

Brown Upsets Penn State at CRC 7s

Written by Jackie Finlan
Friday, 03 June 2011 21:37

Hands down, the biggest upset during day one of the women's USA 7s Collegiate Rugby Championship was Brown's 12-10 win over Penn State, a game that was saved for the second-to-last match of the day.

Faulkner (left) was crucial to Brown's attack. (Marvin Dangerfield)

Brown had begun the day with a 17-5 loss to Virginia - another highly anticipated game that recreated the teams' national DI quarterfinal, which went to UVA in overtime. Brown followed with a 7-0 loss to Temple, the only DII team in the competition.

"They came out a little shaky and had two frustrating games because the learning curve is pretty hard," Brown coach Emilie Bydwell said. "But then they really brought it together in the last two hours, spending time with each other and working things out. They set some goals for themselves and definitely accomplished them for a great win."

Paramount to Brown's success was better discipline and fewer penalties. The referees' whistles repeated stunted Brown's momentum during the first two rounds and prevented two achievable wins.

Minutes into the game, Brown ran in two unanswered tries against Penn State. The first came from Emily Hsieh, who began the day as hooker and then moved to center when the team needed it. From a penalty inside PSU's 22 meter, Hsieh took the tap at full pace, froze two defenders and ran underneath the posts. Chelsea Garber handled the extras for the 7-0 lead.

The sidelines went crazy, as it became evident that the crowd was rooting for the underdog. UVA in particular was leading the rally.

Minutes later, Garber re-enacted Hsieh's defense-splitting line when a messy scrum worked in

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Brown's favor. Brown scooped up the ball and moved it down the line for the flyhalf's taking, 12-0.

With no time left in the half, Penn State received a penalty near midfield. The ball was tapped to Sadie Anderson, who reversed the flow and sent the ball weakside to Lisa Henneman. The former 7s Eagle got around the corner and just as the defense closed in, hit Anderson back inside and the scrumhalf finished it off for the try, 12-5 into the half.

In the second stanza, Shakeela Faulkner looked like she was going to score for Brown, trekking down the sideline with only Anderson to beat. Anderson didn't wrap as she knocked Faulkner into touch and was yellow-carded for the dangerous hit. To PSU's credit, the defense held even though a man down. The extra pressure pushed Penn State and its offense responded, with Christiane Pheil, who had little time on the field today, finishing off a fantastic series of offloads in the tackle for the try. The corner try made for a difficult conversion for Henneman, and so the score remained with Brown ahead 12-10.

Penn State did everything in its power to get across the tryline one more time as the clock wound down, and they were pressuring on the line as time expired and Brown desperately tried to push ballcarriers into touch. Deven Owsiany and Pheil toed the touchline to keep it alive, but Brown finally succeeded for the thrilling win.

"I'm really proud of them," Bydwell beamed. "It definitely makes the day worthwhile.

"They bought into the fact that we need to be insanely disciplined to play good 7s and to compete with a great team like Penn State," Bydwell added. "Penalties have always been our downfall, but they were able to fix those issues throughout multiple games, and hopefully that translates into Sunday."

Bydwell tipped her hat to all of the players for stepping up, but in particular Hsieh, who ran some great lines; Garber, for demanding the best out of her teammates and keeping the team calm; and Faulkner, "who cannot be out-paced right now," Bydwell said.

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It was a great way to end the first day of competition and a reiteration that a 7s game can go anyway between good teams. Penn State still takes the top seed out of Pool A, while Brown takes third.