

Tiberio Ponders South Challenge

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No one on the Southern California collegiate all-star team thinks Saturday's NCASC final against the South will be as one-sided as their match against the Pacific Coast.

The Griffins know they were playing a Grizzlies team that was organized somewhat at the last moment and lacked a large number of likely All Americans.

"We know the South will be tough," said captain Peter Tiberio of the University of Arizona. "They use their forwards very effectively and their back row is very mobile. So we know it's going to be a different experience."

Tiberio, who is coming off an eventful season where he also represented the USA in 7s, was a key member of the SoCal team that won in Glendale in 2009. Then he was a young up-and-comer. This time, he's a leader.

"Team leadership is a role I am happy to take on, but I think it's something other players should take on too," he said. "I am still laid back and easy-going."

Not on the field, where Tiberio is one of the most dangerous open field runners in American college rugby. Tiberio was a big part of Thursday's victory, but not the only one.

"Zach Fenoglio had a really good game, and so did Jordan Badia-Bellinger," said Tiberio. "Mike Shea and the forwards overall did real well for us."

Friday was a training day for the Griffins. All the teams have to manage taking a day off after competition with the fact that they have one day to fix any issues and prepare for a new opponent.

"It's a tough balance between resting guys and at the same time we made a lot of mistakes in the first game, and we need to deal with those," said Tiberio. "We need to elevate our play. The biggest thing we've been working on is defense and working harder to get on the other side of the ruck. Yesterday we were leaving holes on the outside of rucks and we need to recognize that and fill those holes."

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