The Sacramento Lions and Austin Blacks played the closest DI playoff game in Chula Vista, Calif. Saturday, from which the Lions emerged 34-21 winners.

The Lions opened scoring just four minutes into the match with a John Finau try and Kilifi Latu conversion, taking a 7-0 lead. However, back-to-back Austin penalties slotted by Gonzalo Sanchez drew the Texas champs to within one point at 7-6.

Austin claimed the lead in the 21st minute with a try from Jeffrey Seaney.

The Blacks, with their backs against their own try line, turned the Lions over and broke their defensive line for a long run. Sacramento's fullback did make a tackle, but the defense as a whole was not quick enough to recover, leading to Seaney's score.

Sanchez extended Austin's lead with his third penalty of the first half 10 minutes later, giving the Blacks a 14-7 advantage, which they held until extra time of the first half, when Folofeti Leialoha ended Austin's 14-point run with the Lions second try, drawing them within two, 14-12, at halftime.

Leialoha's try was made possible by a Sacramento kick which Austin mishandled. It appeared as though several Lions were offside, but no call was made.

Sacramento, as it did to open the game, struck first in the second half when massive prop John Hopoi slammed down a try. Latu converted, giving Sacramento a 19-14 lead.

The match's fourth lead change occurred when Austin's Ty Terrazone broke away from a stalemated maul and found pay dirt. Sanchez converted. During Austin's scoring possession, which lasted several phases, at least five different Lions spent time on their back, for one reason or another, signaling fatigue.

However, the Lions found a second wind to push Hopoi to his second try of the game, this one coming off a long break from a scrum, putting the Lions ahead 24-21.

Austin then subbed in seven players in an attempt to run around tired Sacramento, but the tactic didn't work, as the Lions ran on some of their own subs and ran in two more tries to close out the contest. Reserves Ratu Ratadara and William Taylor scored the final two tries.

The Lions draw NorCal rival O-Club in Sunday's quarterfinal, while Austin gets to play Texas rival Dallas in a consolation match.