



INFORMATION PAGE

Week of April 23rd, 2011

1 The Picture

This shot is from an after-match gathering at the ever-enjoyable Garrison Savannah Clubhouse in Barbados. In the picture with me is Blair Cressman, Tour Captain of the Winnipeg Wasps side that toured Barbados and played two matches and a 7s tournament while on-island. Many of the smaller Unions in the NACRA region are an excellent venue for club tours from North America and farther abroad-offering decent competition, a surprisingly rich rugby culture and outstanding venues from the rainforests of Guyana to the clear blue water and sandy beaches of the Caribbean. If you would like information about which Unions might be right for your next tour, you can check out their websites at www.nacrugby.com, or email me with your questions.

2 USA Super League Week 7 Results

BOULDER, Colo. – Old Puget Sound Beach (OPSB) staked their claim in the Rugby Super League (RSL) playoffs Saturday as they defeated the Denver Barbarians 41-33. A hat trick from OPSB's Filimoni Botitu gave Beach the victory and a secured a semifinal berth. OPSB will travel to San Francisco Golden Gate for the Red Conference semifinal on May 14.

The two teams in the Blue Conference semifinal are Boston and Life University who will face each other in two consecutive games as they face off this weekend in regular season play and in the conference semifinal on May 14.

Week 8 – April 30, 2011

Dallas Harlequins (0-5) @ San Francisco Golden Gate (5-0), 3:00 p.m.

Utah Warriors (2-3) @ Old Puget Sound Beach (3-1), 3:00 p.m.

Chicago Griffins (1-4) @ Chicago Lions (3-2), 1:30 p.m.

Life University (5-0) @ Boston Rugby (4-1), 7:00 p.m.

New York Athletic Club (2-3) @ Old Blue (0-5), 1:30 p.m.

RED CONFERENCE

OLD PUGET SOUND BEACH @ DENVER BARBARIANS

A dozen tries were scored in the entertaining game, with Denver opening their account with a converted try to take an early lead. OPSB responded with a converted try of their own through Robert Fitzpatrick. The zippy and elusive OPSB winger, Filimoni Botitu, crossed for the first of his three tries on the day shortly after. Denver immediately replied with two more five-pointers. OPSB responded with two of their own to take a 24-21 halftime lead.

The second half continued at the furious pace, with OPSB stretching their lead to 34-21 before the hosts cut the lead. Denver closed to within a point and was just a missed conversion away from taking the lead, trailing 33-34.

Denver had another penalty opportunity as time was about to expire, but elected to go for a lineout which was spoiled by OPSB. Beach claimed another converted try from Ryan Bishop in injury time to make the final score 41-33.

OPSB's player-coach, Evan Haigh, enjoyed the back and forth struggle with Denver.

"[Dick's Sporting Goods Park]...was a very fast venue where we were able to get our outside backs into some space and use our speed.

We wanted to win it today and go through to the semifinal and not have to do it at home next week," said Haigh.

"All the tries were scored by the backs today for OPSB, including Botitu's hat trick," said Denver's manager, Rob O'Connor, acknowledging the impact Botitu had on the game.

"He [Botitu] gave us fits all day long, reeling off several long runs," said O'Connor.

Denver's try scorers included prop Josh Masek, number 8 Tommy Pasque and center Christian Sarmento.

Although OPSB is in the semifinal against San Francisco Golden Gate on May 14, Haigh knows they have a more immediate task at hand when they host the Utah Warriors next weekend in the final round of the regular season.

Haigh likens Utah's playing style to that of SFGG, which will help in his preparation for the semifinal. Haigh is very aware that Utah will relish another crack at OPSB, given that there was only a one-point difference in their last encounter, with OPSB emerging the victors.

Further Information:

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3 Daines Named Women's All-Americans Head Coach

BOULDER, Colo. – USA Rugby is proud to announce that Martha Daines has been named the head coach of the Women's Collegiate All-Americans (WCAAs).

Daines will lead the WCAA Touring Side this summer through a training camp and a two-match series with a Canadian Universities team in Lake Placid, N.Y.

Daines is a veteran coach with experience at many levels, having coached at Macalester College, University of Minnesota, the Minnesota Valkyries, the Midwest All-Stars, the Under-23 national team and the USA-A national team.

"The Collegiate All-American Touring Side provides this talented group of athletes a real opportunity to test their skills and to raise their overall level of play," stated Daines. "I'm very excited to help the athletes take the next steps along the path to full international play."

