

WCR, Navy Prepare for Quarterfinal Bout

Written by Jackie Finlan
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The tough work of the WCR forwards enabled the team's 30-10 win over UCLA. (Shelby Peterson photo).

A tremendous quarterfinal match awaits in the Women's DI College Championships, as Women's Cougar Rugby (WCR) and Navy prepare for tomorrow's face-off. Both teams put about 20 points between themselves and their competitors, and received well-earned berths to the Round of 8.

WCR defeated SoCal #2 team UCLA 30-10. The Bruins put in a good showing and challenged the Cougars early, scoring first to put the pressure on WCR.

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"Credit goes to UCLA. They're here to play and came at us," WCR coach Tom Waqa said. "I was impressed with our girls; they didn't panic. They stayed focused and answered back immediately."

Rebekah Siebach relieved some pressure with a try to even it up, and then Kristi Jackson and Kara Remington followed suit. Star Bollinger hit a conversion for the 17-5- lead at half. Once again, the weather conditions and narrow field dimensions restricted the wide-open game for which both teams are known, but WCR adapted better to the restrictions.

"A truly good team doesn't need perfect conditions to execute," WCR captain Kara Remington said. "You've got to run with it and be ready to look for different ways to play. You make do with what you have."

UCLA played a similar game to WCR, sucking in the defense with aggressive punches around the fringe before sending the ball wide. The Cougars had a couple close calls out wide but some scrambling defense managed to kill the Bruins' overloads.

WCR did a better job retaining possession, and that made the difference in the game. The forwards were greatly challenged by UCLA, but stepped it up and retained enough possession to allow the backs to move the ball. Ela Wolfgramm and Jessie Beck tacked on second-half tries, while Bollinger and Chanel Arts split the two conversions. With a comfortable lead, Waqa made some substitutions and UCLA took advantage of the inexperience on the pitch, scoring with not time remaining, 30-10.

"We wanted it more," Waqa said. "We weren't restricted, we adjusted; although we could have scored a lot more if the field was wider. We had a game plan and the girls stuck to it."

"The game set a tone for us," Remington added. "We're here to win and that what we did today. There were no huge superstars today, and I'm glad about that. We're playing as a team and that's how we plan to move forward."

The Cougars will face Navy tomorrow, which defeated Colorado State 41-18 today.

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"We played well," CSU coach Jenna Middleton said, "but Navy is a really good, organized team. They were as physical as we assumed, and it came down to being outsized in the pack and especially the backs. The scrumhalf did a good job of getting the ball out, and they were prepared to run. They moved the ball really quickly and capitalized on our mistakes."

CSU played Navy to a 24-11 halftime deficit, but mentally slid out of contention in the second half when a series of minor mistakes allowed Navy to make good on turnover ball. While CSU did an excellent job in the ruck, they couldn't hold onto possession long enough to unleash their backs, who played good defense but barely any offense. Eight of CSU points came from the long, strong boot of flyhalf Laura Whitney.

Navy's performance against a strong, wily CSU erases all doubt that the young, inexperienced team lacks consistency. Sue Parker has whipped together an extra potent squad that will certainly challenge WCR for the berth to the Final