Written by Jackie Finlan
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Rutgers (25) earned its first win of the College Premier season, upsetting Kutztown (15) 15-13 under the lights tonight. The victory was slightly tinged considering Kutztown played a man down for the second half, but as Rutgers coach Ken Halligan said, "A win's a win."

Rutgers leaned on its dominating forw

ards to build a 5-3 lead into the half. The New Brunswick team first got on the board after driving deep into Kutztown's territory, where a five-meter scrum set up a pushover try that No. 8 Eric Rubenstein touched down.

"All year our scrum has been holding us in the game," Halligan said. "It's our go-to area. We try to slow down the ball and keep it in the forwards. With the exception of one backs' try, all of our tries have come from our forwards, mauling and driving inside the 22 meter. Yes, we have some more experience in our forwards [compared to our backs], but like a lot of sports, we play an East Coast game strategy - keep it in close and grind in out."

Kutztown kept it close with a first-half penalty, but were severely handicapped when its No. 8 was was red carded for hitting a player out of bounds. Penalties continued to plague Kutztown and Mike Beal's penalty extended Rutgers' lead to 8-3. Four minutes later, however, Kutztown reinstated the two-point game with a penalty of its own.

The game stood at 8-6 until the closing minutes of the match. Kutztown had some opportunities in the backs, but wing Otto Weiler contained extra-man overloads well and put in a couple of game-saving tackles out wide. Rutgers mauled its way to Kutztown's 10 meter, and three phases later, prop Joe Malanka punched off the breakdown and fell over the line for a converted try, 15-6.

But once again, Kutztown answered the score and saw flanker Zach Jessell dot down a try with minutes left on the clock. Unlike previous performances when Rutgers had let late leads slip away, the team kept the ball in the forwards, drove back into Kutztown territory, and ran out the clock.

"I'm definitely pleased with our performance," Halligan said. "We've had quite when we haven't been able to close out. It was nice to finally win one." It was especially satisfying given the approximate 500 spectators on the sideline.

Halligan was particularly pleased by Malanka and fellow prop Jim Roblin, who led the forwards from up front. Rutgers' scrum has been a highlight of the team's season, but the irony is that Rutgers doesn't do much scrummaging practice; in fact, its practices aren't very contact oriented. The team has lost four or five key starters, and its depth lacks experience, so keeping injuries to a minimum is paramount.

Next weekend, Rutgers is on the road to Ohio State, which also has just one win in Rugby East, while Kutztown takes on Dartmouth.

Rutgers 15
Tries: Malanka, Rubenstein
Convs: Beal
Pens: Beal

Kutztown 13
Tries: Jessel

Convs: Acker
Pens: Acker (2)