West Point Director of Rugby Rich Pohlidal distributed an email Tuesday to the press and coaches in collegiate rugby stating in grand detail his argument for a fall season for college rugby.

At the heart of the email is the likelihood that the Army men's team, at least, could be switching its season to fall-only for 15s, with emphasis on 7s and select-side play in the spring.

The topic has been one close to Pohlidal's heart for some time, and in a conversation with RUGBYMag.com following the email, he outlined his thought processes.

"Win-loss records are not how I am judged," said Pohlidal. "Our program is judged on academics, military development, and then athletic success. Now, if we get those first two right, we will likely win as well. But I want to look at solutions that develop rugby. I really strongly believe that moving to playing in the fall, with a championship in the fall, that puts teams on a more equal footing in terms of their preparation, is the right way forward."

Pohlidal pointed out that the teams that did well at the USA 7s CRC were those that had the most preparation time, regardless of state of origin (Utah had a week more than Cal, and beat Cal; Army a week longer than Utah, and Army beat Utah; Dartmouth a week longer than Army, and Dartmouth beat Army).

It's unlikely that many other coaches will agree, especially those for whom fall play would be a drastic departure. But some in colder states certainly would second Pohlidal's feelings. Still others might look at their current schedule, which often includes a split schedule with a long winter layoff, and welcome a shorter season.

What he is proposing is to play a fall season that, for some schools, asks players to arrive on campus early (this, Pohlidal says, is much easier on the players than making them play a championship during finals), devotes seven to ten weeks for preseason games and league matches, and then three weeks of national playoffs. Or, it might not even end in a national playoff, depending on what colleges want from their rugby.

Such a plan, Pohlidal said, would mean every team has the same preparation (while the current system favors teams that have warm weather in January), and would free up the spring to ensure players were available for the USA U20 team or other select or national teams, provide time to prepare for the USA 7s Collegiate Rugby Championship 7s event, and also free up coaches and players to help coach high school and youth teams, and by extension allow coaches to recruit potential students to their universities.

Stated Pohildal in his outline (emphasis his):

While the Pacific Coast, Southern California, and South Unions enjoy fairer weather and outdoors training environments year round, the largest unions and the majority of colleges/ universities to include the three military academies do not; we are snow bound in Jan and February, and for some, most of March and April. ***With 4 of the seven unions (NE, West, Mid-West and Mid Atlantic) playing a split season in both fall and spring due to weather restraints through late December into mid March (April for some), only a small window exists to provide collegiate teams across the country equal footing to train, compete, and build up to peak performance for a national championship competition in 15's. This preparation gap creates an unfair advantage for warmer climate teams which in a full contact sport like rugby cannot be mitigated without undue hardship placed on the shoulders of the schools and moreoever the student athletes*** *. Modulated training on "basketball courts or on wrestling mats" as suggested by once D1 coach could never compensate for 10-12 preseason matches and outdoor training on grass/ turf fields in rather normal rugby conditions.*

However, we can make best use of the small spring playing window for a collegiate sevens

*season which would allow equal opportunity for all collegiate athletes to compete, **in a fair play model** , in the code of rugby sevens. The CRC and NBC's drive for rugby content demonstrate that we are now being given a golden opportunity for rugby- not just sevens. It should be recognized that the 15's World Cup in 2011 NZ, has been picked up by NBC- without a doubt sevens rugby has influenced this positive repositioning of the 15's game in the American Sporting Landscape this fall…..seems like NBC doesn't mind competing with football?*

Pohlidal called his solution "an American solution." One that standardizes the schedule in a country where coordinating the right weather conditions to play an outdoor sport can be a challenge.

This is by no means a settled issue, but Pohilidal has taken a big step not only by outlining his ideas in a formalized form, but also by strongly hinting that whether any formal change is made or not, Army rugby may well switch to fall play regardless.

If nothing else, it seems that the success of the USA 7s CRC and the new Collegiate Premier Division have not settled anything in American college rugby. Rather, they have simply uncovered more issues, and more questions.

Below is Pohlidal's suggested college rugby calendar (some dates of the IRB Sevens World Series are guesses based on this past season's dates). Right now it is presented by RUGBYMag.com as a point of discussion. Certainly other college coaches have called for a fall-only competition, and others believe strongly in a spring-only competition.