Further Information:

Alex Williams | Women's High Performance Manager | USA Rugby | awilliams@usarugby.org

4 **Caribbean Men's XVs Weekend Preview**

On April 30th British Virgin Islands will meet Barbados in the final stage of the Caribbean Men's XVs South Qualifiers to see who will advance to compete with Trinidad & Tobago and Guyana in South Round 2. BVI have met Barbados several times before in friendly matches, but this match is being taken much more seriously by both sides. While Barbados are in the habit of winning these encounters, they will not be taking this much improved and determined BVI team, especially as this is a rare opportunity for BVI to show its best form in front of a home crowd in Tortola. The referee is Alasdair Robertson of Cayman Islands, one of the Caribbean region's most experienced officials.

Also on April 30th, Bermuda will host Bahamas in the first match of the North Round 2 series. Each team will then face the winner of the Cayman Islands v Mexico match being played on May 14th. The Bermuda squad might be considered to have more "nig match" experience than the Bahamas, but Bahamas arrives with a number of flashy runners that can score from a distance. The match will be refereed by Joyce Henry from Canada. Joyce has recently been appointed to the first ever IRB Women's Referee Panel, and it is a privilege to have a ref of her experience and ability participate in the Caribbean Region's Men's XVs.

5 **Laws Discussion- the Contest**

The contest for possession- at tackles, rucks, mauls, lineouts, scrums and kicks- is one of the key principles of Rugby Union. Indeed, the need to regain or retain possession shapes our sport and the strategies and skills developed and applied by players.

And yet, we have matches where teams are contesting less and less, especially at rucks and scrums. They're often not contesting because resistance is futile-the ball carrier is rolling or crawling after the tackle, or using his body to shield the ball ("squeeze ball"), the ball-carrier's supporters are "sealing" at the ruck, the ball is not put in straight at the scrum, etc. So the defenders try twisting the "sealers" out by their necks and shoulders or drive into their necks as their heads are down. Or they don't engage the ruck, opting to spread out and try to win the ball with increasingly intense tackles. At scrums the defenders can't reach the ball at the put in, so they challenge the opposition by disrupting and wheeling the scrum. Safety starts to become affected.

As a coach or ref, are you comfortable encouraging an unsafe body position at a ruck, or strategies designed to destabilize or wheel the scrum?

I have heard some coaches defend these changes in style and omissions in officiating by asserting that it helps get clean possession to launch attacks. My counter to this is that while every team wants to keep possession as long as possible and with as little effort as they can, every team ALSO wants to be able to regain possession if they play smart and powerful defense. If you want the potential to steal possession at rucks, you have to allow that potential to the opposition!

Refs can support the principle of contesting possession by requiring that ball carriers and support players don't take positions that are immovable. Rucks are intended to be moving objects-similar to scrums-where teams push to get past the ball and earn the right to pick it up. This can only take place if the ruck can move-which is unlikely if the ball carrier is acting as a barrier (e.g "squeeze ball") or support players hunch over the ball or anchor themselves to players on the ground. Yes-sometimes rucks fall down and become static-the problem to be addressed are the first arriving players who

are trying to make themselves immovable instead of ready to drive forwards and clear out defenders. If the first arriving players drive the defenders back and then fall down then well done!

If support players at the ruck are required to keep their shoulders up and support their own weight, then they are not only in a position to push and be pushed, they are also in a safer position to take a hit from opposing players. RugbyReady demonstrates safe body positions at rucks and is worth reviewing at <http://www.irbrugbyready.com/>.

So refs-look for space between the support player's chest and the ball carrier. An even better result would be to get the ball carrier to try to roll away, as law requires.

Scrummings are easier to fix - require that the ball be put into scrums as it is put into lineouts-straight enough to be touched by both teams. (*Really-you CAN call the feed!*).

The IRB produced some videos in 2008 regarding legal and illegal rucks. These, and similar videos on the topic can be found on Youtube and are worth looking at from time to time as a reminder. Here are two of many links:

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iLpP1C0oNGQ>

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sed8k5UsBoc&feature=related>

I benefit from hearing your views-please feel free to email me with any comments.

6 Mini Contact Rugby

I have heard many opinions about the right age to introduce contact rugby. Just as in adult rugby, it is important to prepare players properly before playing full contact. Twenty years ago in France I refereed in a tournament that had teams from U15 down to U5-all playing tackle rugby. Tag rugby is an important, low-risk way of introducing youngsters to our great sport, and I believe that with good coaching and enough practice, we can add contact rugby at the mini-rugby levels. I have attached a link to a U10s match between Cayman Islands and Bermuda, courtesy of the Cayman Islands' RFU site. www.caymanrugbytv.com/crtv-channels/tournaments/conyers-youth-cup.

Actively yours

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