

## Fleet-footed Palmer Into DI Semis

Written by Jackie Finlan  
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Manassas, VA - Palmer College may be young, but they handled Mystic River with poise during the DI club championship quarterfinals, producing a 41-21 victory and bid to the Final Four.



Palmer College's team speed aided in DI quarterfinal win. (Shaun Collins)

Mystic's defense could not contain the pace and athleticism of the Palmer backs, especially with halfbacks Luke Stringer and Chad London directing traffic and player/coach Jarod Selby loading from fullback. The scoring began minutes after kickoff when inside center Mike Junk ran on to a pop pass from the ruck and barreled his way over the try line, a score that the flyhalf, London, converted, 7-0.

Mystic seemed to have the edge in the forwards, using its size in the scrum and around the pitch to dominate the breakdowns. Palmer has struggled with its size up front, but picked up its game for the quarterfinals, and get some nice backup from its stellar fitness and technique. Mystic River's loose forwards produced some nice go-forward ball, and near the five-minute mark, flanker Joe Shurmaitis made the defense pay and ran in a try, which flyhalf Derrick Roma notched for the 7-all tie.

Mystic's scrum would prevail throughout, and produced a try in the second half when a stolen put-in on Palmer's five meter allowed No. 8 Trevor McKenzie dot down, but at that point, the game was out of reach.

The game belonged to the beautiful work between Stringer, London and Selby, who orchestrated a dizzying offense in the open field. After a London penalty kick, Selby ran in back-to-back tries when he first finished off a nice run down the touchline (17-7). The next five-pointer began with London, who hit the line at pace, fending two defenders, before offloading to Stringer in support. With only the fullback to beat, Stringer pinned his defender and passed to Selby to finish off the series. The London conversion made it 24-7.

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Eight minutes later, Stringer needed no one but himself for the try, looping around London and motoring 50 meters for the score and 29-7 into the break.

Palmer picked up where it left off and opened the second half with a try from flanker Fitzgerald, who stole Mystic's ball from the scrum and outran pursuers for the try and London conversion, 36-7.

At this point, Mystic mounted a respectable comeback, getting McKenzie's well earned try before receiving a penalty try for London's high tackle (36-21). With only 15 points separating the two sides, the game suddenly didn't look as bleak. Unfortunately for the Massachusetts team, it couldn't convert the extra man on the pitch into points, and Palmer's defense killed what should have been a scoring opportunity for Mystic.

To add insult to injury, Palmer added a final try before the final whistle for the 41-21 win.

"It was a huge win, even better than yesterday," Selby said. "We started to blow it open in the second half, and we were a little nervous that maybe we'd get complacent, but we didn't."

"This has been a great step forward, as far as progress goes," Selby continued. "Like I said, we had a spotty spring schedule, and we've been performing well."

With the win, Palmer College books its ticket to Glendale, Colo., where the team will play the Olympic Club, who beat Sacramento 25-15 in the quarterfinals, before getting a shot at the title.