

Whitewater Wins Big WIIL Clash

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The newly formed WIIL Rugby Conference had its first marquee early season match-up between UW-Milwaukee and UW-Whitewater in Whitewater, Wisc. Saturday, featuring two unbeaten teams who both made the USA Rugby DII Round of 16 in the spring.

From the first kickoff, the energy level was high for both teams as they tested each other's defenses, but Whitewater drew first blood with a penalty kick by Brian Heim in the third minute after an offside call on the Milwaukee backline.

From there, the teams kept it between the 22s but were unable to capitalize – Whitewater due to handling errors and Milwaukee due to the closing defensive speed of their opponent.

Whitewater finally had a break in the 15th minute with some timely backline passes that spun

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the ball wide to wing Danny Krause who eluded a tackler before touching down the first try of the match at the 15 minute mark (unconverted).

Frustration was beginning to set in for Milwaukee, who had effective attacks off the fringes, but many possessions ended in poached ball or handling errors. Whitewater's frenetic defense caused Milwaukee to be dinged by the ref multiple times for not releasing and the Warhawks capitalized with a converted try between the posts by Matt Drzewiecki in the 24th minute to extend the lead to 15-0.

Milwaukee's aggressive forward play finally paid dividends with a try by hooker Brad Baake after a quick tap penalty at the halftime whistle which brought the score to 15-5.

Both teams began the second half with renewed spirit, determined to prove their mettle. Whitewater's fullback Justin Patterson was key to several effective counters, while Milwaukee's scrumhalf/flyhalf combo of Bryan Garay and Jeff Cebe coordinated the aggressive Panther attack.

15 minutes into the second half, Whitewater finally broke through the line and with some timely offloads saw center Eric Pachowicz score a try in the corner to stretch the Warhawk lead to 20-5.

Milwaukee continued to have their opportunities, often stringing together many phases of pick and go ruck ball, but when they attempted to skip it out to the wings, the Whitewater defense proved too stout. A key sequence came when a Milwaukee wing with space got tracked down by Whitewater flanker Brian Heim 7 meters from the try line, who then poached it and ran untouched down the sideline for 60 meters before being run out of bounds.

Brian Heim kicked a penalty at the 27th minute and wing Danny Krause touched down his second try of the match in the 37th minute to give Whitewater the bonus point for scoring 4 tries.

Milwaukee wasn't done and Brian Endres touched down a centered try of his own, which Jeff

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Cebe converted to provide the final score of 28-12.

Whitewater used this game to prove that even though it had lost some key players from last year's squad, they were still the toast of Wisconsin and they succeeded. Milwaukee, who has been haunted by lopsided margins against Whitewater in recent years, was convincing in showing they had closed the gap with their in-state rival.

Both teams are surely headed for the WIIL Conference playoffs in early November and could very easily meet again in the Championship.