Written by Jackie Finlan Wednesday, 20 July 2011 22:22

Santa Barbara, CA - The USA U20 Women are onto to the Nations Cup final against England after defeating Canada 15-5 this evening.



Canada began the game strongly, using its forwards to work toward the try line. But that ever crucial finishing pass couldn't be completed, and Canada had to wait until the closing minutes of the half before notching any points.

Canada's forwards had the edge around the field, stealing scrums and the happy recipient to miscues in the USA lineout. The half ended 5-3 in the USA favor thanks to an Amelia Bizer penalty from 20 meters out.

In the second half, the USA lacked fervor and Canada spent the third quarter in the Eagles' end. Canada had a couple of goal-line opportunities, but once again, penalties and ball-handling errors prevented any Canadian points.

It wasn't looking good for the Eagles, as a series of poor passing and backward movement stifled its offense. A few penalty opportunities failed to reach touch, putting the USA back on defense and killing momentum.

But with about 20 minutes left in the game, the USA received a lineout in Canada's end. The forwards mauled downfield, then scrumhalf Hayley Anderson sent the ball to the backs. The ball moved toward the sideline somewhat statically, but by the time it reached Bizer, she was bursting through the gainline and making meters. She fended at least three Canadian defenders en route to the try line, and converted her score, 10-5.

North American Duel Goes to USA

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From there, it was all USA. They stayed in Canada's end for the majority of the game, and was getting some nice forward momentum from inside center Akalaine Baravilala, who drew in several defenders before hitting big wing Ashley Okonta. The two teamed up for a try that was unfortunately held up, but showcased how difficult they are to take down.

As the game prepared to enter injury time, Baravilala gave the USA some cushion with a final try. From another driving lineout, prop Dorothy Mittow took a wide angle off the ruck to send the Canadian defense scrambling to contain her. From there, Anderson sent the ball out wide again, and Baravilala read the gap and dove over the line from about 10 meters out, 15-5.

The last quarter showed a lot of promise, but there are still some deficiencies that the USA will have to right before replaying England. Aside from possession in the breakdown, too many tacklers were committing to the ballcarrier. On offense, the desire to keep the ball alive at all costs meant 50/50 offloads to static support players, or punch passes to flat-footed forwards well behind the gainline.

That said, the win was a nice boost for the Eagles, who will need to play their best game of the series on Saturday if they hope to challenge England.

Stay tuned for player and coach feedback.

USA 15

Tries: Bizer, Baravilala Conversions: Bizer Penalties: Bizer