I listened recently to RuggaMatrix America College 4. During the show Tony Mazzarella, Alex Goff, and Pat Clifton talked about new USA Rugby Division 1 conference organization.

Tony mentioned two key points 1) trouble stepping up divisions 2) conference organization

In regards to #1, I was most recently the head coach of West Virginia University men's rugby, until spring of 2010 when I left for a new job after finishing my doctorate. Having spent several years in the Midwest territory at a large university with very poor university support I fully understand the problems with moving up in divisions that Tony discussed. I remember fighting tooth and nail with WVU administration to get more funding and better facilities built for rugby and club sports. It took a new president and constant lobbying by student government representatives to facilitate change, but it took the better part of 7 years to achieve results. So I fully understand the problems in moving up divisions. The mandated structure is going to make things difficult for a large amount of Division 2 and even some Division 3 teams if they must step up to play D1.

In regards to #2, Tony who is involved in USA Rugby and the Midwest at higher levels said "I don't know who is in charge of our conference right now", a comment probably echoed by lots of others in the rugby community. With the mandate for all Division 1 Football Bowl Subdivision (FBS) schools to play D1 USA Rugby in 2012-2013 I was curious how many teams this would really affect. In addition, since we as the general rugby community have been told "don't worry these leagues will naturally form" I wanted to explore what it really meant and perhaps offer up a solution, since it doesn't appear USA Rugby is doing that.

In comparing the teams that currently play in USA Rugby CPL and D1 (2010-2011 school year) to the mandated list, 61 schools will need to be added to the proposed USA Rugby D1 League structure or risk not playing in USA Rugby Collegiate sanctioned matches that lead to playoffs. Well some of these schools (6) don't have rugby clubs (LA- Monroe, LA Tech, Akron, UTEP, Toledo, Eastern Michigan) so that knocks the number down to 55. This means that USA Rugby D1 will swell to at least 132 schools, and perhaps many more as others may choose to move up as well, and it reasons that 1 team from this list will be moving to CPL. Using the FBS leagues (- those teams without clubs), each league will have the following number of teams required to move up to D1 USA Rugby: ACC (1), Big 12 (3), Big East (5), Big Ten (5), Conference USA (11), MAC (6), MWC (2), SEC (7), Sun Belt (7), WAC (8). In looking at this mandated realignment it is non-automatic qualifying BCS leagues in FBS that are clearly the most affected, with the large majority of all affected schools in the south and Midwest.

Below is my attempt at creating three options for division 1 if everyone has to play in D1.

What follows is the current 2010-2011 USA Rugby D1 League Structure.

(All teams listed are eligible for the DI playoff, save the Canadian schools marked by an asterisk. There are multiple CPL clubs fielding sides in DI conferences. Those sides plus the two Canadian Schools in Pac Northwest are not included.)

ACRL

EASTERN PENN.

IVY LEAGUE

METRO NY

MIDWEST-EAST

Clemson
Duke
Georgia Tech
Maryland
North Carolina
N.C. State
Virginia
Virginia Tech
Wake Forest

Millersville
Shippensburg
Temple
West Chester

Brown
Columbia
Cornell
Harvard
Penn
Princeton
Yale

Fordham
Kings Point
So. Connecticut
Stony Brook

Bowling Green
Davenport
Indiana
Miami (OH)
Purdue

MIDWEST-WEST

NEW ENGLAND

NORCAL

NY STATE

PAC. NORTHWEST

Iowa State
Minnesota
Northern Iowa
UW-Stout
Wisconsin

Boston College
Northeastern
UConn
UMass

Chico State
Sacramento St.
Santa Clara
Stanford

Albany
Binghamton
Brockport
Buffalo
Buffalo State
St. Bonaventure
Syracuse

Eastern Washington
Oregon
Oregon State
Washington
Washington State
Western Washington

SOUTH

SOCAL

WEST-CENTRAL

WEST-TEXAS

WEST-WEST

Florida
Florida State
Georgia
Kennesaw State
South Carolina

Loyola Marymount
San Diego
UC Irvine
UC Santa Barbara
USC

Kansas State
Nebraska
Oklahoma State
Truman State

Sam Houston
Texas
Texas State
Texas Tech

Colo. School of Mines
Denver
New Mexico
Northern Colorado

There are currently 15 divisions with 1 wild card, with a total of 77 teams playing D1 USA Rugby, in addition there are 31 teams in CPL for a total of 108 teams playing CPL and D1 USA Rugby.

