

NSCRO DIII Title Report

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The third time is the charm, they say, and it was for Longwood University of Farmville, Virg. Having finished 3rd in the 2007 and 2009 NSCRO Championships, Longwood would not be denied this year. In the final they defeated Occidental College of Los Angeles 36-27 to claim the 2011 NSCRO Men's Collegiate DIII Championship at the Sportsplex Stadium in Virginia Beach, Virg. Prior to the final, Salve Regina University of Newport, RI held on to defeat Ithaca College 29-22 for 3rd place.

The four teams who earned their place in the Championship from the 135 D3 teams that were NSCRO eligible all showed how well small colleges represent collegiate rugby, both on and off the field. The male undergraduate enrollment of these schools ranged from a low of approx. 500 (Salve) to a high of approx. 2,800 (Ithaca). NSCRO has established a small college definition of 3,000 undergraduate students by gender.

Final

Longwood came out firing on all cylinders and scored 3 tries in the first 20 minutes to take a 19-0 lead. Tries were scored by flyhalf Preston Leep, winger Dan Waite and center Ben Smith. Waite and Smith's tries were opportunistic ones, both coming from a loose ball that was in Oxy's possession.

Oxy was well-coach and settled down to play Oxy rugby. It worked as flanker Zack Hundley

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scored on a goal line pick'n'go to make it 19-5. A few minutes later prop Johnny Ni scored from a few meters out and with the conversion, there was a game at 19-12. But Longwood was not lying down, and Ben Smith again showed his alertness on a loose ball and ran it in 15 meters to make it 26-12 with the conversion just before halftime.

Oxy came out aggressively with the 2nd half whistle, and scrumhalf Leon Siegel scored from a 5 meter scrum, and with Grummon's conversion they were back within 7 points at 26-19. Unfortunately for Oxy, at the 29th minute winger Joey Maloney was whistled for a dangerous play and yellow carded. Longwood took quick advantage of this and scored a minute later when second row Alex Randall took a rucked ball at the goal line and powered over for a try to make it 31-19.

A few minutes later Longwood blocked an Oxy clearance kick attempt by the goal line and prop Jeremiah Shepherd fell on it to push Longwood ahead 36-19. At the midway point of the half, Grummon kicked a penalty goal. Replacement wing Alberto Adame scored a fine try with about 11 minutes left to bring Oxy within 9 points at 36-27. The final 10 minutes was scoreless and after two attempts at winning a National title, Longwood came through with its first DIII title.

Semifinals

Salve Regina and Longwood faced off in the first semifinal on Saturday. Salve flew past all of its New England opponents in both the regular league and playoffs, going 10-0, while Longwood dominated Virginia DIII opponents last Fall as well as winning the MARFU DIII title this Spring.

Salve wasted no time, and within three minutes of the kickoff, no. 8 Ryan Shilalis drove into in-goal from a rucked ball to score a try to give Salve a 5-0 lead. Longwood went on attack only to find Salve's defense tough to crack until center Ben Smith broke through and scored at the 22nd minute. The conversion made it 7-5 in Longwood's favor.

Longwood's backs were able to break the gain line often but Salve's secondary defense was there to slow them down. The half ended that way as both teams stood tall when challenged at their goal line. The second was a different story as offense by teams started to dominate the action. Longwood began the second half try-fest at the 8-minute mark when winger Dan Waite scooped up a fine grubber kick by Ben Smith to score.

10 minutes later Salve flanker Colby Sherman drove in off a penalty play, making the score 12-10 to Longwood. John Kennedy put Longwood up by 5 points with a penalty kick. At the 16th minute, Longwood flanker TJ Van Petten scored an impressive try. Just inside the halfway line, Van Petten broken through 4 attempted tackles, and when faced with the fullback as Salve's last line of defense, he booted the ball ahead and gathered it to score. The conversion made it 22-10,

Salve's scrumhalf Clive O'Mahoney scored a fine try off a penalty play to bring his team within 7 points with just over 10 minutes to go in the match. Salve pressured Longwood, but this time defense ruled. Longwood drove back down the field and prop Matt Marino drove in from a rucked ball to give his side a 27-15 led with 3 minutes left. But again Salve came back, and Shilalis scored with a minute to go. The conversion made it 27-22. Time ran out on Salve's

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valiant comeback attempt and Longwood came away with the win.

In the second match of the day, the first-ever NSCRO Western Regional Champion, Occidental College, took on a born-again Ithaca College team. Ithaca, under the capable leadership of coach Annemarie Farrell, was just reformed on campus this past Fall. So what they were able to accomplish in their first season back is simply outstanding. Occidental had a very strong league season beating all 7 opponents scoring 243 points and yield only 52 points.

Both teams used their solid packs to try to gain dominance early on. There was no scoring until the 24th minute when Oxy's captain and fullback Mitchell Grummon nailed a penalty kick. On the ensuing kick off, Oxy's quick wing Joey "Unicorn" Maloney broke 2 tackles and ran 40 meters down the side line to score an impressive try to give his side a 8-0 lead. A few minutes last fullback Grummon took a high kick and broke through for a 35 meter run to then find Maloney in support. The pass to Maloney was right on target and Oxy's try and conversion by Grummon gave them a 15-0 lead. Just before half-time Grummon kicked another penalty goal to make it 18-0. Ithaca regrouped in the second half and utilizing their forward's power drove a 5 meter penalty play over for a try by no. 8 Scott Kamp. Despite their continued pressure on Oxy, Ithaca was unable to score again. The match ended in Oxy's favor 18-5.