

Can Am 7s: *Buffalo*

by Lex Maccubbin

Ellicottville, NY

June 28, 1997

The Buffalo Rugby Club upset Steel Valley 22-14 to win the cup final of the Buffalo Can/Am 7s. Thirteen teams were divided into four pools for the preliminary rounds. Buffalo I defeated Pittsburgh 19-0, and Cornell, 41-7.

In the semifinal, the Cleveland Rovers raced to a 19-0 lead over Buffalo and it looked like the match was over. However, Chris Kowalski scored on a pinballing run to bring the score to 19-5 at the half. Buffalo then played inspired defense and Kowalski led them to three tries, two converted, and Buffalo won 24-19.

Steel Valley dominated Cleveland II and John Carroll with two 38-0 wins in pool play, and then topped the Pittsburgh Harlequins 25-5 in their semifinal.

Final

The final looked like a mismatch, with Steel Valley the favorite. The men from Youngstown, Ohio had performed well in the 1996 National Club 7s Championship and had already played in several Midwest qualifiers. Buffalo had not played sevens in 1997 and were still working out player combinations. But they proved that their win over Cleveland was no fluke, as they raced to a 17-0 halftime lead. Kowalski scored Buffalo's first try, scooting around the blind side of a scrum. Prop Scott Terech intercepted a Steel Valley pass and went 40 meters for their second try and Alex Nadiak

alertly scooped up a ball that had popped out of a ruck for the third. Brian Mennes converted one.

After the break, Steel Valley quickly scored two converted tries to make the score 17-14. With five minutes remaining, Buffalo lost Kowalski and things looked grim. With time running out, however, Buffalo spun wide and then back across the field in second phase. Collegiate All-American John Cox rounded the corner for a try and Buffalo captured the Cup 22-14.

Steel Valley		Buffalo
Sivak	1	Terech
Phillips, T.	2	Martin
Stilgenbauer	3	a-Miller
Davis	4	b-Kowalski
Phillips, D.	5	Mennes
Chaney	6	Nadiak
Bowser	7	Calabrese

a replaced by Cox

b replaced by Bogdanowicz

Referee: Dale (NYSRS)

Bowl

Cornell outlasted Lockport 24-14 for the Bowl title. The Plate final was an exciting, wide open affair, with Pittsburgh beating Clearfield 29-28.

Postscript

The Buffalo Can/Am 7s is held annually on the last weekend of June in Ellicottville, New York, a ski resort 50 miles south of Buffalo. The town welcomed the players and the venue was fantastic. Nestled in the mountains, in a town park, the tournament was played in perfect conditions.

The Buffalo Rugby Club thanks the Village of Ellicottville for the use of their fields and their support. The tournament was sponsored by the Ellicottville Brewing Company and additional support was provided by Rich Products and Pepsi.

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