Having to play a team once is tough enough, but having to not only face the same team twice, in the same day can have its complications. In the final match at the Pacific Coast Sevens Qualifier between the Utah Warriors and San Francisco Golden Gate (SFGG), players and coaches all knew a lot about one another. However, Utah stuck to its game plan and used the second half to tire out SFGG 47-26.

In the first game, Utah used a conversion on their second try to sneak past SFGG 12-10. In second game, however, all slates were wiped clean and any animosity toward each other amplified. Both coaches knew what they had to do; it was just a matter of executing it on the pitch.

SFGG did what it had done the previous game by getting off to a quick start. Minutes after the opening kickoff, SFGG had managed to pin Utah behind the 22-meter line. A stingy Warrior defense delayed the first points of the game, but SFGG eventually found a seam and took the early lead 7-0.

Having been in its fair share of close games all day, Utah once again utilized a quick backline off a penalty to break the SFGG defense and tie the game at 7-7. Then Utah took advantage of a quick lineout throw in got the ball out wide and decided to let Kisi “Maka” Unufe loose for another score to take a 14-7 lead.

Off the next kickoff, Utah used a combination of backs Mike Palefau and Unufe out wide off a beautifully executed delayed pass, to freeze the defender, and get a 14-point advantage 21-7 and gain a spec of momentum. However, SFGG shoved any confidence and momentum back in the face of Utah by ripping through the middle of their defense to neutralize any Utah momentum temporarily at the half 21-14.

In the second half, Utah, without one of their fastest players in Unufe (ankle injury), still took some risks. It started with a run up in the middle, in similar fashion to the SFGG run before the half, and quick counter step to alter the defender en route to a score and another 14-point advantage 28-14. But, SFGG yet again found a way to counter with a run on the outside by back Danny Barrett to get back within seven at 28-21.

This time, however, Utah took yet another weapon from their arsenal. With Unufe out, the Warriors called upon Mike Palefau to take over and he didn’t disappoint. With a little more than three minutes remaining, Palefau got the ball and right when his teammates on the sideline said “finish it Mike,” he used quick and strength to get through the middle of the SFGG for his first score. Seconds later, Jason Pye took the ball off a penalty, punted it over the defense and jumped on the ball for a score and the exclamation point to ice the game at 40-21. “I just saw a perfect spot behind the defense and decided to grub it over the line,” Pye said. “I was fortunate to get a good bounce and be able to score.”

To cap off the win, Palefau used a couple of juke moves to halt three SFGG and run past three SFGG for his second score and a finish to a strong performance.

“We played loose and were able to beat a great opponent in SFGG and I’m really proud of the guys,” Pye said. “Mike (Palefau) and Maka showed a lot today. Mike has continued to make a case for being one of the best players in the country and Maka is a young talent that has nothing but greatness in his future.”

“This program is starting to do great things,” Utah’s Sean Whalen said. “Maybe not right now, but around 2012, this team is going to be crazy good, I’d put my house on it,”

Utah went 5-0 and outscored opponents 158-48.