

Highland Powers Past East

Written by Bernie Decker
Sunday, 24 April 2011 01:13



Highland RC completed their mini-tour to Colorado without a blemish, working their offensive schemes to near-perfection as they defeated Denver East High Angels 76-3 in the curtain-raiser for the Super League match at Dick's Sporting Goods Park on Saturday. Though East competed bravely and were able to contain the Utah powerhouse somewhat in the second half, a 57-0 Highland advantage at the break proved insurmountable for the scrappy Coloradans.

Highland were adept at reaching the breakdown first, grappling turnover ball, and then exercising fluid backline movement after creating the overlap.

A pilfered lineout at East's 22 put Highland on the front foot as flyhalf Ihaka Watene sliced and spun through defenders to touch down a Koby Harris-converted goal for a 7-0 lead at three minutes. 8th-man D. J. Ferris discovered an open lane after collecting lineout ball twelve meters from goal and stormed over for Highland's second try at seven minutes: 12-0.

The re-start did not go ten meters, so a split field had the travelers reeling off consistent positive ground in tight phase work until center Seni Fauonuku finished in the corner. Harris' conversion made the score 19-0.

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Fine backline movement from a lineout 20 meters from goal had fullback Jayce Hansen across the line for the try at thirteen minutes. The visitors scored five more times before the break with tries by: Allai Mukuapuku, a second from Watene, Logan Daniels, Josh Randall, and Josh Faagulu.

Highland's ability to close swiftly at the breakdown meant they were able to re-set their lines and work possession both inside with their forwards as well as outside to their talented backline.

The second half was a less one-sided affair as East began to implement better defensive containment and make inroads into Highland territory, but it was Highland first to the loose and their evident willingness to engage meant that the travelers ultimately controlled 72% of possession.

East got on the board with a Danny Brugioni penalty goal 47 minutes into it and spent some minutes inside Highlands 22, but the Angels were unable to breach Highland's goaline. Four more tries by the nation's #1-ranked U-19 squad put the final at 76-3.

East 3
Pens: Brugioni

Highland 76:
Tries: Watene (2), Ferris, Hansen, Fauonuku, Mukuapuku, Daniels, Harris, Lauti, Faagulu(2), Pauni
Convs: Harris (4), Watene (2), Lauti (2)

Referee: J. Zevin