

Lomas Keep Pace With Win Over Vikes

By Stefan Schulson

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Vancouver, B.C. – On a dusty, dry pitch at Connaught Park, the Meralomas held the high-scoring UVic Vikes to a meager 9 points in a 22-9 victory, solidifying the Lomas' hold on second place in the CDI premiership. The Vikes came into the game averaging over 40 points per game, but went try-less for the first time this season against the defending champs.

The Lomas opened the scoring early on a classic winger's try from Joel Nystrom as he took off on a 60-yard sideline jaunt, undressing the Vikes' winger on his way to the goal line. Fullback Mike Hall added the convert and the lead was 7-0. The Vikes got on the board shortly thereafter courtesy of a penalty kick to put the score to 7-3, but the physicality and experience of the seasoned Meraloma side began to take hold. After a six-phase sequence of grinding pick-and-go rugby deep in the UVic zone, second rower Aidan Buan crossed the line for the Lomas' second try of the opening frame. Hall was again good with the conversion to extend the hosts' lead to 14-3. The remainder of the half was largely played between the 22's as both teams stifled the opposition offense with solid defense. The Vikes were able to add an additional 3 points on another penalty kick to go into the break down 14-6.

At the start of the second half, the Meralomas wasted no time in adding to their lead as scrum half Colin Brown alertly took a quick tap penalty from 5 meters outside the UVic try line and slipped through the arms of the defense for a try, pushing the Lomas' lead to 19-6.

After that early score, however, the offensive well ran dry for the Lomas, and the Vikes began to turn up the pressure, moving the ball back and forth across the field as is their modus operandi. The Meralomas dug in their heels defensively and weathered everything the Vikes threw at them, surrendering only 3 points on another penalty goal. Mike Hall added a final penalty kick for the Lomas for a final score line of 22-9. With the win, the Meralomas now sit firmly in second place in the CDI standings with 31 points, four back of front running James Bay and setting up a showdown for top spot in three weeks' time at MacDonald Park.

In the first division match, the Meralomas withstood a solid first half from the UVic Norsemen to take the game 40-30 (although my game notes had the final at 45-23). The Norsemen dominated play in the opening stanza and went into the halftime break down by only 2 points 13-11, but were unable to match the physicality and experience of the Lomas for the full 80 minutes. Led by flyhalf Bryan Tyrer's two tries and solid ball distribution, the Lomas' controlled the bulk of play and shut down the Norsemen's offensive efforts to win the game. In addition to Tyrer, try scorers for the Lomas included Luke Dineley, Derek Townsend, Jake Hirst, Eionel Valentin and Mike Oketch.

The third division Delta Force was the only Lomas' side that didn't finish on the positive side of the score sheet, dropping an unremarkable 41-17 decision to SFU despite being tied at the half. Enough said.

The Lomas' premier women were looking to further establish their position at the top of the standings as they faced Bayside at South Surrey Athletic Park. The Lomas' forwards, led by the backrow trio of Val Young, Caitlin Ebbehoj, and Kat Cureton, set the stage for the 46-3 win, keeping Bayside on the back foot at the break downs all game long. The solid attacking platform opened up ample opportunities for the Lomas' backline to slice through the defense. Try scorers included Brittany Waters (3), Sydnee Chang (2), Erin Fitzpatrick, Caitlin Ebbehoj, and Nicole Pasquino, while Michelle Helmeczi added three conversions.

The Meralomas' second division women's side was in Burnaby to take on the Lakers. While Burnaby controlled the play at the breakdowns, the Lomas' defense held fast, shutting out the Lakers 5-0. Scrumhalf Amy Grath was awarded a penalty try for the only score of the game, and Leah Robbins contributed a strong game playing out of position on the wing.

This upcoming weekend all three Meraloma men's sides will travel to Burnaby Lake for the second installment of the Palmer Cup challenge. The premier women will cross the Strait to Victoria for a game against the Velox Valkyries and the second division women are also scheduled to go overseas to face the Nanaimo Hornets.