



Club lock Danny O'Connor throws a punch at DeA Tigers rival Marco Cassandro during yesterday's First Division match at King's Park. Club won 6-3. Photo: Dickson Lee

## Club sweating on O'Connor's availability

### RUGBY UNION Alvin Sallay

Barnstorming CBRE Club lock forward Danny O'Connor is in danger of missing next weekend's Grand Championship after he was red-carded during yesterday's First Division league encounter against DeA Tigers.

Hong Kong international O'Connor was involved in a fracas with DeA's Marco Cassandro early in the second half with the score tied at 3-3. Referee Pat Tiller gave O'Connor his marching orders while Cassandro was sent to the sin-

bin. Despite being down to 14 men and a seven-strong scrum, Club managed to hold on for a 6-3 victory.

"We will appeal against the decision to award Danny a red card. I feel it was the wrong decision, and it should have been a sin-bin for both players. I think the referee panicked and listened to too many players," said unhappy Club captain Tom Cameron.

Club's scrappy win will earn them the right to avoid league champions HKCC in next Saturday's semi-finals.

Instead Club will meet league

runners-up Valley, while DeA take on HKCC.

O'Connor's absence will surely hurt Club's hopes of reaching the final. An influential player who makes his presence felt in the line-out and loose, O'Connor is regarded as one of the bulwarks of Club's huge pack. But the red card means an automatic two-week ban, something which Club officials will fight to revoke as they push for a quick hearing into the matter.

"He [Danny] is a key player and he is crucial for our hopes of winning the Grand Championship," said Cameron who is desperate to

end a rather average season on a high.

Despite being reduced to 14 men, it was Club who dominated long stretches of play in the second half as they put the DeA tryline under siege. But a determined defence, with forwards Nigel Clarke and Seni Seruvakula to the fore, kept Club at bay.

It was left to Rob Naylor, coming on as a replacement for scrumhalf Simon Aird, to break the deadlock with a penalty in front of the posts midway through the second half. The scores had been level at half-time with penalties from Club fly-

half Nigel D'Acre and his DeA counterpart Liu Kwok-leung.

Yesterday's performance wouldn't have raised any concerns for HKCC as they attempt to complete the double. HKCC skipper Mike Meredith, an interested spectator at King's Park, was satisfied with the outcome.

"Football Club are probably the stronger side and it is good that we will be playing DeA next week. But it doesn't really matter at this stage as we have to play someone," he said.

Valley, too, will be relishing their encounter against Football Club - especially if O'Connor is missing.