

Camp Gives Chances for Hopefuls

Written by
Tuesday, 10 May 2011 20:09



The USA team for the Churchill Cup will be named next week, and USA Head Coach Eddie O'Sullivan is expected to give shots to some players who performed well at the recent domestic camp.

O'Sullivan told RUGBYMag.com that he was extremely pleased with the energy level of what was by all accounts a physically grueling assembly.

"It never ceases to amaze me – it's an extraordinary commitment on their part, and I don't use that word lightly," O'Sullivan said. "I understand the amount of effort and energy and juggling of their lives that goes on to get them a shot at the Eagles. I know guys spend four, five years just working their socks off to get an opportunity. So when you bring guys in like that you have an obligation to give them a shot."

O'Sullivan said he worked hard on the planning and clarity in giving players expectations and assignments.

"They knew what was required of them, and the question is, can they deliver," he said. "And that's as fair as you can be. They responded really well. If you saw it you'd see guys really working hard. These guys brought huge piles of energy into the camp."

O'Sullivan stressed that if he doesn't pick players from this camp for the Churchill Cup, that doesn't mean their World Cup dream is over. Things can change throughout the summer. He also stressed, and told the players this, that just because a player is a professional overseas doesn't mean he's a shoe-in.

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There does seem to be the feeling that the coach is whittling his list down, and at the same time, he's expanding playing opportunities. It is quite possible that some established USA players will be given some time off, as they have to have some down time this summer. Still others will have the regular list of reasons for not being available – work, family, injury, school.

That gives others a shot to make their case, and that's what this camp was about.

“I couldn't put my hand on my heart and say we haven't missed anybody; it's be pretty stupid and arrogant for me say that,” said O'Sullivan. “But I do think we're digging down pretty deep in the player pool, and we've seen guys who may not be ready now, but in 12 months time, 18 months time, maybe they will be, and that's part of the process as well.”