

Cadets Score 127 pts En Route to Final 4

Written by Jackie Finlan
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Army returns to the Women's DI College National Championship final four after a big 51-0 win over North Carolina. The cadets racked up 127 points over two games and only allowed one try.

The wet and windy conditions made for a sloppy game on either side of the ball, and both teams struggled to move the ball and use their outside speed. UNC was hampered by a number of injuries in their backline, and the scoreline reflected as much.

Annie Lee and Jessica Sexauer led Army once again in tries scored, accounting for three five-pointers apiece. Sharron Gianessi, Kaitlyn Kelly, and Kayla Orvik, who played a really solid game at No. 8 and whose workrate on defense wasn't to be outdone, all added tries.

Although Army coach Will Riddle is happy to have won, the team agreed that it wasn't necessarily satisfied with its performance, and acknowledged that some work would need to be done before seeing Women's Cougar Rugby, which outlasted Navy to a 7-0 victory today, in the final four.

"They have some big, strong runners, and their backs are more elusive than most," Riddle said. "Our open-field tackling needs to get better, and it's something we've struggled with a bit this semester. We'll be outsized, and this will be the first time that we play a team that can match our speed."

On the positive side, having a less than optimal game can be good motivation for the two weeks training ahead. "If you play a perfect game, then it's hard to tell them that work needs to be done," Riddle said. "It's just a consistency thing."

Of all the teams that Riddle has coached at Army, he feels this year's squad, with its seven starting seniors, has the best chance at winning a championship. It will be interesting to see how the team responds when it's truly challenged by Women's Cougar Rugby, which is celebrating its first trip to the final four.