With the mandate for all Division-1 Football Bowl Subdivision (FBS) schools to play in D1 USA Rugby we now look at those schools. There are currently 120 teams playing in 12 leagues (independents included) in D-1 FBS an average of 10 teams per league. Below is a list of teams that play in the D-1 FBS along with each leagues number of teams (in parenthesis). Teams moving to different conferences in 2012 were placed into the conference that they played in fall 2010.

ACC (12)
Boston College
Clemson
Duke
Florida State

Georgia Tech
Maryland
Miami (FL)
North Carolina
North Carolina State
Virginia
Virginia Tech
Wake Forest

Big 12 (12)
Baylor
Colorado
Iowa State
Kansas
Kansas State
Missouri
Nebraska
Oklahoma
Oklahoma State
Texas
Texas A&M
Texas Tech

Big East (8)
Cincinnati
Connecticut
Louisville
Pittsburgh
Rutgers
South Florida
Syracuse
West Virginia

Big Ten (11)

Illinois
Indiana
Iowa
Michigan
Michigan State
Minnesota
Northwestern
Ohio State
Penn State
Purdue
Wisconsin

IA Independents (3)

Army
Navy
Notre Dame

Conference USA (12)

East Carolina
Houston
Marshall
Memphis
Rice
Southern Methodist

Southern Miss
Tulane
Tulsa
UAB
UCF
UTEP

Mid-American (13)

Akron
Ball State
Bowling Green
Buffalo
Central Michigan
Eastern Michigan
Kent State
Miami (OH)
Northern Illinois
Ohio
Temple
Toledo
Western Michigan

Mountain West (9)

Air Force
Brigham Young
Colorado State
New Mexico
San Diego State
TCU
UNLV
Utah
Wyoming

Pacific-10 (10)

Arizona
Arizona State
California
Oregon
Oregon State
Stanford
UCLA
USC
Washington
Washington State

Sun Belt (9)

Arkansas State
Florida Atlantic
Florida International
Louisiana
Louisiana-Monroe
Middle Tennessee
North Texas
Troy
Western Kentucky

SEC (12)

Alabama

Arkansas
Auburn
Florida
Georgia
Kentucky
LSU
Mississippi
Mississippi State
South Carolina
Tennessee
Vanderbilt

WAC (9)
Boise State
Fresno State
Hawaii
Idaho
Louisiana Tech
Nevada
New Mexico State
San Jose State
Utah State

In comparing the teams that currently play in USA Rugby CPL and D1 (2010-2011 school year) to the mandated list, 61 schools will need to be added to the proposed USA Rugby D1 League structure or risk not playing in USA Rugby Collegiate sanctioned matches that lead to playoffs. Well some of these schools (6) don't have rugby clubs (LA- Monroe, LA Tech, Akron, UTEP, Toledo, Eastern Michigan) so that knocks the number down to 55. This means that USA Rugby D1 will swell to at least 132 schools, and perhaps many more as others may choose to move up as well, and it reasons that 1 team from this list will be moving to CPL. Using the FBS leagues (-those teams without clubs), each league will have the following number of teams required to move up to D1 USA Rugby: ACC (1), Big 12 (3), Big East (5), Big Ten (5), Conference USA

(11), MAC (6), MWC (2), SEC (7), Sun Belt (7), WAC (8). In looking at this mandated realignment it is non-automatic qualifying BCS leagues in FBS that are clearly the most affected, with the large majority of all affected schools in the south and midwest.

With the idea of 16 total conferences being formed, there would be 8.25 teams per conference, with the minimum being 7 teams according to USA Rugby. Clearly there is a need for new USA Rugby D-1 leagues to be geographically close due to travel costs, so the idea of having South Florida and TCU in the same league as Pitt will not work in the case of USA Rugby (goodbye Big East league for USA Rugby).

What is interesting is that of these 55 teams that are affected by the mandated move, 7 actually play in D3 (Tulane, Southern Miss, Western Michigan, Kentucky, Louisville, Marshall, Troy)!!!! So best of luck to those teams in moving up two divisions, travelling far, and getting blown out, or you are not able to play anything but social rugby.

