Virginia's Sharlyn Carter carves up the UC Davis defense. (Roger Mazzarella photo)

Bowling Green, OH - UVA ... the little team that could. Another familiar match-up during the Women's DI College Championship opening round: Virginia's small, the other team isn't. But once again, UVA relied on its excellent team speed and precision counter-rucking to down the bigger UC Davis 37-17 for a berth to the quarterfinals against Brown.

UC Davis played an unconventional style of rugby that's seen more in Midwest teams than West Coast squads - keeping the ball in tight with their big forwards and using its backs sparingly. The strategy worked well enough for the Pacific Coast #3 team, but lacked the balance that UVA showcased.

UVA was missing captain Jen Van, Minna Choi and Michelle Souleret, so a bunch of first-years had to pick up the slack, and did so wonderfully. Freshmen inside center Kelley Frank and scrumhalf Cam Boland in particular played very composed games for their ages.

Wing Erica Cavanaugh, back to full strength after some niggling injuries late in the season, punished her opposites, crushing them every time they touched the ball and running in three scores of her own. Cavanaugh worked well with try scorer Sharlyn Carter, whose multiple linebreaks saw her team into enemy territory on several occasions. Captain Stephanie Chubb led from flyhalf, and continually set up her teammates on attack, while her expert boot kept UC Davis scrambling.

"It was a fun game, but it was one we could've lost had UC Davis played to their strengths," Kechner reflected. "At the end of the day, they couldn't handle our speed."

It was a tougher game physically than UVA's experienced over the last few years in the opening round, having played an athletic Texas A&M two of the last three trips. Tomorrow, UVA will take on Brown in the quarterfinals.

"Brown knows us. They're all nice kids, and we cheer each other on," Kechner said. "They're not huge - like us - but they're well coached, very fit and their technique is impeccable. We just need to do what we do well."

Whoever wins tomorrow's quarterfinals will move onto the winner of Penn State v Stanford, a game that would be contested in Palo Alto in two weekends.