Seattle Sounders were crowned champions of the CONCACAF Champions league May 4 in front of over 68,000 people at Lumen Field. The game was the final of two legs against Liga MX side Pumas UNAM after the teams drew 2-2 on aggregate in the prior contest. Before the Sounders, no other MLS side has won the CONCACAF Champions as Mexican teams have dominated the tournament over the last 16 years.

Before the start of the game, Sounders fans gathered on Occidental Avenue for their traditional walk toward the stadium. Chants and songs filled the air as hundreds of Seattleites paraded to see their team in a continental final. So far this season, the Sounders have not performed as well in MLS play as they do in tournaments. They currently sit 13th out of 14 teams in the Western Conference. Nevertheless, fans and the team seemed more focused on securing their Champions League victory than climbing up the table.

Gabriel Hagman, a small business owner in Seattle, is among fans who preferred the Sounders to win the Champions League, rather than focusing on league play. Even before the game started, he was confident that his team would score three goals and secure their victory in front of a monster home crowd. The atmosphere at the game compared to MLS Cup matches (last appearance in 2019) was about the same for him. He was surprised by this, as he did not think Sounders fans cared too much about the Champions League but was excited to see his team make history.

Many Pumas fans made the trip from Mexico City to see their team take on the Sounders. The traveling fans were friendly and fierce as they partied hard in Pioneer Square prior to the match. However, even the fans from Seattle knew they were in enemy territory.

Ray Trujillo has lived in Seattle for over 20 years and is a huge Sounders and Pumas fan. However, being born in Mexico City, he cheered on his hometown team which he thought was going to have a tougher time winning.

"I am a Sounders fan but my heart is divided. I love my Sounders, but my hometown team Pumas are my heart. It means a lot to me that they are playing against each other in Seattle. Regardless of the score, either way, I will be okay," Trujillo said. "The Sounders have the advantage with 67,000+ fans and they are playing on turf, which is such a big advantage. All the teams in Mexico except for one play on natural grass. The Sounders have an additional advantage as they did not play last week and Pumas have played every three days for the past three weeks."

The first half of the game concluded with a last-minute strike that caught a deflection from the Sounders' Peruvian star Raul Ruidiaz.

Mohammed Gaayte, a resident of South Seattle, thought that Ruidiaz's goal was going to be enough to secure the championship.



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“Currently, Seattle is leading 1-0 which should be enough to win the CONCACAF Champions league however, there are another 45 minutes left in the game. We need to stay alert, together and louder, just get loud as fans in general and let’s win it and make history. Let’s make our Sounders and the city of Seattle proud,” Gaayte said. “I went to the MLS final in 2019 and that was a big big game, but this one I think is the biggest, and nothing out of the 50+ games I have attended has compared to this one. The fans, the readiness, the chanting, the crowd I mean this is beautiful. We will be in the Fifa Club World Cup if we win this and there is a chance we will face or meet the winner of the Champions League in Europe, Asai, Africa and Oceania so we are at that level. There is no American team ever to appear at that stage. I would be so proud to see that and would be the cherry on top of being a fan that loves and attends these games.

Heading into the second half, Pumas played very rough, totaling 22 fouls by the end of the game. In the 80th minute, Ruidiaz struck again on a beautifully worked play that featured a low cross from Jordan Morris into the box, then tapped over to an open Ruidiaz by Nico Lodeiro to put the Sounders up 2-0 and 4-2 on aggregate. The stadium exploded with the Pacific Northwest Seismic Network recording three “RaveQuakes” out of sheer excitement stemming from the goals. The final goal to send the Sounders into history came from club legend Nico Lodiero after Seattle pounded the Pumas goal with several attempts.

The crowd exploded the stadium into an anthem singing Queen’s “We are the Champions” as the stoppage time came to a pause after 90 minutes of play. One could observe the sheer emotion the Sounders and fans shared when the final whistle blew out. Winning the Champions League as the first American team enshrines Seattle’s name in soccer and futbol history for eternity.