Utah defeated Army 32-26 but in essence it was really three games – the first lasted no more than 15 minutes, during which time Utah stepped on the gas early and scored through a Sione Lauti penalty, a try from flanker and captain Danny James, and a Blake Miller try that Lauti converted.

Hosts Army must have wondered what happened. They've barely taken the field and are down 15-0.

But Army rebounded as you'd expect them to. They took control of the ball, and the game – the second game of the match, and during a period of 50 minutes, scored 19 points and gave up none.

The Cadets attacked in tight and sent it wide, stretching the Utah defense and trying to put wing Ben Leatigaga away. Leatigaga ended up tryless, but he was dangerous anyway, creating space that resulted in tries for wing Latu Vaha'i and outside center Will Holder.

"We finally start fast, and it lasts only ten minutes," said Utah Head Coach Blake Burdette, shaking his head. "We didn't score a point, and didn't really see the ball, for about 50 minutes. We just defended, and I was really pleased with our defense."

For spectators it seemed as if Utah had used up all their battery power. Their energy must have sapped by all that defense, surely, and with Holder adding penalty kicks at 26, 34 and 49 minutes, it seemed clear Army would run out the victors.

So on to the third game of the match. Ten minutes to go, Army up, now, 19-15.

"We hadn't seen the ball and we knew if we got the ball we could score," said Burdette. "We just needed to find a way to get the ball."

And that's what they did. A turnover, and then a longer series in the Army 22, a penalty, and from a quick tap lock Maika Hafoka is over and suddenly Utah is in business, up 22-19. Minutes later, Palamo, who had been relatively quiet on offense, took a pass from a loosely-won lineout. and burst through a hole in the Army defense - outside backs coming up fast, inside not so much. Palamo went 30 meters before being brought down, but he wasn't held in the tackle and got right back up.

Finally the big back was stonewalled by three Army defenders, but with a little help from his teammates he wriggled, shoved, and worked his way over for the try. 27-19.

Seconds later, after some wild Palamo running and linkage with his support, prop Nick Mostyn circles behind a ruck, calls for a pass from Don Pati at pace, breaks a tackle and you'd think the prop would be caught in open play, right? Not so, and Mostyn is over. In the space of six minutes Utah scores 17 points, and leads 32-19.

Army battled on and got a penalty try - Will Holder tries to grubber into in-goal and trips over a Utah player trying to block the kick. But those final ten minutes ran a scoreline of 17-7 in Utah's favor.

"It's tough to win on the road anywhere," said Burdette. "The home team is in their own beds, they know where everything is. We're not as comfortable, and have to travel across the country. But the guys put a lot into this game. We were in their half maybe three or four times in the second half, and scored three tries – all in the final ten minutes. We just hung on until we could win. West Point hosted us really well, but it was great to take the win."

This could well be one of the most surprising results in the College Premier Division; not so much because Utah won … they were underdogs as the away team, but were still highly-regarded … but because of the way it was won.

Utah taking an early lead? Not a surprise. Army bringing it all under control and reasserting authority? Also, as expected. Utah finishing the strong and blowing the lid off the entire thing? Hmm … Utah has done it before.

Playing an unpredictable type of rugby that relies in part on athleticism, on opportunistic play, and sometimes on great individualism, isn't bad rugby. Utah showed that as a game plan, it can work, as long as the team in question plays good defense, and is patient. Utah was patient. They waiting over three quarters of an hour for their chance, and then took it once … twice …

thrice … to beat a truly outstanding Army squad.

Utah once made a national DI final with two players who made as habit of scoring from intercept tries. You could look at one try and think it was luck. Look at two in a row and think it was crazy luck. After a while, you'd be forced to acknowledge that it was all part of the plan – just because it's not what everyone else does, doesn't mean it's not rugby.

Utah 32
Tries: James, Miller, Hafoka, Palamo, Mostyn
Convs: Lauti 2
Pens: Lauti

Army 26
Tries: Vaha'i, Holder, Penalty
Convs: Holder
Pens: Holder 3