

Norfolk's Nerves Settle for a D2 Win

Written by Jackie Finlan

Saturday, 10 November 2012 17:21

Norfolk improved their first Women's DII Club Championship experience, rebounding from a 21-12 loss to Pittsburgh yesterday to defeat Portland 39-0 for a trip to the 5th place match.



The score speaks more to Norfolk's turn-around from yesterday than Portland as competition. The Oregon team had a very disruptive pack that challenged Norfolk's fluidity on offense, but the Storm were better prepared mentally to account for that pressure.

Norfolk has four players who have played at the military championships, but everyone else – who range from 18 to 43 – were new to nationals.

"Yesterday was overwhelming," Norfolk coach Etta James said. "We got behind and instead of playing team ball, we got the, 'I can do it myself.' So instead of passing the ball out, we held it a little bit longer, one step further. At this level, the defense comes up a step faster. If I spent the season saying, 'You need to pass a step sooner,' yesterday we found out why. But today we were on – they saw it coming. They put the defense on their heels because they moved the ball quickly. They talked, ran the loop, and yesterday they kept forcing the punch."

James indicated that Norfolk's strength is in the parity of the lineup, and that fact showed itself against Portland.

"For a D2 team, you can struggle with depth," James said. "You have that one outstanding back or a pair of backs if you're lucky, or two big forwards who play well off each other. I've been blessed; we're not dependent on one player. Our strength is that we can genuinely play team

Norfolk's Nerves Settle for a D2 Win

Written by Jackie Finlan

Saturday, 10 November 2012 17:21

ball. We're not putting all of our hopes on that one player. It takes a lot of pressure off the backline as well, because if they just do what they do well, it works out for us."

In the backs, Lindsay Kinsler led the charge. Having played for the USA U23 team, Kinsler moved from center to fullback so she could see the field better and direct her teammates. She did an excellent job of anticipating Portland's attack and launching preventive defensive measures. The fullback scored two tries, two conversions and a penalty kick. Chinomso Asonye, Roe DeLutis and Kendall Vaughn (2) also scored tries.

In the forwards, Nichola Diaz and Katie Thomen did an excellent job around the ruck. Portland scrumhalf Kelly O'Connor attacks well around the breakdown, and the front rows did well to stifle that attack, forcing the Pigs to find other options.

If there's anything that Norfolk will have to improve, as they look ahead to tomorrow's match against Las Vegas, it's their reaction to turnovers.

"We're good at producing offense, but shifting between defense and offense, sometimes we can be a step behind," James said. "And if ball's not coming out cleanly, then that panic builds and affects purposeful rugby. There was never a moment where we could turn our backs like we had this. Portland played a very physical game, and I used all my subs."

James is confident in her side's chances tomorrow, and that rests on the team's fitness.

"My team is fit; bring it," James said in response to the onslaught that awaits against Las Vegas' larger team. "Every Tuesday is fitness based, and we do the 'death flop' at the beginning of training. My biggest forward can run a five consistently, and we have a couple of backs who can do sevens. That's a lot of aerobic capacity. I was caught off guard with the 60-minute game yesterday, because that last 20 minutes is our strength. Tomorrow, we plan to make their pack work hard, and hopefully we can wear them out. I can't overcome mass, but good body form can overcome acceleration."

Las Vegas rebounded from a disappointing 12-10 loss to Severn River yesterday. Today, the

Norfolk's Nerves Settle for a D2 Win

Written by Jackie Finlan

Saturday, 10 November 2012 17:21

Slots put in a solid performance against Albuquerque, winning 20-5 off of tries from wing Khristy Gaines, Lo Stender and Noralee Dodge.