

## CPD Final Crowd a Milestone

Written by Alex Goff  
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USA national team games have drawn more than 10,000 fans on a few occasions, including the first test match of the modern era in 1976, and the USA v. South Africa in 2001.

But no domestic rugby game outside of the odd international drew as many fans as the Cal v. BYU game did on Saturday. While a few thousand or so came to Rio Tinto Stadium in Sandy, Utah to see Highland v. United, the crowd, which paid \$14-\$27 to attend, swelled to over 10,000 (according to the official count we given to RUGBYMag.com, 10,139 plus as many as 1,500 complimentary tickets).

That is far and away the biggest crowd to see a non-international in the modern era.

And even though the vast majority were there to cheer BYU, the visitors liked it, too.

“Awesome atmosphere, no doubt,” said Cal captain Derek Asbun. “It’s a BYU crowd but we just treated it like any other condition you play in.”

“We thought it was exciting,” added Cal Head Coach Jack Clark. “We thought it was great to have a good audience. We thought this stadium was fantastic. We were excited for the opportunity and glad for the opportunity to play here.”

“We’ve got a fantastic fan base here,” said BYU Head Coach David Smyth. “College rugby, this is a great thing. It’s got to be good for not only college rugby but USA Rugby. If we want to keep moving the ship in the right direction, these are the sorts of events we need to have.”

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“The atmosphere was awesome; great turnout, great event, great venue, it was awesome,” added BYU captain Ryan Roundy.

Something, then to build on. The College Premier Division might be struggling with name recognition, but on an ESPN network it proved fans will show up for a big rugby game, especially when the home team has a stake in it. And maybe this was the beginning of something special.

Notes: Rumors and talk have abounded of an altercation outside the stadium. As sad and upsetting as that may be, they are also not uncommon at sporting events. Those who remained at Rio Tinto after the game saw no police or ambulances at the stadium, but we know no more than that.

USA Rugby did not pour an awful lot of promotion into the CPD final, and yet the crowd was over 10,000. One wonders what could be done if more of these types of events were put on, and a little more marketing heft put behind them.