

Fallbrook Shuts Out Sacramento to Claim Girl's U19 Title

Written by Will Dietrich-Egensteiner
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In what was a truly dominant performance, second-seeded Fallbrook (Calif.) beat top-ranked Sacramento Amazons, 60-0, in the Girl's U19 National Championship final at Rio Tinto Stadium in Sandy, Utah on May 22.

Sacramento beat Fallbrook in the 2010 final, but could not even come close to repeating their performance this year. Despite the massive effort put forward by the Amazons, Fallbrook just looked too clinical and used every part of their game to take home the trophy.

Sacramento kicked off and Fallbrook quickly got on the board with an unconverted try and never looked back. Sacramento managed to pressure Fallbrook but a scrum was awarded to the Warriors close to their own goal line. Fallbrook won the ball and kicked down field to relieve the pressure. Sacramento fielded the ball but in the ensuing ruck Fallbrook was able to turn the ball over and take it the other way, eventually leading to the team's second score. The try went unconverted and the score stood at 10-0.

What followed was a period of back-and-forth play with the ball changing hands numerous times. Sacramento kicked off and won the ball back after a successful counter ruck, only to turn the ball over to Fallbrook who were awarded a penalty and kicked to touch. Fallbrook won their lineout and kicked the ball from midfield. Sacramento took the ball cleanly and cleared their lines, kicking into touch from their own goal line. Fallbrook used the opportunity to take a quick lineout but a few phases later again turned the ball over to Sacramento. Some sloppy handling on Sacramento's side led to the ball shooting out of the back of a ruck, where a Fallbrook player pounced on it. A penalty was awarded to Fallbrook and their number eight took the quick tap, marching the ball close to the Sacramento line. Fallbrook was awarded another penalty.

Despite Sacramento having a distinct size advantage in the forwards, Fallbrook were solid in the scrums. The ball was passed out of the scrum to the fly half, who passed it to the inside center before looping wide to the touchline to take the pass and score in the corner. The conversion was missed, bringing the score to 15-0.

After this, Fallbrook got the offense going and was able to extend their lead. Led by outside center Tara Burke and fullback Jamie Garcia, the Fallbrook backline made breaks and managed to slip tackles while the forwards worked crash balls and secured possession well at the rucks, despite some brutal hitting by the Sacramento pack.

After a Sacramento kick failed to reach touch, Fallbrook counterattacked with Burke racing inside the opponent's 22-meter line before being tackled. The forwards then worked crash balls against the grain until they finally crashed over the line. The conversion kick was made and the score increased to 22-0.

After the Sacramento kick off, Fallbrook lost the ball but won it back soon after before Burke broke a few tackles and raced down the left touchline to score. With the conversion, Fallbrook took a 29-0 lead.

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The Amazons kicked off yet again, but in one bright spot for the team, a big hit forced the knock on by Fallbrook and Sacramento was awarded the scrum. The Sacramento number eight picked the ball off the back before they were awarded another penalty. The quick tap was taken and the ball spun wide. Unfortunately for the Amazons, the winger was tackled into touch and Fallbrook won the resulting lineout. They worked the ball wide and made it into the Sacramento half. Sacramento committed a penalty and Fallbrook caught them napping, taking the quick tap to score under the posts. Garcia made the conversion for a 36-0 score.

Following the kick off, Sacramento was called for not releasing. Fallbrook kicked to touch and won the lineout before Burke attempted a chip over the Amazon defense. Sacramento fielded it cleanly though before being knocked into touch. Fallbrook won the lineout and worked the ball to Garcia who scored an unconverted try at the end of the first half. The score stood at 41-0 to Fallbrook.

After the break, Fallbrook kicked the ball off and won it back after Sacramento was penalized. Fallbrook won the scrum and kicked deep down field. A loose pass spoiled Sacramento's hopes of counterattacking when a Fallbrook player picked it off and was tackled at the 5-meter line. The Warriors were awarded a scrum and the number eight drove for the line, only to be hit hard by the Amazon defense and held up over the line.

Sacramento found some relief when Fallbrook was penalized after the ensuing scrum. They kicked for touch, but Fallbrook stole the lineout only for Sacramento to steal the ball back in the ruck. The Amazons got some good phases going and worked a lot of forward ball, but they could not come away with a score thanks again to Burke, who intercepted a pass and ran it in under the posts. Garcia's conversion made it a 48-0 game.

It seemed that everything the Amazons did, Fallbrook had an answer for. The Warriors had a penalty deep in Amazon territory and used the quick tap before recycling the ball for a forward crash and another score. Garcia again landed the conversion and it was 55-0 with still 20 minutes left to play.

Sacramento started to become frustrated and it showed when their scrumhalf was yellow carded. The Amazons managed to hold off Fallbrook until Burke took the ball inside the Sacramento five. A simple pick and go resulted in Fallbrook's 10th and final try of the match.

Sacramento was able to make some advances into the Fallbrook half, but the Warrior defense held strong and the final whistle came after another Amazon run was forced into touch.

The final score was 60-0 and a well-deserved championship win for Fallbrook. They made the most of every opportunity Sacramento gave them, ran good lines, slipped tackles, held their own in the scrums against a far bigger Sacramento pack and maintained the majority of possession. The Amazons put forth tremendous effort, especially in the tackle, but penalties stacked up against them. They were playing with a young side. Six players on the Amazon roster are 18 years old and the rest are freshman according to Sacramento coach Sefesi Green.

"We were beaten by a really good team," Green said. "Fallbrook definitely deserved the win. I'm

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just happy we could bring this young team the experience. The girls played with a lot of heart and put out a lot of effort, but it just wasn't good enough against the better team."