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The National Small College Rugby Organization and Keystone Rugby Conference have, if nothing else, shown what can be accomplished with free agency. Could the grass roots organizations be giving us a peek at the future of college rugby?

Not administered by USA Rugby, NSCRO managed to get its men's 15s semifinals broadcast nationally on Fox Soccer Plus last spring. USA Rugby's DI-AA and DII playoffs had no television coverage whatsoever. USA Rugby did contribute funds to NSCRO's Fox Soccer Plus broadcast.

This June, NSCRO's inaugural 7s National Championships will be played in conjunction with the Collegiate Rugby Championship in Philadelphia, Pa., and the semifinals and finals will be held in front of thousands of fans inside PPL Park. USA Rugby's 7s National Championships have twice been held at club sports fields in front of a couple of hundred fans and no television coverage.

The Keystone had a fall match aired live on Pennsylvania Cable Network and is set to have its playoffs shown by the government-funded channel, too. PCN's programming goes out statewide to roughly 5 million viewers. When's the last time the Mid-Atlantic or Eastern Pennsylvania rugby unions had games broadcast live on television?

And this spring, everyone will be keeping tabs on how the inaugural Varsity Cup final and the DI-A final compare. The Varsity Cup final, according to BYU Rugby's website, is set to be held at Rio Tinto Stadium in Sandy, Utah. BYU has helped put over 18,000 fans in the stands of Rio Tinto the last two years combined. If the Cougars make it to the Varsity Cup final, Rio Tinto could again be buzzing.

Utah is also in the Varsity Cup and would likely draw well at Rio Tinto, with or without BYU. And Cal, with such a large and well-traveling fan base, put butts in the MLS stadium's seats for the 2011 DI-A final.

The location for the 2013 DI-A final has not yet been announced. Consider that Life, St. Mary's and Davenport, all small schools with much smaller alumni bases than Cal, Utah or BYU, are favorites to get to the final. Then consider that Arkansas State, another favorite to go a long way, is not conveniently located near any potential venue, and it's easy to envision a scenario where the DI-A final draws a fraction of the fans it drew in 2011 and 2012.

Smaller, more focused and autonomous groups are accomplishing things we've never seen before in American rugby. Why?

(The Varsity Cup, to be fair, won't likely accomplish anything USA Rugby hadn't already accomplished with the '11 and '12 DI-A Finals, but it could redirect the revenue from the governing body's coffers to the participating programs'.)

Part of the reason the NSCRO and the Keystone are successful is timing. After years of grass roots effort, rugby is finally a prevalent enough sport that media outlets, school administrators and the general public are taking unprecedented notice.

But the biggest reason is free agency. The teams in the Keystone are able to leverage their own brands and angles to achieve their own agendas. They no longer have to be concerned about the local DII women's club teams or the high school teams or their issues. Keystone's yeomen are putting their concentrated efforts toward the greater good of one small group of colleges.

NSCRO doesn't have to bundle its National Championship dates with USA Rugby's DI-AA and DII dates. Therefore, when the opportunity arises to have its semifinals aired on Fox Soccer Plus, it can say yes. And when the CRC says it has room for some small college 7s, NSCRO can pounce on the opportunity.

This line of thought, that competitions are free of one another, even seems to be creeping into conversations amongst USA Rugby committees. The College Competitions Committee recently kicked around the idea of moving the DII men's 15s National Championships to the fall semester and holding a DII 7s National Championship in the spring. Given that the overwhelming majority of DII teams play their 15s rugby in the fall as it is, this move makes a ton of sense.

There are still giant hurdles having to be cleared by groups like NSCRO, Keystone, Varsity Cup and even the Collegiate Rugby Championship, college rugby's most high-profile independent competition, but they're being overcome at a more blinding rate than ever before.