



Here's our look at Pool B of the USA 7s Collegiate Rugby Championship this weekend at PPL Park in Chester, Pa.

Pool B

Who Will Win: University of Utah

Who they Have: OK, enough about who they don't have. Thretton Palamo isn't on the team.
Who is: Don Pati, who is an electric attacking player, tireless Danny James, last year's captain Blake Miller, new-to-rugby speedster Winston Harris, and shifty, exciting brothers Taukave and Tonata Lauti.

They may not have the big man in Palamo, but they have a lot of players capable of stepping into his shoes at least for a moment. In that way, this Utah team might be a better overall team that last year.

Who Will Challenge Them: With apologies to Boston College, we think it's a battle between Dartmouth and Notre Dame. Dartmouth is without scrumhalf Derek Fish, who tore his ACL in his last 15s game of the season.

Dartmouth has size – former ski-racing, 6-5 prop Nate Brakeley and 6-4 wing and former Dartmouth football wide receiver Tanner Scott; pace – captain Chris Downer and his twin Nick, Fijian, and work rate.

They have crossed over not only Scott, but Steve Morris, another former football player, and track runner MUhammed Shakoor.

Written by

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But the Notre Dame story is much the same. Nick Civetta is 6-8 and can run. Bob Manfreda is new to the game, attracted after seeing the USA 7s in Las Vegas. Sean Mitchell is a hard-running center and former USA U19 player, and Sean Peterson was a two-time national champion with Jesuit in Sacramento.

Notre Dame has great skill and experience among its playmakers and some tough hombres up front. Do they have the pace to hang with Dartmouth?

Don't Count Out: Boston College.

We will likely pick Boston College for an 0-3 pool record, but we could well be wrong. They are a complete unknown, and you know a team coached by Jason Lett won't back down or give up. Ever.

Alex Brown is a big, 6-3 runner with lots of rugby experience, and in fact the team is flooded with players who have played since early high school, or before. That understanding of the game can't be recreated in a few weeks.

Schedule:

10:42 Boston College v. Notre Dame

11:04 Utah v. Dartmouth

As we said, BC could be a sleeper with so many experienced players, but Notre Dame has that, too. Irish win clash of Catholic colleges.

We strong believe the first round of the day is the time when a favored team can be upset. So Utah is vulnerable here.

1:16 Dartmouth v. Notre Dame

2:32 Boston College v. Utah

Another tough one for Dartmouth. But even if they lose to Utah, a win over Notre Dame could reinvigorate their chances.

4:34 Notre Dame v. Utah

6:34 Boston College v. Dartmouth

Utah will hit their stride now and should win. Dartmouth should beat BC at this point. We could possible see a pool where three teams finish 2-1. We could also see BC pull off some surprises.

But in the end we think it's Utah and Dartmouth in the top two. But it's close.