

NYAC Holds Off BYU

Written by Alex Goff
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Provo, Utah - Turnovers killed BYU as they lost 22-16 Saturday to NYAC in a meeting of 2012's DI-A and Super League champions.

BYU led early with a Paul Lasike penalty. But NYAC put in a sterling physical performance and patiently put themselves in position to score. Their first try, from Mike Petri, made it 5-3 with about 15 minutes to go in the first half. A little frustrated by NYAC's defense, BYU kept getting into penalty trouble, and those penalties led to a try from the NYAC forwards from a lineout, with lock Brian Doyle just getting the ball down despite some impressive goalline tackles from the home team.

BYU edged closer in the second half when center Paul Lasike slotted a nifty drop kick to make it 12-6. But Al McFarland stuck a dagger into Cougar hearts by ripping the ball from BYU captain Ryan Roundy's hands and cantered 50 meters untouched to score. Toby L'Estrange's conversion hit the posts, keeping the score at 17-6.

BYU could not convert pressure into points - an ill-advised quick-tap here, a poor pass to an open runner there - and then an interception by NYAC fullback Justin Hundley capped off the scoring for the New Yorkers, making it 22-6.

BYU did not lie down, and they worked the ball wide with alacrity late - stretching a tiring NYAC defense. Prop Kody Thompson scored, and then a beautifully-worked try put Seki Kofe in for a try. But it was all too little, too late. 22-16 the game ended, NYAC winners.

"We need to play these games," said BYU Head Coach David Smyth. "Being a slightly less experienced team, we made some crucial errors that had a lot to do with being impatient. We tried to go wide and score when we could have taken it up a couple of times, and Pip Hundley was standing out there reading the play. We took a tap when we probably should have kicked for points, and we lost the ball. We talked about that before the game, that against a team of this caliber you can't let them off in those situations."

Smyth said he was very happy with his team's defensive effort, and certainly three of the tries NYAC scored couldn't be hung on the defense - one from a series of penalties, and two from turnovers. They were led by Ryan Roundy and openside flanker Kyle Sumsion, who was very active until he had to leave with a possible concussion late in the game.

For NYAC's part, they had some good efforts and some iffy ones. Conor Coyne was hugely effective at hooker, and the forwards battled well. Too many NYAC kicks floated out on the full, and that didn't help them, but they punished turnovers.

Hundley almost scored in the second half when an errant pass saw the ball roll in front of him. The fullback flyh-hacked downfield, gathered the ball, and was almost away. Later on, he wasn't caught when he poached a pass and was free and clear for 90 meters.

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"It's a calculated risk," Hundly told RUGBYMag.com about the decision to go for the interception. "But with Chris Chapman and Phil Bailey playing such great defense all day, I knew they'd be solid behind me if it didn't come off. Nothing had come through our midfield, so it was worth the risk."

Hundley said NYAC might have tired a little at the end, when BYU scored two tries, but added "we hurt ourselves with penalties late. We play an aggressive defense and sometimes you get penalized. But we pride ourselves on our defense. We knew BYU would be a physical battle."

NYAC 22

Tries: Petri, Doyle, McFarland, Hundley

Convs: L'Estrange

BYU 16

Tries: Thompson, Kofe

Pens: Lasike

DGs: Lasike