

Pacific Coast Playoffs Highlight Poor Planning...Again

Written by Pat Clifton

Wednesday, 20 April 2011 03:38

The Pacific Coast seems to perennially have a hard time creating a sensible DII men's club playoff structure. Last season, they put together a ridiculous two-pool system that saw NorCal's second and third place teams advance to Nationals with just one win in the Pacific Coast playoffs, while the NorCal champ missed out because they had to win, and failed to win, back-to-back games.

[Click here for more clarity on last year's situation.](#)

They've changed things around this year, and the playoff system is seemingly improved, but by how much? I'd venture to say not a whole heck of a lot.

Eight teams still advance to the PacCoast playoffs, with the top seed playing the bottom seed, the second seed playing the seventh seed, etc. That makes sense, but those matchups are not quarterfinals.

The two highest-seeded winners on day one advance to play each other on day two. They'll both have already punched their tickets to Nationals by winning on Saturday, and play just for seeding. Saturday's other winners advance to duke it out for the territory's third bid to Nationals.

Why is this system flawed?

If the top four seeds hold true, Red Mountain and Tempe, arguably the Pacific Coast's two most decorated DII clubs this decade, can do no better than the third seed.

Yes, PacCoast is using the same seeding system as the vast majority of American rugby, just going off the previous year's accomplishment. But, their unique playoff structure makes it crazy hard for the Arizona teams to better their position. Even if they both win 100-0, they're left rooting for the Pacific Northwest or NorCal champion to be upset. Or else, the best they can finish is third, putting them in the same situation next season.

And if Tempe and Red Mountain both win, they play each other (which they already did to decide the Arizona champion) for that third seed. Meanwhile, the Pacific Northwest champ plays the Pacific Northwest third seed for one of the TU's other two seeds to Nationals.

Why should Tempe have to beat Red Mountain again to reach Nationals? If they both win their Saturday PacCoast playoff matches, the Arizona championship all of a sudden means nothing. Same goes for the PNRFU champ. Why do they have to play the PNRFU third-place team, haven't they already earned the right to be past them?

Did VCU have to beat Kansas twice in the NCAA Tournament? Or better yet, did Auburn have to beat Alabama in the regular season, the SEC championship game and the National Championship game, too? That's an entirely relevant example if two teams from the same LAU get to Nationals and win, which has to be the PacCoast's hope, right?

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The question has to be asked at some point, is it absolutely essential to have an eight-team playoff? I can't see why it is. But if it *really* is, can an extra weekend be created to pull it off sensibly? If not, that's fine, here are some other options to consider, Pacific Coast:

1. You have three LAUs. Invite the champ of each and the runner-up from the league of the previous year's champion to the semifinals and call it good. It makes sure the LAU title still has value.
2. Invite the champ of each league to the semis, as above. Have the three second-place teams and what would be the highest seeded third-place team duke it out a weekend or two prior. Yes, it's an extra travel date, but if those second or third-place teams want in, make them work for it.
3. Do what the West does in DIII, and have 60-minute quarterfinals and semifinals on Saturday and an 80-minute final on Sunday.
4. Flip a coin. I know it seems crazy, but relatively speaking, is it? Seemed to workout OK in "Friday Night Lights".