

DII Men College Playoff Update

Written by Pat Clifton
Sunday, 27 March 2011 12:05

Three territorial champions were crowned in DII this weekend, filling six of the remaining 11 Sweet 16 seats. Of those advancing, two are returning from a season ago.

In the South, South Florida and ECU met in a rematch of the 2009 South title game, with the Bulls winning 29-11 and extending their dream season, in which they're undefeated against DII competition.

USF fired out of the gate by taking the lead in the third minute, which they wouldn't relinquish the rest of the day. They carried a 19-3 lead into halftime and led 29-6 with about a minute to play, when ECU notched their first try.

"They're thrilled. This is a championship match, and they've busted their balls getting there," said USF coach Gordon Campbell of his Bulls. "They're thrilled, but also looking forward to the next challenge. A lot of our guys are seniors, so this is their last shot, and they've got to put everything on the table, not leave anything left in the reserves, so I'm hoping they'll do it."

In the Mid-Atlantic, favorite Salisbury walloped St. Joe's 61-5. This game was never in doubt, as the 2004 national champs did their homework by watching St. Joe's in their semifinal against Towson.

"We watched their game yesterday a little bit and saw what they were doing, and they did the same things today, and we were kind of ready for it," said Salisbury assistant Bill Creese of the Hawks' affinity for running from deep inside their own end of the field.

"They even had a penalty on like the two-meter line on their end and did a quick tap instead of kicking it up and doing a lineout there, so we knew we wanted to put it on their back three. They run one phase of offensive play, and they ran it probably 40 times in the game. They'd get it out to their inside center and then pop it back into the forwards and we just kept somebody in that gap."

Despite the lopsided loss, St. Joe's advances to the Sweet 16 as MARFU's second seed for the second time in three years. Salisbury is back in the dance for the third-straight year and fifth in six. Though the Sharks have been so many times, reaching Nationals never loses its luster.

"It's weird, because each team you kind of get your own environment with each team and it's just as exciting," said Creese. "A lot of these guys it's their first one...I think we have three seniors that are playing on our team, and the rest are sophomores, juniors and freshmen."

In the West, Saint Louis defended its title, downing Texas champ Rice 23-12. For the second year in a row, SLU reached the final by defeating Arkansas. This time the Razorbacks were tougher, falling 34-21. Rice downed Colorado College 27-7 in the other semifinal.

(This article originally incorrectly stated ECU defeated USF in the 2009 South title match)

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Kissimmee, Fla. April 16-17 30-May 1

Salisbury (MARFU #1)
Michigan State (Midwest #2)

Round of 8

ECU (South #2)
William Paterson (Northeast #2)

Semis

USF (South #1)
Bentley (Northeast #3)

Round of 8

St. Joe's (MARFU #2)
Middlebury (Northeast #1)

Final

San Diego, Calif. April 16-17

UW-Whitewater (Midwest #1)
SoCal #2

Round of 8

Pac Coast #2
St. Louis University (West #1)

Semis

SoCal #1
Rice (West #2)

Round of 8

SoCal #3
Pacific #1