

Buffalo Rugby Club Advances to Empire Finals

By **Matt O'Rourke** - April 7, 2019  894  0



Buffalo Rugby Club Div. 2 side after an EGU semifinal win
| April 6th, 2019

After first round wins at Delaware Park on Saturday, March 30th, both the Buffalo Rugby Club (BRC) men's Division 2 and 3 squads won Empire Geographic Union (EGU) semifinal games on Saturday, April 6th to advance to the EGU conference championships.

The event marks a historic moment for the club as this is the first time BRC has advanced two sides to their respective conference final in the same season. It's the first time since 2015 that two sides from the same club in the Empire GU have advanced to the finals.

"I think it says a lot about the entire club from top to bottom where you can send your first side to Westport, CT – 425 miles away – and not only win that game but have a talented enough roster to win the home game as well," said BRC president and assistant coach Jeff Qualey on the club's big day.

In the first round of the conference playoffs on March 30th, the Division 3 side got the momentum going with a hard won 24-10 win over local rival Ken-Ton Misfits. Josh Bennett, Peter Klopp, Anthony Gray, and the club's fall try leader Aaron Wright all scored tries while Collin deGuehery was two for 4 kicking the conversions.

The Division 2 side's quarterfinal resulted in a 26-0 win over New Jersey's Montclair Norsemen. Grant Currey led the BRC scorers with two tries good for ten points. Mike Lang and Colton Kells also found the try zone, and Luca Wrabetz went three for 4 in the conversion kicks.



Luca Wrabetz lining up a kick against Montclair | Photo courtesy of Ron Astridge

On Saturday, the 2-seeded Buffalo Division 3 side hosted the 3-seed Gotham Knights out of Manhattan in an Empire GU semifinal showdown.

Buffalo scored early and took a 13-0 lead into the half. However, the Knights scored two tries in the second half to take a 14-13 lead. The tough Buffalo defense was able to stop advances by Gotham and get the ball back into the hands of the offense, led by scrum half Collin deGuehery, late in the game. Jayson Coleman scored his second try of the game as Buffalo retook the lead. The squad would ultimately hold on to win 20-19, advancing to the EGU Division 3 final next weekend at top seeded Long Island.

"Gotham was a very talented, well coached side," said Qualey. "We made some halftime adjustments to counteract their quick release play. All in all, our guys committed to strong defense and a high possession game. I felt Dave Piraino (fly half) made a play every time the team needed it, whether it be making a big tackle or a big run."

deGuehery's two conversions and two penalty kicks tied Coleman with ten points apiece in the match.

Meanwhile in Connecticut, the 3-seed Division 2 side and BRC head coach Steve Carauana were preparing to take on the 2-seed Fairfield Yankees in their semifinal. BRC last played the Yankees in the EGU Division 3 championship in 2017.

A try from Grant Currey and the following conversion by Luca Wrabetz gave Buffalo the early 7-0 lead. A good try line stand kept Fairfield out of the zone, but a penalty committed by Buffalo resulted in a penalty kick by the Yankees, now down 7-3.

Fairfield took a 10-7 lead after scoring a try, but a 40 meter ramble by tight head prop Mike Dean and the conversion from Wrabetz put Buffalo back on top, 14-10. Three more penalty kicks by Wrabetz made the score late in the game 23-18. Buffalo made a solid five-minute defensive stand clinging to the lead when Evan Castellani caused a maul to end the game and seal BRC's second win of the day.

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BRC president Jeff Qualey addressing the team | Nov. 2018
| Photo courtesy of Ron Astridge

Even during the game back in Buffalo, the Division 2 side was gathered around one cell phone that was providing a live FaceTime stream of the game, cheering and watching as their teammates grinded out a win. And at the conclusion of the Division 3 game, the team was awaiting scoring updates from Connecticut throughout the match. Qualey added "The guys were very excited to get the news of the second big win on the day."

BRC's Division 2 team will host the 5-seeded New York Rugby Club on Saturday, April 13th at Delaware Park. Buffalo fell to NYRC at home in the 2015 EGU Division 2 final. The Division 3 team travels to Bayville, NY to take on the top seeded Long Island Rugby Football Club.