

Air Force Flies Past Colorado

Written by Bernie Decker
Tuesday, 05 April 2011 10:29

In a matchup between College Premier Division clubs Air Force (#25) and University of Colorado (#24), the servicemen came out on top Saturday on a warm spring afternoon at Glendale's Infinity Park stadium. The Zoomies' pack out-muscled their upstate neighbors at both set and loose pieces on their way to a 36-15 victory.

The Academy got on the board early as standoff Carson Cleveland feinted the swing out wide and fed hard-charging inside center Anthony Ruiz at CU's twenty meter line. Ruiz was quickly into space, turned around a CU defender with a jink, and was across goal for a Cleveland-converted goal at six minutes. The Buffs returned fire immediately and brought the action into Air Force territory, but were pinged for handling in the loose and the Zoomies were soon inside CU's 22 and threatening as the Buffs sought to align their defense. An Academy knock-on five meters from goal had CU with the put, but Air force drove the Buffs off the ball and No. 8 Brennan Gallagher scooped, stepped, and dove over for the try and a 12-0 advantage.

CU attacked at the re-start, their lighter forwards obtaining turnover ball at the 10-meter-line and working their way slowly inside the 22. Air Force were penalized for offsidies ten meters from goal and ball swung wide enabled flanker Alex Oesterle to locate and exploit a seam for the touch down, AFA up 12-5 midway through the first half.

Jagged play of both minor and major infraction characterized the next ten minutes with each side attempting to imprint their brand of dominance on the match: Air Force with its powerful forward rushes and CU setting their talented backline to work. But it was the Academy side that were next to score as replacement flanker Jeremy Warfield scooted into goal and, with Cleveland's conversion, made it a 19-5 margin at the break.

The Buffs came storming out of the blocks and spent a good deal of time in Zoomie quarters, but were unable to translate possession to points and the bigger, stronger Air Force pack began to wear down their opponents. Ruiz picked up his brace, taking a perfectly thrown wideout pass from Cleveland into goal and extending the lead to 24-5 at 58 minutes. Air Force continued to pound away in the forwards, aggressively contesting in the backline and poaching ball in the loose.

They were soon at CU's five meter line and replacement forward Austin Halle snagged the ball

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from the loose and barged into goal for a 29-5 Academy margin in the 65th minute. And Air Force were back at it straightaway after a 40 meter scamper by Taylor Roberts put Jake Byorth away for the Cleveland-converted goal and it was 36-5 as time ebbed.

But CU were not done. The Buffs turned over ball at the Zoomies' ten meter line and a series of banging, dodging runs by centers Folks and Lahman found them pressuring at the loose fifteen meters from goal. Eighthman Ben Shafer snatched ball and stepped inside a tackler before knocking through another pair of would-be stoppers and into goal: AFA 36, CU 10 at 72 minutes. A bit of desperate success as CU quick-tapped a penalty and put Air Force on the back foot, rushing into the 22 and setting the platform closeby the tryline.

A pickup and slash into goal by Oesterle made it 36-15 with five minutes left and one began to wonder if a fantastic finish was in the mix, but Air Force tightened up their defense and got the well-earned victory.

Next up for the Zoomies, Colorado State University Rams, Saturday April 9th @ Infinity, while the Buffs travel to Salt Lake City for a tangle with CPD rival, Utah on the day.
Scoring:

Air Force 36

Tries: Ruiz (2), Gallagher, Warfield, Halle, Byorth
Convs: Cleveland (3)

University of Colorado 15

Tries: Oesterle (2), Shafer

Officials: T. Luscombe, J. Larkin, D. Hattrup