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Olympic Club pulled away late in Saturday's DI Men's Club Semifinal at Infinity Park in Glendale, Colo., to win 41-29, but it took them the better part of 80 minutes to separate from the Iowa chiropractic college.

Palmer fullback Jarod Selby opened scoring in the sixth minute with a penalty goal, and Olympic Club rebutted just 70 seconds later with a converted Ryan Harris try.

Then things got a little weird. In the 10th minute, a Keegan Engelbrecht kick for points hit the upright and landed in Palmer flyhalf Chad London's arms, and London raced nearly the length of the field for the Dragons' first try. A few minutes later, Palmer No. 8 Ryan Duklas took an interception 50-plus meters for a second long-range score, putting the Midwest champs up 13-7.

Palmer threatened to extend their lead while spending roughly five minutes inside Olympic Club's defensive 10 meters, but some tenacious goal line defense and a Palmer penalty kept O-Club within a score.

After O-Club cleared its lines, Palmer stole the lineout and was on a break when center Russell Johnson, with an uncovered Selby to his right, sailed the pass to put the speedy Canadian away just out of Selby's reach and into touch.

Escaping a couple dangerous situations unscathed, O-Club clawed closer with an Engelbrecht penalty in the 37th minute, followed by a Peter Galicz try off of a five-meter scrum, giving the San Francisco club a 17-13 lead going into halftime.

"At halftime I said to the team, if we just take care of the ball, we were kind of dominating the line of touch and the scrums, they weren't going to have any good ball other than the ball that we gave them," said O-Club coach Ray Lehner, "and that was the goal -- just hold onto the ball."

Lehner, aside from reiterating the importance of possession, also made some key substitutions at halftime, bringing in former Eagle Kort Schubert and prop Andrew King. It didn't take too long for the pair to make an impact, as a big run from Schubert put O-Club into scoring position, and King slammed down the try in the second minute of the second half.

"We tried to essentially manage the workload of some of these guys," said Lehner, "so I think we got the right mix where we started the right team and got the right guys on."

London then slotted a pair of penalties to pull Palmer back into contention at 24-19. O-Club second row Carl Hansen was binned shortly after the latter kick, and with a man advantage, Selby inserted himself in the backline off of a scrum and raced untouched for Palmer's third long-range try of the day. London hit the conversion, putting Palmer up 26-24.

After Palmer was whistled for obstruction on the ensuing kickoff, Englebrecht slotted a penalty to reclaim the lead, 27-26.

Less than two minutes later, London hit his third penalty of the second half to force the third lead change in about as many minutes, putting Palmer up 29-27 with 13 minutes to play.

Olympic Club went on the attack from the restart, but a big Palmer tackle forced a knock-on at their five-meter line. The turning point of the game came next, when Olympic Club's pack drove over Palmer's scrum and Schubert picked up the ball and forced it into pay dirt, taking the momentum and the lead, this time for good, 32-29.

Palmer, with about 10 minutes to work with, did go on the offensive and were granted a scrum near the O-Club defensive 22, but once again, the O-Club's pack stole Palmer's scrum.

"My hat's off to our tight five," said Schubert. "They battled all game, and all their work paid off there and a few stolen scrums just kills the momentum of Palmer, and I think that was the difference in the end."

For good measure, Olympic Club slammed in another try off of mulitple forward movements, this one by reserve forward Brian Mclenahan.

The O-Club's re-emphasis on possession was what created the opportunity for victory in the second half. They used heaps of slow ball to starve Palmer of scoring chances and march into their territory. This, Lehner says, was the plan all along.

"In our competition in Northern California there are a lot of teams like Palmer with really great backs, and we want to close the game, slow it down, and especially late, once we had the lead, we wanted to really slow it down," he said. "The boys did a great job. Andrew King is a real force. He came off the bench and made a massive difference once he came in."