

For the second time in two years, Mexico's national women's team didn't leave Decatur with a win.

This time, El Tricolores salvaged a draw, finishing tied 1-1 with Argentina on Thursday night in front of more than 2,500 fans at The Jack.

"I think we had a good beginning with a good first half," Mexico coach Leo Cuellar said.

"Unfortunately, we took a goal in the last minute of the first half. I think that kind of shook us a little."

Argentina, playing with nearly its full national club, outshot Mexico 7-5, took three corners to Mexico's one and forced Mexico goalkeeper Pamela Tajonar to make seven saves.

Mexico, playing with mostly a U-21 team, committed 23 fouls to Argentina's 15 and was the aggressor in the second half, surprising Argentina head coach Carlos Borrello.

"I thought Mexico was going to keep the ball on the ground and play possession," Borrello said.

"I didn't expect them to play direct."

A year ago, Duke University beat Mexico 1-0. Thursday, it appeared early that Mexico would take the victory this time.

On a crisp, clear Tennessee Valley night, Mexico struck first in the 22nd minute as Christine Nieva poked into the goal a ball that slipped through Argentina goalkeeper Vanina Correa's hands in the 18-yard box. Seconds earlier, Correa had stopped a hard cross into the box from Mexico's Lupita Worbis.

"It was an unfortunate mistake," Borrello said. "The ball was wet, and the keeper wasn't able to hold onto it. It was a lucky play."

Once Mexico took the lead, it was content to slow down the pace of play, controlling possession and making Argentina force the issue.

It worked for awhile, but fouls on Mexico began to take their toll. Three times in the final 15 minutes of the first half, Argentina was given free kicks within 25 yards of the goal because of Mexico fouls. But the Argentines weren't able to take advantage. With one minute of extra time put on the clock in the first half, it looked as if Mexico would escape without conceding a shot, let alone a goal.

But Argentina showed that it had some feistiness to it.

Clarisa Huber dribbled down the far sideline to the corner before booting a beautiful cross that went over Tajonar's head and hands. Waiting to pounce at the backpost was Belen Potassa, and pounce she did, knocking the ball into the net for the game-tying goal.

"Split-second late decision," Cuellar said. "At this level, you pay the price immediately if you don't make the right play."

Argentina had more opportunities, controlling possession 58 percent to 42. And several of those opportunities were in the box, though it couldn't ever get a clean shot at goal.

Borrello wasn't happy with his team's play.

"Didn't play well in the first half," he said. "The second half was better. We started playing 50-50 balls, and that's when we started playing better."

The United States will play Canada in the championship match in Mobile on Saturday at 7:30 p.m. Meanwhile, Mexico plays China at 5 p.m., and Argentina plays Trinidad and Tobago at 2 p.m.

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