

GW v WWU in DII Quarters

Written by Jackie Finlan
Sunday, 17 April 2011 05:15

A battle of the Washingtons is on tap for the Women's DII College National Championships today, as George Washington takes on Western Washington in the teams' quarterfinal.

Western Washington got through its Round of 16 match with ease, defeating Claremont Colleges 67-5. WWU had a speed advantage over its Southern California opponents, and once the team got comfortable with the wide field, used speedsters like inside center Erin Stehr (who had three tries) to overwhelm Claremont's backs. It was a big kick-and-chase game as well, and Claremont's fullback struggled with the consistent pressure.

The forwards dominated the scrums and shored up their lineouts.

"One area where we needed work was in our lineouts," WWU assistant coach Mika Underwood said. "We had been losing a lot of ball in our throws, so we worked on our lineouts in the past couple of weeks and it showed."

The only issue the team had was the heat, but the strong performance allowed the team to rest its players and work its bench. WWU is expecting a tough match against George Washington, which downed Lee University 20-5 in its first-round playoff match.

GW retained the majority of possession and took a 15-0 lead into the half thanks to tries from Lily Olsen, Jaime Albarelli and a penalty try. Some injuries forced some movement in the roster, "which was interesting," according to GW president Cait O'Donnell, "but we played through adversity well."

O'Donnell did the honors in the second half and logged GW's fourth try on the day, and Lee managed a score in the final 30 seconds of the game.

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“I was impressed by the speed and physicality of their forwards,” Lee coach Mike Freake said. “They consistently got over the gainline and beat our girls to the breakdown. Their backs ran much too sideways, and relied on agility and cutbacks to get up the field, but it was really the forwards who won them the game.

“Our girls played well in patches and had two good chances to score,” Freake continued, “but got impatient and didn't take advantage of some space out wide. I was very pleased with their effort and perseverance.”

Whoever wins today's quarterfinal – GW or WWU – will face the winner of Norwich v Radcliffe in the semifinals.