WWU Pushes OT Decision v GW

Written by Jackie Finlan Sunday, 17 April 2011 22:17

For onlookers, the George Washington v Western Washington quarterfinal had the makings on another upset, of which there were plenty during the Women's DII College National Championship this weekend. At the half, GW was up 12-0 on the team that had posted the largest point margin (67-5 v Claremont) during Saturday's round of 16.

But in true champion fashion, WWU battled back to tie it up in the second half, then used overtime to seal the 20-12 win.

The rugby gods favored the Virginia team at the outset of the match, and Western had a difficult time containing one of GW's massive centers, who scored in the first two minutes of the game. The defense reacted accordingly, however, and paid her some special attention that forced GW to adjust its offensive attack.

"We started of really slowly, but then we started to play more for ourselves and our team," scrumhalf Jordan Barber said of the game's turning point.

The halfback was instrumental in Western's comeback. Battling back from the first-half deficit, Barber put her team on the board when, from a scrum, looped around flyhalf April Fogel to dart through the backline for the try. Wing Hillary Nichols tied it up when a weakside maneuver gave her enough room down the sideline for the try, 12-12.

In overtime, WWU slotted a penalty for the 15-12 lead, and with the threat of losing the game diluting composure, George Washington got hit with a yellow card. The extra room on the pitch allowed Barber to ring GW's death knell, picking from the back of a scrum and darting over for second try of the day, 20-12.

"In the end I think we wanted it more," said Barber. "George Washington didn't give up, and they are a great team, but we wanted it more. We just needed to play Western rugby."

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WWU Assistant coach Mika Underwood agreed. "I don't think we needed to make any adjustments at halftime," Underwood reflected on her team's performance during the first 40 minutes. "We just needed to keep at it and keep grinding it out. We knew we would come back. I am really proud of the team for what they've accomplished."

Western Washington will face Radcliffe, which eliminated Norwich 22-7 today during the teams' quarterfinal, in two weeks during the national semifinals. WWU qualified for nationals in 2008 (a correction from a previous article that stated WWU had never advanced) but didn't make it past the opening round. As the lone Pacific Coast representative still standing, the Flames will have their hands full as they prepare for a cross-country trip to Pittsburgh and take on a team that went against the odds to RugbyMag.com's second-ranked team.

Women DII College Championship

Quarterfinals

Western Washington 20-12 George Washington

Radcliffe 22-7 Norwich

Stonehill 37-7 UNC Charlotte

Notre Dame 23-15 Shippensburg

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Consolation Round

Mary Washington 17-10 UW La Crosse

Lee University 38-0 Claremont Colleges

Winona State 14-0 Washington State (fft)

Mesa State 14-0 Santa Clara University (fft)