Manassas, VA - Tampa Bay had a huge weekend during the Men's DII Club Championship, first beating Middlesex 41-17 in the Round of 16 Saturday, then downing Chicago Blaze 38-6 in yesterday's quarterfinals. The win earns the current DII champion a return to trip to Glendale, Colo., where the Krewe will have to first beat the Old Aztecs before attempting to defend its title.

Tampa Krewe runs away with another playoff win.

It's no secret that Tampa's strength is in its extraordinary forwards, and the fact that the team has so many of them. But Krewe needed the first quarter to find its footing, and the Chicago Blaze were able to notch two penalties while Tampa struggled to gain control. Fortunately for Tampa, its stellar defense kept the game close while the offense worked out its kinks.

"They starved Chicago Blaze of any good ball," Tampa coach Dai Morgan said. "They had no room to run, and every time they did, they received so much pressure that they'd rush passes and make mistakes."

Tampa was fortunate to be able to rest some key players in Saturday's match and the influx of fresh legs could be felt all around the field. Veteran inside center Justin Frank was saved for Sunday, and the three-quarter pairing with Jeff Herron stopped the backline attack from breaching the gainline. Both of the Beukes brothers – Andre and Reno – were back on the field together and contributed to Chicago's frustration on offense.

The offense had yet to find its full stride by halftime, with Krewe retaining a slim lead into the break. Tampa did well to not repeat its mistakes from Saturday, when the team tried to send the ball wide too early and force a score. The turning point occurred during the first 10 minutes of the second half, as the Chicago Blaze ferociously attacked Tampa's goal line.

"They threw everything but the kitchen sink at us," Morgan said, "but our defense soundly stopped them. When we cleared, we got the lineout, broke through the line on the set piece and

scored. That's when Chicago's heads started to drop."

Led by captain and No. 8 Tyler Cathey, the forwards really started to shine in the last quarter, especially as Tampa's deep bench started to rejuvenate the pitch (a credit to the expert work of trainer Laura Taylor). Leading try-scorer flanker Leslie Mango added another three tries to bring his weekend tally to seven.

Twenty-one-year-old flyhalf Daragh Carr, who kept the scoreboard ticking over with penalties and conversions, made some nice decisions and waited until there was enough space for his backs to work with the ball. Another youngster, Travis Miller, was the happy recipient of one such occasion, as Carr set up the wing for a one-on-one near midfield. Miller beat his opposite then danced around at least five defenders to dot down the try.

"A lot of credit goes to Chicago Blaze; we didn't thrash them," Morgan insisted. "We played them in the Sweet 16 last year and only a strong 20 minutes got us through to Colorado. We were expecting a tough game, and we got it. But I have to tip my hat to my guys; we played outstanding in the second half."

As pleased as Morgan was with the performance, he and assistant coach Kevin McWilliams already have a to-do list to attack at training.

"Our actual execution is still very good – I'm not worried about that – but we made some mental errors this weekend," Morgan explained. "For example: We were being pressured on our own line and could've cleared easily and gotten away from that pressure early on. We made some silly mistakes, running from our own line, and committed some penalties. We need to avoid those mental errors."

Which will all come with time, as Tampa has a few young players who are playing in only their first or second season in senior rugby. The coaches will spend the next two weeks picking apart the game, and laying out various scenarios and the decision-making that goes along with them.

"The young guys are going to make mistakes," Morgan said, "but at the same time, Carr kept us

in the game with his foot and distribution of the ball, and Miller had that unbelievable try and shut down his opposite defensively all game.

“We’re here to take them to the next level,” Morgan continued. “The youngsters keep everybody happy; keeps us all feeling young. For both Kevin and I, we love teaching and having this opportunity to work with the kids and see them improve is fantastic for us.”

Tampa will take Tuesday off and hit the practice pitch on Thursday, when the fine-tuning for the Final Four will begin. Morgan is hoping that New Orleans will make it past Fresno during its DII semifinal in two weeks, setting up an all-South final and huge shot in the arm for the territory.