

## **Match #11: 2005 Season**

**Game #11:** Humboldt Old Growth (Manila Field, Arcata)

**Date:** Saturday, April 16

**Result:** Berkeley 8 - Humboldt 3

**Try:** Rob Vartabedian

**Conversion:** Alberto Pani

18 good men made the long trip north this weekend, and it proved to be an EPIC end to a great season!

The squad arrived in time to hit up the Humboldt Brewery, where the several of the opposing team were working. They generously started serving up free pitchers, hoping to blunt the Berkeley potency on the field the following morning. Berkeley were up to the challenge.

In the morning it was off to Samoa field, where the ground was in good condition, but some morning rain left things a little slippery. Berkeley started out strongly, and after some early attacks Berkeley was awarded a penalty, which Pani slotted. The rest of the half was hard fought, with a lot of hard running and hard tackling forwards, and backline flare, both sides using the kick and chase to good effect, and Humboldt responded with a 3 pointer of their own, and some strong play as befitting a side which finished in 2nd place last year, and very rarely loses a game while playing at home. While the Berkeley pack had been pushed about like rag dolls at scrum time during the first 20 minutes, they dug deep, turned the tables, and started marching Humboldt backwards, taking scrums against the head, wheeling the HOG scrum on several occasions to steal the possession, even adopting the HOG "Black Black BLACK!!!" scrum call, much to their chagrin. Truly the highlight of the season for the scrum men. The referee was so enjoying the encounter that he allowed the first half to continue 54 bruising minutes.

Berkeley came out strong in the second half, and would spend most of the rest of the game in Humboldt territory. They struck early with a strong maul to drive over the try line and allow Vartabedian to crash over for the try. 8-3, and Berkeley were not going to let another game slip out of their grasp and haunt them during the 6 hour drive home, and over the summer. Every player was having a huge game, the forwards were on fire, and the bone shaking tackles made by Joel Rass to snuff out several penalty taps & runs will ensure that "Samoa field" will hereafter be known as "Tonga field". In the centers Mastro and Jed were having big games, Santi had to be carried off the field in agony, only to miraculously recover be back on the field just moments later. Ian made a late bid for the 'break-out rookie' award with a strong run to set up an attack, Alberto was doing tireless work to recover the Humboldt kicks down field and to launch counter attacks, and Tony and Seb solid on the wings. Another loooong half, as Berkeley played out of their skins,

until finally the sweet sound of the final whistle. Berkeley wins, and finishes the season with a winning record: 7-6-1

**Man of the match:** Humboldt couldn't single out an individual, saying that the whole team deserved it, but my nod goes to Ganjei, reveling in the role as flanker, for tackling like a demon all day long, and displaying significantly increased speed around the field

**Boat Race:** Team Berkeley regrouped at Humboldt Brewery, where again the beer flowed freely, and sweet it tasted. Humboldt lined up a fearsome looking 5 man boat race team, but Berkeley pulled away on the return leg to demolish them by a glass and a half, and to claim the title of "Undefeated Div III Boat Race champions". From there the night continued into the small hours, and was far and away the teams finest night out. Francisco was licking heads left, right and center, but the MVP of the evening was, without a doubt, Alberto Pani, as he led the troops from bar to bar in Arcata. In the morning, Berkeley recuperated at the Samoan Cookhouse for a hearty lumberjack breakfast - the highlight being Joel R sculling an very large bowl of gravy in very short time - before returning to the Bay Area blanketed in glory and bruises.

#### **Referee Report: Paul Berman**

Venue: Manila Community Park, Manila, Humboldt County, Kick-off 14:00 (2:00pm)

Weather: Moderate rain showers

Pitch: Firm under foot, all lines clearly marked, all flags in correct locations, regulation goal posts well padded

Arriving 2 hours prior to kick-off, allowed for a civilized opportunity to acclimatize. Both sides got down to business from the get go. Tackling was fierce and fair, while both teams were willing to have a run at each others defences, neither side willing to concede points. Testing kicks under wet conditions were for the most part well collected & fielded by both back lines. During the 1st quarter Humboldt appeared to have the upper hand driving Berkeley back at the set scrum. Berkeley managed to relieve the pressure with some smart chip & chase rugby from their backs. Both squads benefited from some smart tactical kicking, of particular note Humboldt's fly-half Jeremy Drakeford & Berkeley's full-back Alberto Pani, who respectively kicked their sides only points of the half.

For the Berkeley pack, a tale of two halves, as they seemed to gain in confidence as the game progressed. The 2nd half saw them taking the game to their opponents. They found themselves able to withstand several attempted wheels & won several balls against the head, scoring a push-over try (unconverted) off a driving maul within 4 minutes of the restart, from their prop Rob Vartabedian.

"As befitting a side which finished in 2nd place last year, while rarely losing a game at home," the HOG's fought hard, pressing Berkeley till the final whistle. The 3rd half at the Humboldt Brewery, Arcata, where several of the Humboldt team work & share ownership was the finest hospitality this referee has experienced all season. One HOG

player had especially prepared a fantastic sheppard's pie dinner. I cannot thank Humboldt enough for their wonderfully generous hospitality.