

So Much Rugby, So Little Time

Written by Pat Clifton

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The schedule for the Men's National Teams is about to get pretty hectic, with the Pacific Nations Cup, June Tests and 7s World Cup all on the horizon. Over the next five months, the senior men's teams have 12 matches or tournaments.

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The May Pacific Nations Cup match with Canada interferes with domestic and international club play, so fielding a competitive team will be challenging. As it's a non-rankings test, expect to see some greener and younger players on the field, and maybe a larger contingent of 7s players.

The World Series wraps up the second weekend of May, in time for guys to make the pre-Canada camp beginning on May 17. Several of the contracted 7s Eagles – Luke Hume, Blaine Scully, Andrew Durutalo, Matt Hawkins, Zack Test and Colin Hawley, have experience with the 15s team, or have at least been in 15s camps, while others would certainly relish the chance to impress 15s head coach Mike Tolkin.

The question remains, how do you manage rest and recovery time coming off of a long World Series prior to the 7s World Cup?

“I think we'll have a strong enough lineup where we can give a player a game off and it won't affect our overall play,” Tolkin told RUGBYMag.com, not specifically referring to 7s players.

“We've got to be able to play with 25-26 guys, and if we can't then we're just not good enough. I think that's an important aspect and this is the time to prove it. These guys, this is the time to prove that they can come off the bench and we don't miss a beat.”

The question about 7s players and rest extends through June, especially for Hume and Scully, as they've become big-time weapons for the 15s Eagles and are possible overseas contract candidates.

The 15s Eagles play the second and third weeks of June and twice the following week. Then there's the 7s World Cup, before the World Cup Qualifiers in July. So some 7s players may have to weigh preparing for the 2013 7s World Cup and getting time with the 15s team before the World Cup Qualifiers.

“Those guys will certainly get an opportunity compete for a spot on the 15s team. Coach Talks

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and I are always in discussion about this and sharing ideas the best way to do it," said Magleby. "There will be a handful of guys that if they make the starting 15 or top 22 or top 23, they'll play a couple of matches to start the summer tour series. They'll be with us before that and then they'll be with us leading into the Rugby World Cup, and then there'll be a handful again that play in the tour test matches, again if they make that squad, in July."

Factoring in will be the health, availability and form of some other guys. Are Chris Wyles, Taku Ngwenya and James Paterson all healthy? Is Tolkin ready to go to battle with Miles Craigwell, Zach Pangelinan or Cornelius Dirksen? How about Dean Gericke? And does Mike Palefau, who's been unavailable for the 7s team due to work, have the time or desire to play 15s this summer?

"The pool is being stretched, no doubt," said Tolkin, "but we'll be able to find players."

UPCOMING EAGLES SCHEDULE

Event	Date	Competition	Location
Hong Kong 7s	March 22-24	7s World Series	Hong Kong
Japan 7s	March 30-31	7s World Series	Tokyo
Scotland 7s	May 4-5	7s World Series	Glasgow
England 7s	May 11-12	7s World Series	London
Canada	May 25		
PNC	Canada		
Ireland	June 8		
Test	Houston		

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Tonga	June 14		
PNC	TBD		
Fiji	June 19		
PNC	Japan		
Japan	June 23		
PNC	Japan		
7s World Cup	June 28-30	7s World Cup	Russia
Canada	July 20		
RWC Qualifier	Atlanta		
Canada	July 27th or 28th	RWC Qualifier	TBD