

PSU Keeps Winning Streak Alive

Written by Jackie Finlan
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Dual try-scorer Lisa Henneman clears the ball and nullifies Stanford's attack.

Buffalo, NY - Pool A of the Women's DI College Championship has been decided, and with little surprise, it's Penn State that's returning to Palo Alto, Calif., for the national semifinals. The Nittany Lions outplayed Stanford to a 32-7 victory during today's quarterfinal, thereby ending the Cardinal's eight-year streak of consecutive final's appearances.



The teams are very familiar with each other, and Penn State entered the game with a specific plan.

"We know Stanford well," PSU coach Pete Steinberg said. "We know Frances [Wehrein], Amelia [Villines] and [Jennifer] Cooperrider are all good players, and we wanted to nullify them. We thought we could create some opportunities by kicking. They kicked, too, but we were structured to make some nice returns."

Penn State took advantage of its attacking opportunities and saw fullback Lisa Henneman (2), flyhalf Sadie Anderson, center Hanna Gregor and lock Kyle Armstrong score tries in the first half for a 27-0 lead into the break.

"The score doesn't reflect the evenness of the game," PSU coach Pete Steinberg said. "While it shows how we were able to convert opportunities into scores, it doesn't show that Stanford was on our line three or four times, and just couldn't get over."

Stanford's pack played very well and was one of the strongest that Penn State had seen in recent years. They picked up their performance in the second half and made some positive

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gains by attacking the fringes. It took a physical toll on Penn State and might have lent to the two yellow cards that PSU received for repeated infringements in the tackle.

Stanford made good on the advantage just once, logging a converted try to avoid the shutout, but also had another try held up. For all of their mental lapses in the second half, the Penn State defense did well to overcome the personnel disadvantage and repelled a number of goal-line attacks.

Penn State's Kelsey Corbett had the last work, taking a nice pass from Elena Cantorna for the game's final try, 32-7.

Penn State started 13 different players from yesterday's game against UNI, and five of them were freshmen. "We had freshmen No. 8 and 6, and senior No. 8 and 6 on the bench," Steinberg said. "We have lots of depth. It's the outcome that high school rugby is producing. Some of these girls have been playing since they were 10 or 11 and are coming in with amazing experience. It gives us a lot of competition, and it's an advantage we have over Stanford. They can't recruit like we do because it's really difficult to get into Stanford."

No one rivals PSU's program, but now a new team will be attempting to dethrone the champ. Penn State will know its semifinal opponent after today's UVA v Brown quarterfinal.

In the Pool A consolation match, Northern Iowa and Dartmouth exchanged leads three times before a sustained late charge allowed UNI to take the game with a 31-22 final.

UNI took an early 7-0 lead, then the teams traded scores to a 14-7 scoreline 28 minutes in. Dartmouth closed the gap with an unconverted try then took its first lead of the game early in the second half with a corner try, 17-14.

There the game stood for the next 20 minutes, until UNI retook the lead with a try, 19-17. Eager to get back on top, Dartmouth answered right back two minutes later with an unconverted try, 22-19 with 10 minutes remaining.

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With five minutes to go, UNI powered down the pitch for the go-ahead score, then tacked on another when a turnover ball allowed another try, 31-22. There was only the difference of one try, but UNI slotted three conversions for the cushion.