

Coca-Cola earns Pennell Cup final berth with 15-10 win

By Alex Webbe

Coca-Cola (Gillian Johnston, Sugar Erskine, Julio Arellano and Steve Krueger) made a strong statement Thursday afternoon as they rebounded from an 8-6 halftime deficit to record a 15-10 win over Enigma (Jerome Wirth, Jeff Hall, Matias MacDonough and Carlucho Arellano) in the opening game of the 20-goal season at the International Polo Club and earning a spot in Sunday's Herbie Pennell Cup final against Villa del Lago (Jim Zenni, Guille Agüero, Hilario Ulloa and Agustin Obregon).

Enigma took early control of the game on goals from Matias MacDonough and Jerome Wirth, 2-0, before Coca-Cola could score. The teams were five minutes into the opening chukker when Sugar Erskine drove the ball through the Enigma goalposts, 2-1. An Enigma foul at the 1:34 mark sent Julio Arellano to the penalty line where he converted a 60-yard shot to tie the game at 2-2. Carlucho Arellano (younger brother of Julio) took the lead back for Enigma with the final goal of the chukker with just 44 seconds remaining in the period, 3-2.

Wirth extended the Enigma lead with the opening goal of the second chukker, 4-2, when Coca-Cola rallied. Back-to-back goals from Erskine leveled the score at 4-4 with 4:11 left in the period. Jeff Hall put Enigma in front again with his first goal of the game to end the chukker on top of a 5-4 score.

Enigma continued to have their way with Coca-Cola in third period action, scoring three consecutive goals (two from Hall and one from MacDonough) for an 8-4 lead. With 1:24 on the clock, Julio Arellano scored on a 40-yard penalty shot followed up by a goal from the field from Erskine. At the end of the first half it was Enigma with an 8-6 advantage.

A refocused Coca-Cola team took the field in the fourth chukker and proceeded to run all over Enigma. Team captain Gillian Johnston scored the first goal of the second half and cut the Enigma lead to a single goal, 8-7. Erskine capped off a 160-yard run with his fifth goal of the game for an 8-8 tie. Julio Arellano converted a 60-yard penalty shot for a goal at the 3:22 mark with Johnston stretching the lead to two goals, 10-8, a minute later. Julio Arellano scored the final goal of the game with a defenseless Enigma foursome getting shutout and trailing by three goals, 11-8.

Enigma continued to have trouble with their offense in the fifth as Coca-Cola continued to control the ball. Julio Arellano scored both goals in the chukker (one on a 40-yard penalty conversion), giving Coca-Cola a 13-8, five goal lead with one chukker left in regulation play.

Julio Arellano scored his fourth penalty goal of the game at 6:04 of the final chukker to make it 14-8, Coca-Cola. Wirth tried to keep Enigma alive as he scored on a 30-yard penalty shot, 14-9. Julio Arellano added another goal from the field for Coca-Cola, 15-9 as the clock continued to work against Enigma. Hall scored the final goal of the game on a 30-yard penalty conversion as Coca-Cola ran off with the game, 15-10.

Julio Arellano led all scoring with eight goals (four on penalty conversions). Erskine added five and Johnston was credited with two goals for the win. Hall scored a team high four goals for Enigma. Wirth added three goals; MacDonough scored twice and Carlucho Arellano scored a goal in the loss.

The victory boosts Coca-Cola into the final on Sunday at 3pm where they will face Vila del Lago. Coca-Cola has won the Herbie Pennell Cup twice before (2012, 2013) while Villa del Lago will be looking for their first Cup win.