Here is my 1st attempt to do USA Rugby's job and set those mandated D1 conferences based on current leagues and new teams that have to come in (marked in Red). Clearly this is not good when you have to form 2 new conferences of just new teams (Midwest East, and SE- Miss Valley), perhaps that was part of the problem with why these teams weren't playing D1. In addition of those teams that are in D3, three (Kentucky, Louisville, Marshall) currently all end up in same league (Midwest East), and two end up in the SE-Miss Valley. I also split the southern conference, and moved Texas Tech from the West-Texas to West-West to get 7 teams. Well looking at the 1st attempt there are 18 conferences with 3 of them having less than the needed number. In addition, I doubt Hawaii will play in a Southern Cal league. I find it highly unlikely that all teams in Midwest-East and SE-Miss Valley will move up and will play down and not be eligible for playoffs. This creates another geographical mess if three of them drop out. So what to do: have 18 conferences, elevate more clubs in those leagues or areas and figure that playoff mess out? Or consolidate to 17? Still a playoff mess. Consolidate to 16? Best to do it with NY State, Northeast, and eastern Penn.

ACRL

EASTERN PENN

IVY LEAGUE

METRO NY

MIDWEST-CENTRAL

MIDWEST EAST

Clemson
Duke
Georgia Tech
Maryland
North Carolina
N.C. State
Virginia
Virginia Tech
Wake Forest

Millersville
Shippensburg
Temple
West Chester
St. Joseph's

Team Needed

Team Needed

Brown

Columbia
Cornell
Harvard
Penn
Princeton
Yale

Fordham
Kings Point
So. Connecticut
Stony Brook
Team Needed

Team Needed

Team Needed

Bowling Green
Davenport
Indiana
Purdue

Ball State

Michigan

Michigan State

Central Michigan

Western Michigan

WVU

Pitt

Ohio U

Kent State

Miami (OH)

Cincinnati

Marshall

Louisville

Kentucky

MIDWEST-WEST

NEW ENGLAND

NORCAL

NY STATE

PAC. NORTHWEST

SE-MISS VALLEY

Iowa State
Minnesota
Northern Iowa
UW-Stout
Wisconsin

Northwestern

Iowa

Northern Illinois

Illinois

Boston College
Northeastern
UConn

UMass

Team Needed

Team Needed

Team Needed

Chico State
Sacramento St.
Santa Clara
Stanford

Nevada

Fresno State

San Jose State

Albany
Binghamton
Brockport
Buffalo
Buffalo State
St. Bonaventure
Syracuse

Eastern Washington

Oregon
Oregon State
Washington
Washington State
Western Washington

Idaho

Boise State

Vanderbilt

Memphis

Middle Tennessee

Western Kentucky

Mississippi State

Mississippi

Southern Miss

U of Louisiana

Tulane

SE- FLORIDA

SOCAL

WEST-CENTRAL

WEST-TEXAS

WEST-WEST

SE-EASTERN

Florida
Florida State

Central Florida

Florida Atlantic

Florida International

South Florida

Miami

Loyola Marymount
San Diego
UC Irvine
UC Santa Barbara
USC

UNLV

Hawaii

Kansas State
Nebraska
Oklahoma State
Truman State

Kansas

Missouri

Arkansas

Tulsa

Sam Houston
Texas
Texas State
SMU

Rice

Houston

North Texas

TCU

Baylor

Colo. School of Mines
Denver
New Mexico
Northern Colorado

Texas Tech

New Mexico State

Utah State

Georgia
Kennesaw State
South Carolina

East Carolina

Auburn

Alabama

UAB

Troy

Option 2: 16 conference league

ACRL

NORTHEAST

IVY LEAGUE

NY STATE

Clemson
Duke
Georgia Tech
Maryland
North Carolina
N.C. State
Virginia
Virginia Tech
Wake Forest

Boston College
Northeastern
UConn
UMass

So. Connecticut

Temple

St. Joseph's

West Chester

Millersville
Shippensburg

Brown
Columbia
Cornell
Harvard
Penn
Princeton
Yale

Albany
Binghamton
Brockport
Buffalo
Buffalo State
St. Bonaventure
Syracuse

Fordham

Stony Brook

King's Point

MIDWEST-WEST

MIDWEST-CENTRAL

MIDWEST EAST

SE-MISS VALLEY

Iowa State
Minnesota
Northern Iowa
UW-Stout
Wisconsin

Northwestern

Iowa

Northern Illinois

Illinois

Bowling Green
Davenport

Indiana
Purdue

Ball State

Michigan

Michigan State

Central Michigan

Western Michigan

WVU

Pitt

Ohio U

Kent State

Miami (OH)

