Through the middle of California and Penn State's last pool play match during the USA Sevens Collegiate Rugby Championship, it looked like the Nittany Lions might give the Golden Bears a run for their money. But Cal did well to distress an energized PSU side in the second half, and built a 26-7 victory.

Cal relies on game plan to down PSU. (Marvin Dangerfield)

The beginning of game insinuated another rout, when a Penn State lineout went awry and landed in Dustin Muhn's paws for a quick try and Sean Gallinger conversion. On the very next possession, Blaine Scully leapt and kept the kickoff, then brushed off Arnold Chavis, who is half the size of Scully, down the sideline. The grounding was questionable, but after a quick conference with in-goal judges, the try was awarded, 12-0.

There was a lot of game to play and Penn State could have enabled a waterfall of points-against, but the team kept its head up and rallied back. From a lineout deep in its end, PSU kicked downfield and kept possession. From the subsequent lineout, Joe Baker scooped up the errant ball and hit Chris Saint running at pace back inside. Baker made a great sideline conversion for the 12-7 scoreline into half and the lone points against Cal all day.

"We're playing big, bad Cal, and all of a sudden you look at the score and we're only down by five - it boosts your confidence," Saint said. "The momentum carried over to the second half, but we gave them too much space and made some mistakes, and you can't do that against good teams."

For Blaine Scully and teammates, Cal was expecting this level competition of from Penn State and wasn't surprised by the pressure.

"At halftime, we talked about sticking to our pattern, stretching the defense, staying out of

contact, playing the ball backward until spaced opened up," Scully explained. "We did a better job with possession in the second half."

PSU came out hungry and spent the first minute or so deep in Cal's end. The crowd was looking for another upset and cheered on Penn State's every attempt toward the tryline. But Cal's defense held strong and then showed it can have some fun with the ball, as Muhn sent a long cross-field kick to Scully awaiting on the sideline. The closest PSU defender expected the ball to run into touch, so when Scully recovered it, he was off to the try zone uncontested, 19-7 with the Gallinger conversion.

Connor Ring added another try for good measure, taking advantage of a massive overload while deep in Penn State's zone, and Gallinger kicked the finishing touches, 26-7.

"We learned a lot about ourselves in that game," Saint said, "and I'm really excited going into tomorrow." Penn State has plenty to be proud of, especially considering the team scored the only points against Cal on the day.

"We absolutely improved [throughout the day] and were fortunate that our competition got better as the day went on," Scully said. "PSU gave us a really good game, and we're going to take the lessons we learned today into tomorrow."

Cal takes the top seed out of pool A with a 3-0 record, while Penn State finished with a 2-1 record, also moving onto the Cup round tomorrow.