

Sac Lions Score Road Win

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SACRAMENTO, Calif. – The Sacramento Lions Rugby Club increased their winning record to 3-1 after traveling to Hayward, Calif. Saturday to overcome a tough Bay Area Barbarians team with 36-15 victory.

“Our goal this year is to continue to improve every opportunity we play,” said Lions Head Coach Iferemie Tawake. “The Barbarians were a strong opponent and did not make this an easy win for us. But our team worked very hard today. We won every lineout and scrum, and won some of our opponent’s set pieces as well. This was definitely a sign of improvement for our team.”

Staying strong in the set piece was a key component to the Lions’ victory. Sacramento's forward pack showed its athleticism and determination and the result was a measure of hard work this season.

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Lions prop Josh Vavao scored the first two tries in the opening 20 minutes. In addition to Vavao's proficiency in the scrum, Coach Tawake noted that it was his ability to be in the right place at the right time that contributed to his scoring opportunities, and awarded the veteran prop man-of-the-match.

“Josh brings a wealth of experience to our club and we are really lucky to have him back this season,” said Lions Manager Aaron Frederick. “He has played plenty of high-level rugby in the U.S. and we knew it was only a matter of time before he had a big game for us this season.”

The Barbarians answered the Lions with a penalty kick and an unconverted try to bring the score close at 12-8. But some open field play from the Lions pack resulted with flanker Meli Tuiqilai scoring the final try of the first half to put the Lions up 19-8 at the break.

The Lions opened up the second half showing some resilience by stopping a determined Barbarians drive into their own 5-meter. Winger Davita Pale took a turnover ball and made it into a brilliant counter attack running half the length of the field while dodging several defenders on the way. Pale dished to center Sione Latu, who drew in the final defender before offloading to lock Joel Scott, who dotted down in the corner in the 47th minute. The kick was not converted and the Lions extended their lead to 24-8.

The Barbarians scored their last try in the 59th minute, and a converted kick brought the score to 24-15. The Lions, however, would close out the game with two tries in the last five minutes from flanker Sione Tanoa and center Dennis Saafi to take home the victory.

The Lions move to 3-1 in Northern California D1 league play and their next match is [February 23, 2013](#), when the Lions host powerhouse San Francisco Golden Gate at Robla Park in Sacramento.

“We have a long break before a very tough match against San Francisco Golden Gate,” stated Frederick. “We will use these next few weeks to really hone in on our rugby skills and fitness. It is clear that our guys want to be competitive no matter what opponent we are looking at. We think Golden Gate should be a good test of where we are at and where we want to be this year.”

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