Virginia didn't have it easy during the first round of the women's USA 7s women's Collegiate Rugby Championship. The day started against rival Brown, followed by pool favorite Penn State, and ended against Temple, which was just coming off a confidence-boosting win against Brown.

UVA's Cavanaugh pierced defenses all day. (Marvin Dangerfield)

Fortunately, the team had former and current Eagle 7s players Dana Creager and Beth Black from NOVA to monitor progress.

The day kicked off with an always heated match against Brown. The teams enjoy a healthy rivalry in 15s and typically trade victories. Their last meeting occured during the national DI quarterfinals in which UVA rallied from behind in overtime to win a bid to the semifinals, but now it was time to test the 7s rivalry.

"We had three practices leading up to today, so we really didn't know what to expect from the players," Creager said. "They were anxious and excited for the game to get here."

The game began with Brown's Blaine Martin scoring the first try, dotting down a kicked-ahead ball that trickled into the try zone. With the try, Martin came out of the game with a dislocated shoulder, although she would return to prop later in the day.

UVA took advantage of the penalty opportunities afforded them and marched right back, mixing up its quick taps with nice sideline-to-sideline work. UVA eventually built an overload and sent the ball to Sharlyn Carter, who finished off the solid phase play with a try, 7-5 into the half.

Both teams weren't playing the best 7s, a little to eager for contact. Creager rationalized that the gusty winds encouraged the teams to play a little safer and keep the ball in tighter, rather than risk flinging a poachable ball in the air.

Carter, who is the pinnacle of UVA's excellent team speed, put her team into scoring contention quickly in the second half. She was slowed down by Brown's Shakeela Faulkner, but a series of penalties awarded UVA possession. From a tap-and-go in Brown's half, Cavanaugh waited out wide for the easy overload try, 12-5.

Flyhalf Stephanie Chubbs made the win official minutes later, when she broke weak off the scrum and ran in the final try unopposed, 17-5.

It was the first 7s iteration of the teams' rivalry, with UVA still in the lead. The team carried that momentum into its following game against Penn State, and played a solid first half against a team coming off a 34-0 win over Temple.

PSU recycled the ball fluidly, worked the sidelines, and fought through the line, but UVA's defense didn't break. The team was very disciplined and didn't let an overcommitment to the breakdown open gaps in the defense. Sadie Anderson broke the silence just before the halftime siren, breaking weak off a scrum and outrunning pursuers for the diving try, 5-0.

From the second-half kickoff, Penn State continued to move the ball across the field and eventually earned a penalty nearly UVA's 22 meter. The UVA defense scrambled in retreat as Lisa Henneman worked down the sideline and set up Lauren Barber for the try, 12-0.

UVA reigned the score back within striking distance on the very next possession, maneuvering downfield with the help of some penalties. A botched lineout worked to Carter out wide, and the speedy center dotted down, 12-7, converting her own score.

But then Henneman and Sadie Anderson teamed up for a pair of tries to put the game away, working so well together down the sideline and at full pace. The final score, 26-7, was a hard-earned one for PSU.

Which left Temple to round out pool play. While UVA was favored to win, they also watched Temple upset Brown and knew a competitive game would ensue. Temple had a couple of scoring opportunities but it was all UVA. They were synced and worked hard for their tries,

which came from Cavanaugh (2), Rosa Bauer-Moshi, MC Anderson and Stephanie Chubbs.

"Today went really well," UVA captain Erika Cavanaugh said. "We were a lot more prepared than we thought we'd be, and that's due in part to our coaches we have.

"This was a nice game to end on," Cavanaugh added. "We knew what we had to work on from the previous two games, and were able to maintain a strong defense and get in a lot of attacking runs."

UVA ended the day second in pool A and will see pool B's #3 team in Sunday's quarterfinals.