

Albright Returns to NSCRO Semis

Written by RUGBYMag Staff

Wednesday, 14 November 2012 12:37

Albright College has won the Mid-Atlantic berth to the National Small College championship, defeating William & Mary 41-31 during last weekend's title bout. It was a fantastic, see-sawing match, but Albright's composure in the waning minutes saw the Pennsylvania team through to the victory.



William & Mary, which competed in Virginia's division two last year, imposed their will in the first 20 minutes. They settled into their pattern of forward crashes followed by a wide attack. Albright played the majority of that first quarter on defense, making it to the breakdown but not realigning in space well.

But Albright took advantage of the opportunities handed them, and 13 minutes in, William & Mary committed a penalty in their own end. Scrumhalf Stephanie Reyes tapped through the mark and sent the ball to No. 8 Danisha Higgs, who burst into the try zone for the game's first points, 5-0.

Four minutes later, William & Mary tied it up when fullback Alex Muri countered an Albright kick and took the corner for the try. Flanker Gussie Maguire added another William & Mary try, and then Reyes narrowed the margin with a converted try of her own, 12-10 Albright.

Four minutes later, William & Mary retook the lead with another Muri try that flyhalf Maggie Olney converted. But with time winding down, Albright evened it up at 17-all with a corner try and momentum into the break.

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The second half was much of the same – tries answering tries. William & Mary got five-pointers out of No. Kiara Odom and Maguire, while Olney added two conversions. And Albright saw Reyes, inside center Amy Doffont and fullback Laura Nwankwor dot down.

The turning point came when Olney was yellow carded, and Albright used that opportunity to send Nwankwor over for the try. At that point, Albright had taken a 34-31 lead. When back at full strength, William & Mary sent everything they had at Albright, and one promising break out wide fell flat with a knock-on. The subsequent scrum resulted in a free kick to Albright, so Reyes offloaded to Higgs, who took a long route around the corner for the game-ending try, which flyhalf Alyssa Wunsch converted, 41-31.

Albright will play Northeast champion Roger Williams in the national semifinals. Roger Williams advanced to the big show with a 48-0 victory over Castleton State. In the other semifinal, Wayne State College, which won the West championship with an 86-0 victory over Bemedji State, will take on Wheaton College, which won New England after downing Plattsburgh 58-0.

All of the games will be Webcast via NSCRO's website, [here](#) . Albright and Roger Williams play at 10:30 a.m. this Saturday, and Wayne State College v Wheaton follows at 12:15 p.m.