

Cal Powers By Utah

Written by Alex Goff
Saturday, 14 May 2011 23:14



Cal and BYU will face off once again the highest level men's college final after each won their semifinals Saturday evening at Infinity Park in Glendale, Colo.

Cal defeated Utah 62-14 in the opening match, while BYU beat Arkansas State 36-15 in a game that was much closer than the score indicates.

The Golden Bears of Cal and the University of Utah were close early, too. In a very physical match, Cal opted to work a quick one-ball game to counter Utah's danger out wide. So they often ran quick rucks and pick-and-goes, or opted for no ruck at all, simply taking the ball placed on the ground and rumbling on with the forwards.

The approach worked well and resulted in a try for prop James Besser in the opening moments. A James Bailes penalty put Cal up 8-0, but then the Bears started committing penalties. Warned repeatedly to get onside at the ruck, they didn't listen and paid for it. Eventually Utah pressured the Cal line, and when they got yet another penalty, opted for the scrum. Smart move, as a nifty backline move ended up with Taukave Lauti taking an inside pass and racing over the line to make it 8-7.

Cal knew they were in a ball game and charged right back, stealing a Utah lineout. Flanker Tom Rooke, who has been going from strength to strength, drew all sorts of attention and then calmly offloaded to No. 8 Danny Barrett who galloped into the corner.

That was a good moment for Barrett, who then somewhat negated that by getting a yellow card moments later for a needless late tackle on Utah scrumhalf Don Pati.

Cal Powers By Utah

Written by Alex Goff
Saturday, 14 May 2011 23:14

But Cal weathered that storm, and in fact playing a man down they started scoring tries. Before that, though, Utah had a prime opportunity to put AJ Tuinau in for a try, but the big center couldn't quite keep the handle on the ball.

Cal broke it open then. An aimless kick from Utah was taken by wing Dutin Muhn who put on the jets and then fed captain and fullback Blaine Scully for a try. Suddenly it was 22-7, and soon thereafter a series pushes by the forwards put Cal close.

More forward work jammed the Utes back on their line. Utah put in some impressive goal line tackles, but the inevitable inevitably happened, as lock Jason Law wriggled over. 29-7.

Scully again capped off good teamwork by Cal to make it 36-7 and then James McTurk scored just before halftime to make it 43-7.

It was classic Cal. They got the ball back at every restart and kept the ball. Seamus Kelly was a beast in the midfield and Utah just had too much tackling to do.

In the second half, Utah kept more of the possession, but struggled to do much with it. Thretton Palamo made a few breaks, but he usually found Rooke in his face. Meanwhile Utah had more trouble than Cal is handling the wet ball, and as often as not, a dropped ball was snapped up by hooker Neil Barrett, who had an outstanding performance.

Sean Gallinger and Seamus Kelly scored tries in the second half but the pace of the game slowed late. With time winding down Utah got some reward for not backing down, as they scored through Mote Houma to made it 55-14. Gallinger's second closed it out.

"We're happy with the win," said Cal captain Blaine Scully. "We're happy with a lot of work the forwards did; they did a lot of work in transitional phase."

Cal clearly wanted to dominate possession and forced Utah to play defense, and the wet conditions made a forward-heavy game a smart move.

Cal Powers By Utah

Written by Alex Goff
Saturday, 14 May 2011 23:14

Several times the Bears were on the Utah line, and needed multiple phases to get in. Utah defended well, but it was also a testament to Cal's discipline.

"It's just patience," said Scully. "Don't force it and give up a turnover. If the defense is there, get low, get a good drive, a good leg pump going, and go at it again. It was always a case of just keeping up the pressure."

Cal 62

Tries: Besser, D. Barrett, Scully 2, Law, McTurk, Kelly, Gallinger 2

Convs: Bailes 6, Aronson

Pens: Bailes

Utah

Tries: T. Lauti, Houma

Convs: S. Lauti 2