Written by Pat Clifton
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USA Rugby's decision to bar players who started two or more Super League games from the DI postseason didn't please the Chicago Lions (the only team affected) but didn't hamstring them, either, as they prepare to take on Mystic River at Manassas Park, Virg. Saturday in the Sweet 16.

"We've always maintained we needed a big player base, because there's no good in trying to do two things and not have the players to do it. So one of our things has been trying to broaden it, and create depth by broadening it," said Lions coach Wez Parkes, who maintains the RSL and DI sides have been mutually exclusive, for the most part.

"In the fall season we were allowed to use one or two Super league guys, to use them to play alongside some of these young guys and give them whatever experience or whatever pointers they could, and coming out of that, this has truly been our DI squad, and this is their rightful playoffs. As such, we've made a little bit of a distinction between the two just to create an identity."

Parkes says the Lions have received a boost from recent college graduates who've joined the club this season, and their relative inexperience in the postseason could provide some hurdles. Parkes is also pretty green himself, in terms of the DI playoffs.

"It'll be interesting. As a coach, I don't have a lot of experience in the later rounds of DI stuff, and it's always interesting as you come into it. We've got a fairly young team, a lot of young guys. We feel pretty good about what we've got. We don't have any superstars, they're just good, honest workers, so it'll be interesting to see how our game holds up against Mystic," he said.

“It’s just showing up Saturday to play. For some of those guys, it’ll be their first big trip to play rugby. On the field we feel pretty good with that, but it’s how we deal with the variables.”

The winner of the Lions and Mystic River advances to play the winner of Potomac Athletic Club and Palmer Sunday.