Written by Jackie Finlan
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New Orleans swarms Buffalo. (Andy Wagner photo)

Manassas, VA - New Orleans overwhelmed Buffalo during the men's DII club championship's Round of 16 today, running up a 48-22 victory for the bid to the quarterfinals. But if you speak New Orleans coach Jerry Malina, then you'd realize that it was all part of the plan.

"To be fair, we wanted to get out fast, and we did," Malina said. "The game went our way, although we lost some focus and gave up a try late in the half, which you never want to do, but we fought back from it."

New Orleans was focused, on point, and did a good job of mixing up play between the forwards and backs. New Orleans had the larger pack, so it was able to gain significant ground via successful mauls and punches off the base of the ruck, before swinging the ball wide to the backs. The result was a balanced attack that saw Pat Kennedy, Ross Bellaci (2), Mauricio Urrutia and Ron Brink all touch down for five-pointers.

But Malina pointed toward the pack for the foundation of success. The excellent work of Matt Lytle, Matt Upton, Sean Malek, Wes Eustic and Ben Benvenutti controlled the lineouts and worked the scrums, taking away a lot of ground from the opposition. The expertise of fullback Bellaci, who led the team with two tries, highlighted the backs and changed the game with his speedy counters. Kennedy was also an important substitution, who made his impact known immediately in scoring a try to add to the tally.

"We came out knowing what we wanted to do and we did it," Malina closed. "Right now, we have to avoid the let-downs. We let up a couple of soft tries, and you always want that zero. We also have to be smart as a coaching staff and know when to change out legs. There were a couple of guys who went down late, when we thought we needed them. In these tournaments, it's the same for everyone: It's all about recovery. Tomorrow, we're going to bash the hell out of each other."

But Malina was happy with the performance overall and hopes to take that momentum into its game against Doylestown, which beat the Village Lions 35-33 in its Round of 16 match today.