It’s easy to forget that there are good U19 and HS teams all over that country that don’t even make a run to the national championships.

Witness the state of Washington, where early on Liberty felt very confident in their abilities, and moved their schedule around so they could participate in the Pacific Coast playoffs. In the end, Liberty lost out by just seven points to eventual national runners up United.

Liberty then returned to Washington, played in the state playoffs and … lost, 13-8 to Budd Bay.

Budd Bay didn’t play anyone in a regional or national playoffs, but after losing their opening game of the season to Rainier Plateau, they defeated Yakima, Shelton, Harbour, Prarie, Kitsap and Tacoma (as well as Seattle in a friendly) to win the Washington South division and enter the playoffs.

Then they edged Valley 17-15 before beating Liberty.

“We had a lot of new players, and in our loss to Rainier Plateau a lot of players had no idea what to do,” said Budd Bay Coach Dan Dillashaw. “It was a tough start. But while we had a lot of rookie players, they are very good athletes, and they learned.”

Griffin Boudia is one. A complete rookie at rugby he is an outstanding football prospect and progressed, said Dillashaw, to being one of the best No. 8s in the league.

“He scored in almost every match, and while he didn’t score in the playoffs he contributed in other ways,” Dillashaw said.

Two other athletes joined the team this season: Tui Magalei and Anthony Parks. Both are very fast and accomplished football players – Magalei was Athlete of the Year at Olympia (Wash.) HS. At wing they were devastating.

“Once they learned how to stay in the support they were great,” said Dillashaw.

Added to that was senior flanker Justin Henry, who will enroll at St. Mary’s this fall and will play rugby for the Gaels.

The club had a very strong U16 program too, and this despite the fact they had several players just a couple of weeks too old to play U16.

Those players were thrust into the U19 league, with Dillashaw a little worried about how they would handle it. He needn’t have. Zach Riley and Zach Carrithers are a matched set at second row and Budd Bay has them for two more years.

Eddie Harriage, whose older brother Chris players for Central Washington, and the older brother to both, Robbie, was a Budd Bay standout as well, was another youngster. A flanker with the U16s, he was too small to play that position with the U19s, so Dillashaw made him a scrumhalf.

“It all just came together for him,” he said.

In the playoffs the Budd Bay team worked hard to use their defense as offense, forcing teams into errors that they punished. It worked well, even though their enthusiasm sometimes meant the Barbarians were jumped too early and were offside.

Still, for a program that has produced several age-grade Eagles, as well as USA senior player Scott LaValla, 2011 was a surprising success.

“We entered the season with a young team and a lot of rookies, but they learned,” said Dillashaw. “And we have a lot of those players, plus our U16s coming up, so things look good.”