

Santa Monica Upsets the Reigning Champ

Written by Pat Clifton
Saturday, 02 March 2013 21:06

Santa Monica ended Belmont Shore's 24-game Southern California winning streak with a 26-20 victory Saturday in Santa Monica, Calif. Coming into the game, Belmont hadn't lost a league match since February, 2011, and Santa Monica hadn't beat the defending National Champions since 2005.

Santa Monica opened the contest with two Michael Hobbs penalties to take a 6-0 lead, while Belmont's Geoffrey Pound missed two early shots at goal.

Belmont got on the board with an Eddie McKenna try, converted by Pound. A Pound penalty later, Belmont led 10-6, which is how the first half would end.

Santa Monica went on an 8-point run to open the second half and reclaim the lead at 14-10, but an unconverted Eric Duechle try reversed the lead once more. Hobbs then picked off a poorly timed Belmont offload and ran in it for a try, putting Santa Monica up 21-15 late in the game.

Belmont felt the pressure to score again and mis-stepped, allowing Santa Monica to score a second-straight try and ice the match. Shore managed a try in extra time to secure the losing bonus point.

Belmont left 10 points in kicks on the board, but head coach Ray Egan says the difference in the game isn't as simple as errors off the tee.

"It wasn't down to the kicks, really. We had a lot of unforced errors, we spilled a lot of ball, lots of passes not going to hand," he said.

"And a lot of that had to do with Santa Monica's defense. They have a very good system and their counter attack, the kick chase, was very good as well. They kind of narrowed the field for us, so we weren't able to fit into a kind of a rhythm."

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Offensively, Santa Monica played wider than in their loss to Belmont earlier this season.

“ We moved the ball into all the channels, so we kept them guessing all the time. We just didn’t try to keep coming around the corner,” said Santa Monica coach Greg Commins.

“Last time we played a lot more short, as opposed to trying to stretch them. They’ve got quite a few big units, so if you move them around the park a bit, they tend to tire out a bit. The whole thing was to try and create mismatches, and through mismatches you create opportunities.”

Hobbs certainly capitalized on some of those opportunities himself, scoring an intercept try and slotting 11 points from the boot. But Commins says credit belongs to the full 23-man roster.

“Everyone came on the field and put their bodies on the line. Even the older players, like Aaron Davis. He came back for his final season this year. He was completely banged up after the game, but he played out of his skin. He just kept putting his body on the line,” said Commins.

“Michael Hobbs had a naturally good game because he’s a very talented football player, but I have to put it down to a whole team effort. Everybody came out bloodied and banged on both sides.”

An intercept try from Michael Hobbs and a missed Belmont pass that lead to an Alistair Ross try helped finish off the game for the Dolphins. Belmont's Eddie McKenna was red carded at the 50 minute mark for a tip tackle on Santa Monica No. 8 Ken Aseme and from that penalty Santa Monica scored to take the lead.

Aseme was later yellow carded, evening the teams at 14 men for ten minutes.

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Belmont Shore scored with three minutes left to close within a try, and they won the restart with no time left. Shore worked their way into the Santa Monica half, and then wing Jeffrey Pound found some space before kicking ahead. Ross won the race to the ball and touched it down in-goal to end the game.