The Men's DI college playoffs are all guesswork, and at the same time they have taken the guesswork out of the competition.

How they've taken the guesswork out, is to make qualification more simple – win your conference (with two exceptions) and you're in the Round of 16. The two exceptions are Davenport, who take the only 2nd seed from a conference, and Harvard, who technically finished behind Dartmouth in the Ivy League, but won the play-in seeing as Dartmouth are a Premier Division program.

But it's all guesswork in terms of which conferences should be seeded where. How can you base seeds on last season when most of the teams that finished in the playoffs last year moved up to the CPD? How can you transfer those seeds to new conferences created for the new DI? You can't, and USA Rugby went for a regional format, and that's how #3 UC Santa Barbara plays #13 Oregon State, and #5 Stanford plays #7 Northern Colorado.

Of these, oddly, the closer game may well be Oregon State against UCSB. Sure Stanford might have their hands full against a physical UNC side, but the Cardinal are out for some hardware this season and have, generally, been playing well enough to get through.

OSU is a completely unknown quantity for UCSB, and could surprise many.

"We've got an opportunity here," said UCSB Head Coach Kevin Battle. "My one problem I think is that we haven't played since last month and we're a bit rusty. Healthy but rusty. Still, we're playing a conference champion and a team I know will have a strong pack. If our forwards can stand with their forwards, then we'll do well."

That seems to be the story of the weekend. Can Oregon State's pack dominate? Or will UCSB get enough clean ball to run rampant?

Oregon State Head Coach Mark Webber is optimistic about his team's chances. He has a young team that looks to be able to reload for some years to come, and already he has a squad that won the Northwest Collegiate Rugby Conference. Mike Gamm, said Webber, may be the best flanker he's ever coached, and Mitch Fargher is outstanding, also. His second row pairing of Cameron McDonnell and Charlie Findeisen is also excellent.

"My one regret is that we couldn't play UBC [in the NCRC]," said Webber. "We had this ice storm and just couldn't get up there. The league we played in this season has come a long way and it was great to have those games to set us up for this playoff."

Battle says what has pleased him most about this season is how much work his players have put in. They have handled big, physical teams and smaller, speedier teams alike, and now have a chance to bounce back from a disappointing 2010. The Beavers, however, are trying to put a dam in the way.

"Our Academy team beat OSU earlier, but I warned the guys, they are a very different team," said Battle. "Thing is, we're different too."

Notes: It's Alumni Weekend at UCSB and the original UCSB rugby team of 1965-66 will be on hand – at least 12 starters. They will hand out jerseys to the players starting in their positions for the playoff game. Oregon State Head Coach Mark Webber may have to fly down to Santa Barbara instead of ride the bus with his team, as his wife was admitted to the hospital Wednesday evening. Webber told RUGBYMag.com his wife's condition did not appear to be serious, but he was awaiting news.