Written by Jackie Finlan
Saturday, 21 May 2011 20:45

Manassas, VA - Although Middlesex put a valiant effort against defending DII champion during today's Round of 16, Tampa Krewe's forwards wore down the Massachusetts' defense for a final 41-17 win.

Tampe Krewe forwards dominated during DII's Round of 16.

"I'm anal retentive," Tampa Krewe coach Dai Morgan smiled, "so my initial thought is that we didn't play as well as we could have. But to win 41-17 in the Sweet 16 is fantastic. In hindsight, I should give credit where credit is due, and Middlesex did well for 60 minutes, getting in our way and screwing things up for us as good teams do. We couldn't get in our groove. But following that, I'm pretty happy with today's performance."

All of Tampa's tries came through the forwards and it became evident early on that Middlesex was going to have its hands full in tight. Flanker Leslie Mongo finished off two forward drives near the line, accounting for two of his four tries on the day.

But with about 10 minutes to go in the half, Middlesex mounted a lengthy goal-line attack, with Tampa penalties allowing the team to repeat its attempts at the try line. The effort finally paid off and Middlesex's inside center dotted down for the try, 10-7. Middlesex took the lead with time winding down, turning another sustained goal-line stand into seven points, utilizing its speedy outside backs to get around the defense, 14-10 Middlesex into the break.

"We took our foot off the gas and let in what I have to call soft tries," Morgan said. "All credit to Middlesex – I thought they'd be tired – and they caught us by surprise. At the half, we talked about eliminating those mental errors, not forcing the game, and playing to our strengths."

"In the first half, we tried to go wide too early, and that wasn't the game to play against Middlesex," Morgan added. "They had some quality athletes in the backs and tackled well. We're not used to getting tackled, so we had to play from behind. We're used to front-foot ball.

Once we sorted that out and didn't try to play from our own line, we got comfortable and did well."

Tampa came out furiously in the second stanza but was more controlled. Tampa relies on mismatches, whether it's big guys running at little guys, or fast players taking on slower ones. Once the team relied on its big players to continually batter Middlesex, the physical toll saw Middlesex fall off tackles and opened up some gaps through the tries flowed.

To add to the fatigue, Tampa's deep bench saw Andre Beukes, Dylan Richards and Alexandre Pellicier sub in for the pack, and their fresh legs further demoralized Middlesex's scramble defense.

As if Chicago Blaze – Tampa's quarterfinal opponent tomorrow – doesn't have enough to worry about up front, they should be concerned that Tampa didn't start a number of its star players, who will rejuvenate the squad for the final four bid.