Feeding off the momentum from their Stanford Invitational title win, Chico State women opened up their Pacific Mountain North season with a 32-5 win over UC Davis.

“We were a little more expansive,” Chico State coach Alex Triantafyllou said of his side's edge over Davis. “We were looking for one more pass, where Davis seemed to get caught in the pick-and-go game. We’ve really been focusing on fitness, too – moving the ball and getting players to where they need to be.”

Chico took a 15-0 lead into the break, with tries from Hannah Keeton and Megan Foster. Backs captain and flyhalf Kylie Hahn added five points on a conversion and penalty. Davis got on the board in the second half, but not before Natalie Oelsner dotted down a five-pointer for the 20-5 lead. It was a short-lived rebound for Davis, as Chico sent Jamie McElhinney over for the team’s fourth try, and Oelsner ended the game with her second score on the day. Hahn added a final conversion for the 32-5 victory.

Scrumhalf Sierra Knebel and flanker Yesenia Angel – Forward and Back of the Match, respectively – played particularly well in the early-season test, while pack stalwart Bryt Felder-Brown put her head down and led by example, the same way she's played for the past three years.

“We’re off to a good start on the scoreboard,” Triantafyllou said. “Unfortunately, we’ve taken our knocks over the last couple of weeks. We’ve suffered two broken legs and are numbers are hurting.”

Chico State had a solid 35 players in the fall, but after the winter break, the team is now 25 players strong. There's a good bunch of returners pulling their collective weight, but Triantafyllou would have liked a bigger rookie class.

"We have a decent mix of rookies and are making good progress getting our pattern down," Triantafyllou said. "By the time we're peaking, hopefully we'll be more fluid and less rigid. Early on, we're making sure they get the pattern, then hopefully, they'll be more creative and take more chances.

"I have high hopes for the team," Triantafyllou added. "If we can stay healthy, then we'll give it a run."

Chico's biggest competition in the conference is everyone's biggest challenge: Stanford. The Cardinal also kicked off their league season last weekend, downing a strong California 32-0.

This weekend, Chico travels north for a double-header against Oregon State and Oregon, then travels to Las Vegas for a challenge match against Women's Cougar Rugby during the Las Vegas Invitational.