Cal Maritime Academy took its first and only lead over Sac State Saturday on a try by reserve freshman scrumhalf Brian Martinez late in the game, but it was good enough to result in a 24-21 win.

The Keelhaulers built pressure all night long, but critical turnovers in the first half resulted in three long tries by Sac State and large points deficits Cal Maritime had to continually work to overcome.

Sac State's three tries came on electrifying runs of 80, 50, and 70 yards. CMA answered Sac State's first try with a penalty kick by senior scrumhalf Will Fitzpatrick, making the score 7-3. After Sac State scored on its second turnover counterattack, CMA finally scored a try of its own when freshman center Chad Mensinger finished off a series of rucks and passes with a burst through the middle.

Unfortunately, CMA would fail on all of its three conversion attempts and leave easy points on the table. Sac State scored its third turnover counter try from sloppy CMA tackling to earn its biggest lead of the night, 21-8. However, continued CMA pressure in Sac State's end would lead to a drop goal by senior flyhalf Kevin Raff and another penalty by Fitzpatrick, whittling Sac State's halftime lead to a score of 21-14.

The second half was filled by handling errors and line-out infractions, not the least complicated by a strong wind. Still, the Keelhaulers continued to apply pressure and narrowed Sac State's lead to two when Fitzpatrick scored a try in the corner.

Late game pressure by the Keelhaulers through numerous possessions allowed Martinez to seize an opportunity and dart through a gap in Sac State's goal line defense, giving CMA its first lead and the victory.

The win improved the Keelhaulers preseason record to 5 – 0 with additional victories over D1-A Stanford University, the University of the Pacific (UOP), Sonoma State and DI-AA San Francisco State. CMA will meet UOP and Sonoma State again during regular season play.

“We returned from Christmas break rusty and it showed in the game tonight,” said Coach Steven Hiatt.

“We will need to improve dramatically if we want to compete effectively with top flight UC Davis, USF in our 1st league game, and the juggernaut Cal over the next three weeks. Our tackling and defense must improve if we want to achieve any kind of success”.

CMA’s final pre-season match is on Friday, Jan. 25 against UC Davis. The game will be played on CMA’s home ground at Bodnar Field in Vallejo. Kick-off is at 7pm.