

## West DII Down to Four

Written by Pat Clifton  
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Four teams in Chula Vista, Calif. remain in the hunt for a semifinals berth after four Saturday matches.

Santa Rosa is one of them, and they reach the quarterfinals after an impressive 28-5 defeat of perennial playoff participant Ft. Worth.

Santa Rosa jumped out to an early 14-0 lead in 16 minutes, averaging just under a point a minute. Ft. Worth stopped the bleeding with an unconverted try, but wouldn't score the rest of the way, while Santa Rosa added another pair of converted tries in the second half.

Also advancing is Albuquerque, who finished second in the nation in 2009 to East Palo Alto. Though the Aardvarks are just a couple of years removed from that title game appearance, they're not the same Aardvarks.

"(2009/2010) was kind of a rebuilding year. A lot of guys tend to retire and move on once they get that far," said Albuquerque player/coach John Grey.

"I played for Red Mountain the year before we won the national championship, and kind of the same thing. The next year went into the regional playoffs with 21 guys. This year I'm having a very difficult time trimming ourselves down to a 28-man roster. The depth has hugely made a difference for us."

Albuquerque has just 11 players back from last year, and less from the 2009 second-place

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team, but an infusion of youth has softened the blow of loss.

“Our centers, I think one of them is a teenager,” joked Grey. “Almost half our backline is under 22, and all our forwards are over 26, so it’s interesting.”

Awaiting the Aardvarks in the quarterfinals are the host San Diego Old Aztecs, who ground out a 13-7 win over West Champs Tulsa Saturday. Tulsa scored first, a converted try in the 14th minute, and led until early in the second half, when a large home crowd helped will the Old Aztecs to an 8-0 second stanza.

Fresno, the fourth team advancing, did not have as close a Round of 16 game. They were scored on first, too, by Pasadena in the second minute, but cruised from there on, crushing their SoCal counterparts 40-10.

“We’re not used to being down,” said Fresno captain Walt Pickering. “I wouldn’t say there was panic (after that early score), but a little concern, but we battled through. We didn’t play our best rugby today, but we played well enough to go through, and that’s what counts at this time.

Fresno locks horns with NorCal rival Santa Rosa on Sunday.