After a full season of beating on each other, the top three teams in the Pacific Northwest DII club South ended up the top three teams in the entire region.

Chuckanut, the lone North team in the final four, finished fourth, but were competitive. They just hadn't had the same hard-bitten season that ORSU, the Tsunami, and Portland dealt with playing each other every week.

In the end Portland emerged as the champions, defeating the Tsunami in overtime 24-21. ORSU defeated Chuckanut 30-10 to finish third.

Portland did everything they needed to do at crunch time, winning the final regular-season game of the season to get the #1 seed out of the PNRFU South, and then winning in OT.

The Pigs looked good to take the title without much difficulty in Sunday's final, using a superior tactical kicking game and tough defense to keep the Tsunami backed up.

Portland led 21-7 60 minutes into the match, but there were 20 minutes to go, and the injuries began to mount up for the Pigs.

With only three minutes left the Tsunami battled their way from their own 22 to the Portland line and scored under the posts to tie the game 21-21. That's how regulation time ended.

The ten-minute OT was "trench warfare between two tired but determined teams," said Portland Head Coach Andy Edmundson.

Portland returned to the territorial plan that had given them the early lead. Led by captain Alex Johnson they pinned the Tsunami in their own end and waited for a mistake. That turned out to be a penalty that flyhalf Gordo Izquierdo whacked through the posts.

"We felt pretty good after the win on Saturday against Chuckanut Bay," said Tsunami Coach Richard Sharma. "We knew the Pigs always play us tough and unfortunately we have come up short in the last two tries against them due to a lot of mental mistakes. The guys fought hard to get back into the game being down 14 points with less than 5 minutes to go. [But] what really hurt the team were all the penalties. It is unbelievable the number of penalties we gave up in the game. That just put us on our back foot most of the game playing defense and didn't give our backs much of a chance to run the ball against the Pigs."

Despite that, the Tsunami defense kept them in the game. Portland scored 12 points from penalties, but Sharma said it could have been more.

It certainly could have been more if Portland had been at full strength. On Saturday against ORSU former USA U19 captain Dominic Mara suffered a concussion. Then filling in for Mara at fullback on Sunday, Argentinian try machine Zeke Camusio dislocated his tibia and fractured his fibia, ending and outstanding season. Still, Portland held on. Still the Tsunami felt they could

have done more.

"Everyone realizes we gave away that game," said Sharma. "Going into the territorial playoffs we need to be mentally prepared and reduce the penalty count. We have a few key players banged up that need to heal. I feel our defense is solid and if we can retain possession then we should do well."

The Pacific Coast playoffs should be as good a DII playoff as any in the country. Tempe and Red Mountain are playing especially well and are almost equal in quality. NorCal has been very close, and certainly so has the Pacific Northwest. Here's how the playoffs May 7-8 at the SFGG club's fields on Treasure Island look:

Round 1-Saturday:
(1) Portland v (8) ORSU
(2) Fresno v (7) Tsunami
(3) Santa Rosa v (6) Red Mountain
(4) SFGG v (5) Tempe

The seeding is almost immaterial. Tempe, at #5, could well be the best team in the playoffs. In fact, only ORSU of the lower-seeded teams is a true underdog.

Unfortunately, the seeding matters, as the top two seeded winners play for #1 (the loser of that game being #2), and the other two winners playing for #3.

But in DII rugby there are always other factors at play. Injuries have hit everyone, and Edmundson said the economy has hurt his team, too.

"The economy has certainly put pressure on the side," he said. "A number of tradesmen and laborers have been unable to make training or games on a regular basis due to the need to work late or put in extra hours on Saturdays."

Still, continued Edmundson, **"**I feel strongly that the depth the club has built this year will carry us through the PCRFU playoffs. Like hardened soldiers the bruises we've taken have only made us stronger and more willing to take the ball into contact. The Pigs are on a roll and can sniff glory in the days ahead."