

Glendale Rides Emotion to Semifinals

Written by Pat Clifton
Monday, 23 May 2011 00:14



Despite what turned out to be a somewhat lopsided score line, 28-8 in favor of Glendale, the DI quarterfinal between the Raptors and Belmont Shore at the Olympic Training Center in Chula Vista, Calif. Sunday was extremely closely contested.

The defending National runners-up looked determined to get on the board first, with two early probing possessions being thwarted at the last minute by Glendale turnovers at the breakdown.

Raptor hooker Shae Tamate led an effective counter-ruck to get Glendale out of hot water the first time, and the second threat was stopped when a Belmont-won ruck had the ball squirt out the back, which a Glendale defender swiftly scooped it up.

A third probe from Belmont Shore was created by an errant Glendale pass near midfield, which seemed destined for no one. Belmont's Peter Sio attacked the loose ball and nearly broke loose for a try. The Raptors scrambled in defense and caught the slippery center, and the penalty slotted by Seb Karaluc shortly thereafter, which put Shore up 3-0, was a welcome alternative.

Malifa leveled the score when Glendale made its first big break into Belmont's territory, resulting in a penalty.

Just three minutes later, after inside center Justin Pauga broke Belmont's defensive line and put Glendale on the attack, lock Casey Rock slammed down the match's first try. Malifa converted, putting the Raptors ahead 10-3.

Belmont had a shot to pull within one score, but Karaluc missed a 40-meter penalty following a Glendale ruck infringement. Peter Dahl would actually draw Shore closer off of a No. 8 pick from point-blank scrum a few minutes later, repelling multiple would-be tacklers before diving into pay

Glendale Rides Emotion to Semifinals

Written by Pat Clifton
Monday, 23 May 2011 00:14

dirt in the corner. The conversion was missed, leaving Glendale up 10-8 at the break.

Belmont left five points on the board with first-half kicks, and potentially even more if they'd capitalized on a couple try-scoring opportunities. But they didn't, and when Malifa slotted a penalty in the 42nd minute, it put Shore down two scores. Malifa added a third three-pointer in the 61st minute.

Belmont had a couple second-half threats at Glendale's line, but a spirited Raptor defense pitched a shutout. Belmont's game-long struggles in the lineout didn't help, either. Time after time their hooker would miss high, and diminutive Glendale openside Bradley Winbush would claim the ball. Pressure from the Raptors' towering jumpers added to Belmont's lineout woes.

"Lineout was an area we targeted, and it worked out for us, and didn't work out for them," said Glendale coach Mark Bullock. "With (Eagle) Alec Parker and Casey Rock at 6-9, who is just growing in maturity, and Keith Dauper at 6-7, our other lock, I think we've got three guys who can move around, and they're all athletes, and that's helpful for us."

Winbush put the game entirely out of reach in the 79th minute when he caught a Belmont knock about 10 meters from Shore's tryline and scampered the short distance to pay dirt. For a little more comfort, weakside flanker Pat Doyle crashed through for another try at full-time. Malifa converted.

Malifa scored 13 points with his foot in the match, but accounted for much more. He delivered some slicing runs and territory-gaining kicks, while leading the Raptors physical effort from the front in both the tackle and ruck. It was Malifa's first time facing his former club.

"That was quite emotional out there actually, just playing with the brothers I used to play for, the first club I came to American and played for," he said. "We (he and twin Nese) thought we'd have a change, and hopefully we could give something to the club, and to play against one of the best clubs in the country and get a win is quite an achievement for us, and I'm very proud of the boys."

It's no secret Glendale didn't necessarily put out the squad it had hoped to this weekend. Seven Raptors who transferred to the club from Aspen had their playoff hopes dashed by USA Rugby's Club Strategic Committee recently, and that only added fuel to Glendale's emotional fire.

"Our guys were playing with a lot of emotion in terms of the fact that they had seven of their mates that weren't able to be here to play with them," said Bullock, "and they wanted to win for them."

The Raptors also wanted to prove that they were a good club, even without the Aspen infusion.

"They were just kind of a bonus to our club. We had a solid core before, and when they came it was a strong addition, and when they got taken away we went back to the strong core that we had," said Winbush of the Aspen seven. "It hurt us a little bit, because we had the depth to

Glendale Rides Emotion to Semifinals

Written by Pat Clifton
Monday, 23 May 2011 00:14

make a stronger impact, but our boys stepped up to the plate.

"It shows that we play as a club and we play as a team, and that anybody we put in we have the confidence to try and take it all the way and win."

Glendale will have homefield advantage in the semifinals, set for June 4 at Infinity Park, where they'll face the Boston Irish Wolfhounds. The Wolfhounds punched their ticket to Glendale with an 11-5 defeat of Norfolk Sunday.

Glendale

Tries: Rock, Winbush, Doyle

Cons: Malifa (2)

Pens: Malifa (3)

Belmont Shore

Tries: Dahl

Pens: Karaluc