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Make no mistake about it, the Central Washington Wildcats have shown for two weekends straight they are the dominant team in the Northwest Collegiate Rugby Conference (NCRC). After a breezing through the OSU Invitational a weekend ago, they came to the Palouse Open with full intention on a repeat weekend.

They still ran into difficulties, though. The last remnants of the wildfires in central and eastern Washington state made outdoor practices impossible, so CWU had to take their practices inside the school gym again. The minutes they stepped onto the pitch, the entire team was focused and ready to show why they are the class of 7s in the Northwest.

“We were really excited to get outside again and play rugby,” CWU 7s Coach Tony Pacheco said.

In pool play, the Wildcats blanked every team they faced and managed to put up a 71-point effort against a relatively inexperienced Boise State squad. When all three pool matches ended, the Wildcats had outscored opponents 145-0, led by sophomores Aladdin Schirmer, Tanner Barnes and Shelby Williams. All-American Patrick Blair was a beast defensively as well.

“Aladdin, Tanner and Sheldon were the difference for us in this tournament,” Pacheco said. “They had to step up when Blair went down with a sprained ankle.”

CWU went on to play the Eastern Washington Eagles in the Cup semifinals, winning handily 47-5. On, then, to the Western Washington Vikings in the Cup final, one of the few teams expected to challenge the Wildcats in Seattle for the NCRC Championship.

Both teams got off to slow starts offensively, but managed to run in two tries apiece for a tied halftime score. In the second half, it was a different match as CWU’s sophomore trio took over on both sides of the ball to outscore the Vikings 19-0 for a final of 29-12.

That all while playing without All-American Patrick Blair (injured earlier in the day), and a player and their coach, who had been red-carded earlier. The player was Max Narewski, who has been in excellent form. Pacheco was then tossed for arguing the call.

We didn't quite understand the ruling," Pacheco said. "What that means going forward we will have to see. We played a man down for most of the 2nd half and our guys battled to outscore our opponent 17-0. I was really happy with the effort of our players. Credit to WWU I thought they played a great final, they are a talented team."

Local rules require a minimum two-week suspension for red cards, unless an appeal is successful. In two weeks the NCRC finals will be held.

The Vikings and University of Washington were the only other contenders this weekend. The Huskies looked composed throughout the entire tournament under the direction of new 7s coach and former Eagle Kevin Swiryn. The Huskies defeated hosts WSU 17-14 in their final matchup of the day.

Next, it's onto Seattle in two weekends to decide who will represent the NCRC at the national tournament.