The US Military Academy and the US Naval Academy have played each other plenty of times, but that game has almost always been a friendly – plenty of pride on the line, no doubt, but nothing else.

This weekend will be the first time since the 2004 national DI quarterfinals that the two military academies have clashed in anger, so to speak. Back then, Navy won 22-8 to make the final four (where they lost to Cal). This time, the winner gets 1st place in the College Premier Division Rugby East, the loser 2nd place.

At stake, then, is a championship, a home playoff game, and not having to spend a not inconsequential chunk of money to travel to BYU in a week.

Oh, and there's that whole Go Army, Beat Navy or Go Navy, beat Army thing. It's been around a while, too.

"It's part of the preparation almost by rite," said Army Head Coach Rich Pohlidal of the emotions involved. "I can't really worry about it. We just have to prepare and focus on winning another rugby game. When it's Navy the energy takes care of itself."

"We started to try to put things in perspective, but it's not easy," added Navy Head Coach Mike Flanagan. "Everyone's wired. This is a big one for a lot of the marbles. The danger is guys can be so wired for the game they're not thinking to the plan or the pattern – it can become an I moment instead of a We moment."

Several thousand are expected at West Point for the clash. Army is 6-0, having scored at least four tries in every game, and averaging 45 points for and 20 against. Navy is 6-0 against the

same group of teams, with six bonus points for tries, and an average of 34 points for and 15 against.

Army gets the edge on offense and Navy on D? Maybe so. Both are expected to play very physical up front, and thunderously in defense. Navy might be a little strong in the tight five, while Army might have the edge in the outside backs. It's tough.

For the Black Knights, Uiki Leatigaga scored five tries last week, giving him 12 for the season, which is the most for anyone in the CPD not named Ryan Roundy. Will Holder's 20 points from a try, a penalty and six conversions, puts the flyhalf/fullback at 107 for the season, good for third in the league.

But other players have had a huge impact, as well.

Dave Geib continues to play superbly despite moving from flyhalf to fullback. No. 8 Marshall Moten has emerged as a leading player while captain and prop Kallen Ryan is a rock. Flanker Tim Dean may have come to the game late, but, says Pohlidal, has "one of the best work rates in college rugby."

He will need it against a truly outstanding Navy back row that features Sean Rohrs at No. 8, Seamus Siefring at blindside and Blake Taylor at openside. While JJ Stewart is back in the centers after injury and young flyhalf Jake Leete is directing play well.

Yes, Navy has a backline, too. But their bread and butter is 6-7-8, with those back-rowers being the top three try-scorers on the team.

At Army Pohlidal knows he has to contain that group as they roam the field. He also wishes to knock down any thought of his team being heavily favored (homefield advantage or not).

"We graduated 22 last year so everyone was working his way into the team," Pohlidal explained. "And this is a really tough conference – I hope every conference has as much parity as ours does. The more parity the more energy you have to put into it to make yourself successful. Remember, we may be 6-0 but we had to work for it. We escaped against Kutztown. Dartmouth – we escaped from that game, too. It was close."

"We've watched Army and Army's watched us; we know each other," added Flanagan. "Flip a coin, we're not that different. I think we've got some similar athletes and some similar styles, and pretty much the same results against common opponents. We play them on the road, but that's secondary. It's Army-Navy, if one of us was 0-6 it would hold the same appeal."

It's for 1st place, it's for a home playoff game, it's for a perfect regular season … and it's Army-Navy. If you're within driving distance of West Point, you know where you should be.

Army and Navy kick off at the Anderson Rugby Complex at West Point Saturday at 5pm EST.