Cincinnati

Marshall

Louisville

Kentucky

Vanderbilt

Memphis

Middle Tennessee

Western Kentucky

Mississippi State

Mississippi

Southern Miss

U of Louisiana

Tulane

SE- FLORIDA

SE-EASTERN

WEST-CENTRAL

WEST-TEXAS

Florida
Florida State

Central Florida

Florida Atlantic

Florida International

South Florida

Miami

Georgia

Kennesaw State
South Carolina

East Carolina

Auburn

Alabama

UAB

Troy

Kansas State
Nebraska
Oklahoma State
Truman State

Kansas

Missouri

Arkansas

Tulsa

Sam Houston
Texas
Texas State
SMU

Rice

Houston

North Texas

TCU

Baylor

PAC. NORTHWEST

NORCAL

SOCAL

WEST-WEST

Eastern Washington
Oregon
Oregon State
Washington
Washington State
Western Washington

Idaho

Boise State

Chico State
Sacramento St.
Santa Clara
Stanford

Nevada

Fresno State

San Jose State

Loyola Marymount
San Diego
UC Irvine
UC Santa Barbara
USC

UNLV

Team Needed
Colo. School of Mines
Denver
New Mexico
Northern Colorado
Texas Tech
New Mexico State
Utah State

I put Kings Point (USMMA) as choosing to play in D2 as they are a D3 NCAA school, otherwise they could go into NY State. Or any of St. Joseph's, West Chester, Millersville, Shippensburg, Fordham and Stony Brook could be opting for D2 as well. With all those teams staying though, the Northeast is pretty spread out but perhaps that is split into north and south with internal playoffs. I see Hawaii opting into Hawaii men's league. I say for playoffs make it 32 teams, two from each conference, with geographically close cross over conference matchups of 1 vs. 2 (i.e. NY State vs. Ivy League).

Option 3: 17 Conference league

ACRL

PENN/ Met NY

IVY LEAGUE

NEW ENGLAND

NY STATE

MIDWEST EAST

Clemson
Duke
Georgia Tech
Maryland
North Carolina
N.C. State
Virginia
Virginia Tech
Wake Forest

Millersville
Shippensburg
Temple
West Chester
Fordham
Kings Point
So. Connecticut

Stony Brook

St. Joseph's

Brown
Columbia
Cornell
Harvard
Penn
Princeton
Yale

Boston College
Northeastern
UConn
UMass

UNH

U Maine

Rhode Island

Vermont

Albany
Binghamton
Brockport
Buffalo
Buffalo State

St. Bonaventure
Syracuse

WVU

Pitt

Ohio U

Kent State

Miami (OH)

Cincinnati

Marshall

Louisville

Kentucky

MIDWEST-WEST

MIDWEST-CENTRAL

SE-EASTERN

SE- FLORIDA

SE-MISS VALLEY

Iowa State
Minnesota
Northern Iowa
UW-Stout
Wisconsin

Northwestern

Iowa

Northern Illinois

Illinois

Bowling Green

Davenport
Indiana
Purdue

Ball State

Michigan

Michigan State

Central Michigan

Western Michigan

Georgia
Kennesaw State
South Carolina

East Carolina

Auburn

Alabama

UAB

Troy

Florida
Florida State

Central Florida

Florida Atlantic

Florida Intnl.

South Florida

Miami

Vanderbilt

Memphis

Middle Tennessee

Western Kentucky

Mississippi State

Mississippi

Southern Miss

U of Louisiana

Tulane

NORCAL

SOCAL

WEST-CENTRAL

WEST-TEXAS

WEST-WEST

PAC. NORTHWEST

Chico State
Sacramento St.
Santa Clara
Stanford

Nevada

Fresno State

San Jose State

Loyola Marymount
San Diego
UC Irvine
UC Santa Barbara
USC

UNLV

Team Needed

Kansas State
Nebraska
Oklahoma State
Truman State

Kansas

Missouri

Arkansas

Tulsa

Sam Houston
Texas
Texas State
SMU

Rice

Houston

North Texas

TCU

Baylor

Colo. School of Mines
Denver
New Mexico
Northern Colorado

Texas Tech

New Mexico State

Utah State

Eastern Washington
Oregon
Oregon State
Washington
Washington State
Western Washington

Idaho

Boise State

I consolidated Eastern Penn and Met NY into one league. I added four large public universities from New England to fill out New England league. These teams are eligible to play in D2 according to USA Rugby structure but have very large student bodies. I see Hawaii opting into Hawaii men's league. With 17 conferences the playoffs are a nightmare, so every league gets 1 team in and 2 conferences have to play in vs. each other to play a high seed. Or you could take 2 teams from each league (34 total) and 4 of the #2 teams have to play in.

Dr. Jonathan M. Niles
Visiting Assistant Professor
Department of Biology
Head Coach Men's Rugby
Susquehanna University