

Americans Overseas Update: Playoff Time

Written by Pat Clifton
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Three Americans could play in overseas playoff matches over the next few days, while another will be rooting from the bench.

Hayden Smith and Chris Wyles both played in Saracens' 16-13 win over the Harlequins -- the club's 11th straight victory -- in the last week of the Aviva Premiership regular season.

Wyles will almost certainly be in the starting 15 when Saracens boots up against Gloucester in the Premiership semifinal Saturday in Watford, and Smith may factor into the equation.

There's no doubt Takudzwa Ngwenya will be part of Biarritz's efforts in their Top 14 semifinal play-in game against Clermont Auvergne Friday at Stade Marcel Michelin. Ngwenya started in Biarritz's 22-18 defeat of Bourgoin, which secured the club a spot in the playoffs. If Biarritz wins Friday, they advance to the semifinals to face either Racing Metro or Toulouse.

Also hoping to advance is Seta Tuilevuka's Montpellier, but Tuilevuka won't be playing in their semifinal play-in match with Castres Saturday, as he left Montpellier's 27-3 win over Toulouse in the 47th minute due to a groin injury.

In addition to having a bum groin, turns out Tuilevuka has a broken wrist, which is expected to sideline him for 6-8 weeks.

That would mean Tuilevuka is a no-go for the Churchill Cup, but could be ready to play in the Eagles' August 6th clash with Canada in Toronto. If he's going to make the World Cup squad,

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the two August matches with Canada and the September bout with Japan will be important for the center.

Kevin Swiryn did not play in Agen's 36-10 defeat of Brive last week, and his season is over.

Mike MacDonald, who has been battling hamstring issues for a while, started in Leeds' 24-31 loss to the Heineken Cup finalist Northampton Saints. Had Leeds defeated the Saints, they would have avoided relegation, but they now sit at the bottom of the Premiership table, losing a point-differential tiebreaker to Newcastle.

Leeds could be rewarded a reprieve and remain in the Premiership if the Cornish Pirates win the two-legged Championship final over Worcester.

Robbie Shaw started in Bristol's 17-14 win over Bedford to clinch the B&I Cup.