

Rockaway Rugby. Fishheads In Final

BY CIARAN O'HARA / 28 APRIL 2016

Rockaway Rugby Club has advanced to the Empire GU Championship after a huge come-from-behind win over Buffalo RFC at their lakeside lair in western New York. After driving 428 miles with only 17 players (15 on the field at a time), stopping at 3am for five hours of sleep at hotel in Rochester before completing the last leg of their journey, the Fishheads arrived at the field and prepared to do battle.

Rockaway found themselves in trouble early on in the match. A flat performance, and a couple of costly penalties saw Rockaway fall to a 19-0 deficit within 15 minutes. The Fishheads, however, refused to throw in the towel. Scores by outside-center Joe Wolfer, wing Matt Perrone, and inside-center Pete Amabile, with conversion kicks by New Zealander scrum-half Jarrod Mongston, saw Rockaway wrestle the lead back from Buffalo, ending the half with 20-19 lead.

After a violent back-and-forth slug-fest between the two teams, that saw multiple goal-line stands, New Zealander 8-man, Rhys Hikuora, helped seal Buffalo's fate with a break-out, 30 meter try-scoring run in the middle of the second half. Buffalo, however, struck back quickly. After a long march down the field, they scored their final try, bringing the score back to within a single point at 27-26. On the final kick-off of the match, flanker Ciaran O'Hara laid a hit on the Buffalo ball-carrier causing him to drop the ball forward- a turn-over penalty in rugby. Rockaway retained possession of the ball, spending the final minutes battling their way toward the Buffalo try-line, finding themselves within 5 meters of the Buffalo try-line when the final whistle blew. Victory was theirs.

Rockaway will face Fairfield Rugby Club at their home field this Saturday at 1 pm in the Empire GU final. The winner will face the New England regional champion in the next round of nationals.