Pittsburgh, PA - Radcliffe heads to its first-ever DII College Championship final after downing Western Washington 32-14 in today's semifinal.

The teams felt each other out during the first quarter, and both sides had a couple of attacking opportunities inside their opponent's 22 meter. For Radcliffe, one thing became abundantly clear: Western Washington knows how to scrum.

"They were the strongest scrum we've faced all year," Radcliffe forwards captain Janelle Lambert said. "They were really aggressive, and we were lagging a bit. Once we amped up our intensity and became more aggressive on defense, our offense picked up."

But not before WWU lit up the scoreboard with a converted try 15 minutes in. It was a wake-up call for Radcliffe, and players like lock Nicole Poteat and flyhalf Evan Hoese forced a tide-change with some big tackles and leg-pumping punches.

Fullback Xanni Brown, who scored two tries on the day, put Radcliffe in the position for their first try, trekking upfield before sending the ball to Western Washington's 22 meter, where Radcliffe earned the lineout. Wing Shelby Lin ate up some more ground off the set piece and gave Lambert the go-forward she needed to get over the try line, 7-5.

The turning point occured at an unlikely moment, for Radcliffe anyway. Penalized with two yellow cards just before the half, Radcliffe returned to the second half with only 13 players. It was an opportunity for the Flames to put some distance between itself and Radcliffe, but the opposite occured.

From a midfield scrum, Anna Kamerow carried her team into WWU territory. From there, the ball worked to Brown who danced her way into the try zone for the 10-7 lead. Wing Shellonda Anderson recorded the first of her two tries, 15-7.

"We were down players but managed to keep them from scoring," Lambert recalled. "We were

mentally into it, and I think we got into their heads. We wanted to keep the game in our hands."

But WWU had no intentions of dwelling on missed opportunities and made good on another converted try to pull within one, 15-14.

"We know they can come from behind and win," Lambert referenced WWU's OT win against George Washington in the quarterfinals. "They have heart and never give up. But neither do we, and we were able to fight back with them."

Radcliffe's fitness began to wear down the Flames, and that opened up the field for three consecutive tries from Anderson, Madeleine Ballard and Brown to end 32-14.

"We train so hard, especially having to play military teams like Norwich during the season," Lambert said. "It the end, our fitness really helped us."

Lambert tipped her hat for flanker Emily Yorke for running some great support lines and keeping the attack alive, as well as Anderson, who is always a great finisher out wide.

"We knew we could win this game, and that mentality was key," Lambert concluded. "We're ready for the final and any team we face. We're really confident, and our cohesiveness between the backs and forwards is great."

Radcliffe will see Notre Dame, which defeated Stonehill 22-10, in tomorrow's final.