

U20s Selections Manage Obstacles

Written by

Wednesday, 04 May 2011 11:55



Serious business lies ahead for the USA U20s as they prepare for the Junior World Trophy in Georgia beginning May 24.

The Junior All Americans, face Samoa, Russia and Uruguay in the hopes of eventually qualifying for the Junior World Championship in 2012, which features the top 12 U20 teams in the world.

The usual challenges face the Americans, beginning with the fact that it's going to be enormously difficult to win this tournament. Samoa, Uruguay, Russia, Canada, Zimbabwe, Japan and Georgia are all formidable teams. Any of them could beat the USA U20s on the day.

Then add to that the fact that this tournament lies right at the end of the school year. It's not, as has been the case in previous years, smack in the middle of the semester and the college season. Now it's right at the end, but still, players whose college teams are still in the playoffs will have a hard time making themselves available. Still others have school, and there's also the lure of playing in the USA 7s Collegiate Rugby Championship on NBC. All of those matter.

USA U20 Head Coach Scott Lawrence knows all this, and won't whine about it.

"We have talked to all the coaches involved, and all the players," Lawrence told RUGBYMag.com. "I have a list of 60 coaches I talk to every week and we have good relationships with all of them. The important thing for me was, not to put the kids in the middle. So we've worked closely with the teams and the coaches, and the message to the players, in one sense, is that the decision is not just in their hands."

Lawrence has said that playing in a collegiate championship is important, too, and he wants to encourage those players to do that. In addition, some IRB rules come into effect here. The IRB has a cutoff date by which 22 players must be at the JWRT location.

U20s Selections Manage Obstacles

Written by

Wednesday, 04 May 2011 11:55

This prevents national teams from constantly flying in players from various competitions around the world. So Lawrence has some wiggle room – he can wait to see if St. Mary's, Life, or Utah move on in the CPD playoffs, or SFGG in the Super League, and bring one or two players in late as need be.

But it's also clear that the U20s passed on some players who would have been outstanding on the U20s because their teams (Cal, BYU, Army) were expected to be busy in late May.

“We have contingency money set aside so one or two players could fly out late,” said Lawrence. “But the way the rules are, and the way we want to put together the team, we can't do that with a large number of players.”

Lawrence stressed to RUGBYMag.com that no player is a slam-dunk to make the U20s simply because he plays on a leading college team (Eagles continue to show up from all over the country).