Leading up to the match between Harvard and Davenport University tomorrow, the players are looking to prepare for it like they would any other game.

Harvard lock and team President Jonathan Rossi emphasized that his team is working on keeping their fitness up and improving decision-making. “We haven’t changed too much in terms of training structure from the rest of the spring season, but we have focused a lot on game-type situations and facets of the game we didn’t execute as well as we had hoped in Buffalo,” he said.

Team captain Gabe Cunningham echoed Rossi’s statement, saying that the team has followed their normal training schedule over the last two weeks.

Harvard’s strong tradition is factoring into their mindset for the match. “We have really come together as a team throughout the year, so I’m excited to see what we can do,” Rossi said. “Also, Harvard Rugby has an amazing tradition of excellence, so it would be great to add another national title to the program.”

Ivy League playoff winners Harvard (Dartmouth won the Ivy League regular season, but as a CPD team did not participate in the playoff to decide a seed to nationals) made their way through the round of 16 by beating Northeastern University, 15-0, in Buffalo, NY. The playing

conditions were messy so Harvard had to rely heavily on their pack, which dominated in the scrums and lineouts. Because of this, the Crimson players were able to get their offense rolling, scoring two tries, a conversion and a penalty kick.

The match against University of Buffalo was closer, with Harvard only winning by two points. Harvard pulled off the 20-18 win thanks to fly half Max de la Cal, who slotted 15 of Harvard's 20 points with the boot.

"We've played really well together as a team, and I've been impressed with our physicality, which has continued to develop over the course of the season," Cunningham added.

But Harvard did not stop there. The team toured Prague and Berlin in March to build up some valuable experience. "Playing three different men's sides on this tour really helped us bond as a team and learn to play on the road," Rossi said. The team will have to take this lesson to heart if they hope to beat Davenport in Stanford, a cross-country trip for the Crimson.

Davenport took on the University of Minnesota and Kansas State University to reach the semifinals. The Panthers crushed both opponents, beating Minnesota 27-0 and Kansas State 46-5.

Davenport is wary of Harvard, but focused on aspects of the game they think they can exploit. "They're an extremely forward heavy team, but our forwards are skilled and big too," center Erin Hillary said. "We just need to get it away from their pack."

If the Panther forwards can take care of the Harvard pack, then the speedy Davenport backline can be free to exploit gaps and spin the ball out to the wings. "We need to focus on getting it wide to our speed on the outside, play smart and work as a team, not individuals," Hillary said.

Rossi is aware of this and stresses that Harvard play smart rugby. "Our pack has been working on our set pieces and playing clean, sound rugby at the breakdown," he said. "… we know they are a quick team so we are looking to play smart, team-oriented rugby."

While Harvard has been around since 1872, Davenport is new to the national championships. The team is in it's second season and first year of eligibility for the DI National Tournament.

"There is a bit of nervousness being a second-year program and getting this far," Hillary added.

"The team is looking forward to playing this weekend and is grateful to have the opportunity to compete at Stanford with some of the best teams in the country," Rossi stated. "We aren't bringing any anxiety or nervousness with us - just looking forward to doing everything in our power to make the most out of the weekend."

Hillary is confident his side can compete. "We're confident, nervous but confident, we can get the job done."