Suggested Fall XV's Calendar for 2011:

Time Line

Events

Saturday, 20 August 2011

Preseason

Saturday, 27 August 2011

Preseason

Saturday, 3 September 2011

Preseason

Saturday, 10 September 2011

1st League Match

Saturday, 17 September 2011

2nd League Match

Saturday, 24 September 2011

3rd League Match

Saturday, 1 October 2011

4th League Match

Saturday, 8 October 2011

BYE Columbus Day Weekend

Saturday, 15 October 2011

6th League Match

Saturday, 22 October 2011

7	th	League Match

Saturday, 29 October 2011

Rest Weekend

Saturday, 5 November 2011

National Round of 16

Saturday, 12 November 2011

National Round of 8

Saturday, 19 November 2011

National Round of 4

Thursday, 24 November 2011 – Sunday, 27 November 2011

Thanksgiving Break

Saturday, 3 December 2011

National Championship Match

NOTE: Holiday break, Exam time, and winter weather begins to set in.

Suggested Spring 2011 Seven's and Elite:

Monday, 26 December 2012 – Friday, 30 December 2012

USA U20 Assembly Camp for 2012 Season

Saturday, 7 January 2012 – Sunday, 8 January 2012

U23/Collegiate All Star Camps

Saturday, 14 January 2012 – Sunday, 15 January 2012

Monday, 16 January 2012

MLK DAY

Saturday, 21 January 2012 – Sunday, 22 January 2012

Saturday, 28 January 2012 – Sunday, 29 January 2012

Saturday, 4 February 2012 – Sunday, 5 February 2012

HSBC World 7s Series – New Zealand

Friday, 10 February 2012 – Sunday, 12 February 2012

LAS VEGAS Collegiate 7s Kickoff

HSBC World 7s Series - USA

Saturday, 18 February 2012 – Sunday, 19 February 2012

Collegiate All Star Championship U23 & U20

East v. South West v. Pacific

Monday, 20 February 2012

PRESIDENTS DAY

Saturday, 25 February 2012 – Sunday, 26 February 2012

Collegiate 7s Series Tournament 1

Saturday, 3 March 2012 – Sunday, 4 March 2012

Collegiate All Star Championship U23 & U20

East v. West South v. Pacific

Saturday, 10 March 2012 – Sunday, 11 March 2012

Collegiate 7s Series Tournament 2

Saturday, 17 March 2012 – Sunday 18 March 2012

Collegiate all Star Championship U23 & U20

East v. Pacific West v. South

Saturday, 24 March 2012 – Sunday, 25 March 2012

Collegiate 7s Series Tournament 3

HSBC World 7s Series – Hong Kong

Saturday, 31 March 2012 – Sunday, 1 April 2012

Collegiate 7s Series Tournament 4

HSBC World 7s Series - Australia

Saturday, 7 April 2012 – Sunday, 8 April 2012

EASTER WEEKEND

Saturday, 14 April 2012 – Sunday, 15 April 2012

Collegiate 7s Series Tournament 5

Saturday, 21 April 2012 – Sunday, 22 April 2012

Collegiate 7s Series Tournament 6

Saturday, 28 April 2012 – Sunday, 29 April 2012

Collegiate 7s Series Tournament 7

Saturday, 5 March 2012 – Sunday, 6 March 2012

Saturday, 12 May 2012 – Sunday 13 May 2012

Collegiate 7s Championship – PPL Park

Saturday, 19 May 2012 – Sunday, 20 May 2012

HSBC World 7s Series – England

Saturday, 12 May 2012 – Sunday, 20 May 2012

USA U20 Training Camp

IRB JWT Begins

Saturday, 26 May 2012 – Sunday, 27 May 2012

HSBC World 7s Series – Scotland

MEMORIAL DAY

Saturday, 2 June 2012 – Sunday, 3 June 2012

IRB JWT Ends

Saturday, 9 June 2012 – Sunday, 10 June 2012

IRB JWC Begins

Saturday, 16 June 2012 – Sunday, 17 June 2012

Saturday, 23 June 2012 – Sunday, 24 June 2012

IRB JWC Ends