

NEWS

CALIFORNIA STORM LIFTS JERRY ZANELLI TROPHY AFTER WINNING FOURTH WPSL CHAMPIONSHIP

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STILLWATER, OKLA — The **California Storm** topped the **Colorado Rapids Women** in the **WPSL Championship Final 3-1** to lift the **Jerry Zanelli Trophy** Sunday night at **Neal Patterson Stadium** on the campus of **Oklahoma State University**.

It was the Storm's fourth league championship since joining as a founding member in 1998 but its first since 2004. The Storm now has won the most in league history with the win.



“It’s such a special thing to play for a national championship,” **Jamie Levoy**, Storm head coach, said. “I am so proud of the team. They seized the moment and became national champions. It is a dream come true.

From the opening whistle, the Storm looked to play on the front foot. Levoy acknowledged they needed to force the Rapids to make mistakes in certain areas of the field to have a successful night. Tight player-on-player marking left the Rapids no time on the ball and shots on goal from distance by the Storm midfield pinned the Colorado side in its own half of the field.

The early pressure clearly rattled the Rapids.

“They [the Storm] made it incredibly difficult for us to play the way we wanted—particularly in the beginning of the game,” **Sebastian Giraldo**, Rapids head coach, said. “This is one of few teams we have come up against all season that have been able to make us change the way we do things. Full credit to them; they deserve to be national champions.”

Co-captain **Janae Gonzalez**, who scored the winning goal in the Storm’s semifinal match on Friday, nearly opened the scoring in just the ninth minute when she found herself with the ball thirty yards from the Rapids’ goal. Gonzalez’s driven shot smashed off the crossbar just beyond the reach of Rapids goalkeeper **Ellie Sommers**.

Four minutes later, **Alexandra Klos** found the back of the net on a driven corner kick from Gonzalez to put the Storm up 1-0.



“We saw on film that they [the Rapids] zone mark on corner kicks,” Gonzalez said. “We crowded the zone, so we had numbers [and] my job was to hit the ball as hard as I could into where everyone was.”

Klos' header deflected slightly off a Rapids' defender, making Sommers adjust her leap for the ball mid-air but could not keep the looping ball out of the net.

The Rapids' first opportunity came after the first-half hydration break when **Alyssa Glover** ran on to a ball from the left flank that **Adi Walick** played from deep in central midfield. Glover skied her shot harmlessly over the crossbar, keeping the scoreline 1-0, which held through the duration of the first half.

After minor tactical tweaks during halftime, the Rapids started the second half looking more comfortable on the ball. Three minutes into the second half, the Rapids pulled level thanks to some beautiful interplay in the Storm's offensive third. From the left flank, Glover's cross found **Sami Feller** at the top of the penalty area, who controlled it perfectly with her chest and laid the ball off to **Shiloh Miller** to finish from 25 yards.



The Rapids equalizer didn't hold long as the Storm responded immediately. Just three minutes after the tying goal, **Brenda Uribe** slammed the ball past Sommers after she failed to hold Gonzalez's initial shot from ten yards out. The Storm was back in the lead at 2-1.

The Rapids nearly leveled for the second time in the 65' minute when Storm goalkeeper **Judit Gonzalez Oliveras'** fingertip-save spectacularly denied **Hannah Gallegos** from inside the penalty area.

Mitsy Ramirez put the match away in the 78' minute after Gonzalez sent in a looping ball from the right side that pulled Sommers off her line. Ramirez slammed Sommers' partial clearance back past her to secure the Storm's fourth WPSL title.



As the Storm finally lifted the Jerry Zanelli Trophy again, Oliveras and Gonzalez each earned individual honors for their performances. Oliveras, who was initially the Storm's reserve keeper early in the season, was presented with the **Golden Glove** award to honor her four match-deciding saves and a stronghold in Friday's semifinal.

"Major kudos to Judit [Gonzalez Oliveras] for stepping up when we needed her," Levoy said. "She didn't get a lot of minutes during the season. She came in and played amazing these last two games."

A semifinal match-winner and a hat trick of assists in the final earned Gonzalez the **Most Outstanding Player** award.

BOX SCORE

Colorado Rapids Women: Sommers, Gilchrist, Reuland, Gallegos, Baker,

California Storm: Oliveras, Reed, Ayson, Treiterer, Smith, Hutchison

Goals:

14' Alexandra Klos–Cali

48' Shiloh Miller–Colo

51' Brenda Uribe–Cali

78' Misty Ramirez–Cali

Misconduct:

None

Rapids/Storm

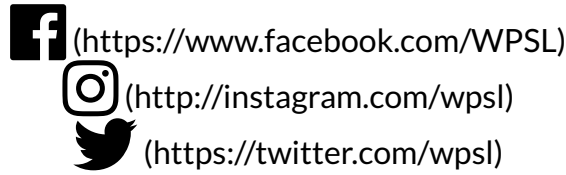
Shots on Goal: 5/9

Saves: 6/4

Corner Kicks: 3/5

Fouls: 6/13

Offside: 0/0



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