

Army Women Team to Beat

Written by Jackie Finlan
Sunday, 05 June 2011 10:10

Philadelphia - There may be grey skies above PPL Park this Sunday morning, but the women's USA Sevens Collegiate Rugby Championship kept spectators in good spirits as the quarterfinals got underway. Army, Penn State, Virginia and hometown favorite Temple all move onto the semifinals, which begin at 1:15 p.m.

Orvik's two tries aided Army's win over Brown. (Marvin Dangerfield)

Cpt Bandura has been Temple's guiding light. (Marvin Dangerfield)

Temple was able to give the crowd what they couldn't have yesterday during the men's competition - an opportunity to get on their feet and cheer on a fantastic closing-minutes win against Princeton, 14-10.

Both teams were evenly matched, as demonstrated by the three lead changes. They moved the ball well and had excellent outside speed - in fact, all of the tries came from long breakaways or around-the-corner acceleration.

Princeton took the first lead with an Angela Yue try from 10 meters out, and then Temple put away a length of the field try to even up. Nikki Schuerch broke through the line to race about 80 meters before being pulled down at the two meter. Excellent support from Korin Tangtrakul was right on her tail, took the pop from the ground and dotted down. Rachel Bandura converted from the sideline for the 7-5 lead into half.

Johanna Valdez was fast enough to leg out Princeton's final try in the corner, and then with two minutes remaining, a breakaway try under the posts and Bandura conversion put Temple up for good. And the crowds go wild.

The Virginia v Navy quarterfinal shared the same drama, with UVA getting the 12-10 win on the last play of the game. Navy had a slight size advantage and used Jane Paar to power over the line twice. UVA is slight and uses its biggest player - Erica Cavanaugh - out wide on the wing. The strategy worked, as Cavanaugh scored the first try around the corner. After Paar's first try minutes later, UVA held onto the 7-5 lead into the break.

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From the second-half kickoff, Navy was on UVA's goal line, chasing down some kicks ahead well and keeping possession. After a recalled try, Paar dotted down again, just too big for the slighter UVA team to stop before the gainline, 10-7.

The players started to fatigue and play became very 15s-like, with players sprinting into traffic without support. The ball skirted out of every breakdown and the scrappy play allowed UVA to inch toward the try line with time expired. The final penalty occurred five meters from the posts, so Meredith Nelson tapped and, with arms outstretched, just barely dotted the ball down for the 12-10 win.

"I wasn't looking at the clock, so I didn't realize that there wasn't any time left," Nelson said. "We were right in front of the try line so I just wanted to hurry before they noticed me. I'm pretty short, so I don't think they even saw me!"

"We knew Navy was going to hit hard and have extremely strong scrums," the scrumhalf said. "We thought we were prepared for it, but we weren't. Even though there were some moments of anxiety, we stayed calm and were able to perform well."

UVA will play Army in its semifinal, and will have its work cut out for it. The cadets defeated Brown 27-0 for the final four berth. Team speed is Army's biggest asset, and that fact was showcased with two breakaway tries from Kayla Orvik.

"I do think our 15s team translates well in 7s, as we usually play a backs-oriented game, and 7s is all about getting the ball through players' hands," Orvik said. "With backs like Jessica Sexauer and Annie Lee, they're really helping us along."

Emily McCarthy and Lee also scored tries, while Marie Timm added two conversions and a game-ending penalty. Two of her kicks hit the posts and bounced in.

Army has proved that they're the team to beat in this tournament. Penn State, which kicked off the day's action, held onto a 12-0 win over North Carolina. The game was marked by some handling errors and the like, but did snap fans out of their early morning glaze with some

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massive hits from Deven Owsiany and Lisa Henneman. Henneman and Lauren Barber each scored tries, while Henneman notched the conversion.

To North Carolina's credit, they did a good job on defense but couldn't capitalize on the scoring opportunities when they presented themselves. Kimber Rozier and Katie Lorenz, UNC's playmakers, were fun to watch but couldn't get into space often enough to generate points.

Women's USA 7s CRC Quarterfinals

Penn State 12-0 North Carolina

Virginia 12-10 Navy

Temple 14-10 Princeton

Army 27-0 Brown

Semifinal Matchups

Penn State v Temple

Army v Virginia