

Texas DI Club Rundown

Written by Pat Clifton
Sunday, 10 March 2013 16:46



Texas has been a region of wild scores, upsets and last-minute game-winning tries this season, from college to men's club, and the trend continued Saturday.

Fort Worth beat the previously undefeated Austin Blacks for the first time in a long time via a game-winning converted try at the death, the Austin Huns eked out a close win over HARC, and the Dallas Reds torched The Woodlands.

The Reds poured in 11 tries in an 86-5 win over The Woodlands in Conroe, Texas. The win pushes Dallas above .500 at 4-3 just as the playoff race heats up.

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One slot ahead of Dallas is the Austin Huns, who have played one more game than the Reds. The Huns snapped a three-game losing streak with their 45-38 win over HARC in Houston. A strong wind affected play in the match, and it was evident on the score sheet.

Austin, with the wind at their backs in the first half, took a 38-19 lead into intermission. HARC surged back in the second half and held the Huns to just one more converted try, but Austin held on for the all-important win.

The Huns are still in the thick of the playoff hunt, despite struggling through a series of injuries.

“The biggest thing is us just getting healthy. During that streak we had lost both our first and second choice 10s to injury” said Austin’s Kirk Tate.

“We’ve got a bye week this week and The Woodlands next week and then another bye week for Easter. That’s going to give us an opportunity to get healthy and get every back in a good physical shape for the stretch run.”

Another team who has struggled mightily with getting its top team on the field this season is Fort Worth. A mixture of injuries, unavailability and a lack of commitment has seen Fort Worth field its full team just twice – in wins over the Huns and Blacks – the latter coming in dramatic fashion Saturday.

“Yesterday we felt real confident. We had our full team. We knew they would come up overconfident,” said Fort Worth coach Teshay Flowers.

“Obviously, they hadn’t lost a game in over three years in the state of Texas, and after the last game, where we were up 5-0 at halftime they hung 50 on us in the second half, so they were real confident they would beat us. And after talking to their coach after the game, he said it himself.”

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Fort Worth's calling card is its physicality. If you play them, chances are you're going to walk away bruised and battered, win or lose. And Saturday, that was even more the case than usual.

"We put together a roster where we wanted our meanest, fit first 15 out there," said Flowers. "They came out really physical from the onset – heard hitting, quick play, both offensively and defensively."

Austin survived the early wave of emotion from Fort Worth, took a 20-7 lead into halftime and started the second half on the front foot.

"They were kind of imposing their will on us, but about 10 minutes into the second half we realized they hadn't scored, even though they were the ones dictating the game," said Flowers. "We kind of buckled up, went back to our hard hitting."

Fort Worth ran in back-to-back converted tries by No. 8 Robert Tevi and flyhalf Erik Martin to claim a 21-20 lead. The Blacks then regained the advantage with about a minute left to play with a converted try to go up 27-21.

Austin fielded the restart and tried to run out the clock, but the Blacks were pinged for a penalty at the breakdown, giving Fort Worth one more chance.

The home team banged the ball through the middle of the field a couple of times before hooker Sammy Abdullah caught the Blacks off guard and scampered under the posts for a try at the death. Dillon Thiele hit the conversion to secure the one-point win. Thiele's boot was crucial in the victory, as he was 4/4 on conversion attempts.

The win was historic for Fort Worth, who according to the Blacks, hasn't beaten Austin in 10 years.

"They said 10 years, I would have to say 20, because I don't remember ever having beaten their

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first 15,” said Flowers, who has been with Fort Worth for 14 years.

“Me and some of the older boys who have been around and played on a DII National Championship team said this win was at least as big as that win, if not bigger, because of what a quality program the Blacks have and the fact that we know they are a top 10 team in the country and they’ve shown it repeatedly.”