

Eagles Assembled, But Some Have Headstart

Written by Pat Clifton
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It's no secret that the Eagles will be entering the World Cup this fall with minimal time together. They assembled in Denver Monday for their first full day of prep for the upcoming Canada and Japan tests, but many were dispersed throughout the country and the world before arriving Sunday.



However, eight Eagles put up their own money and sacrificed the last few weeks to converge on Denver and get some early training in: Louis Stanfill, Eric Fry, Colin Hawley, Junior Sifa, Mate Moekiola, Blaine Scully, Kevin Swiryn, Brian McClenahan and Inaki Basauri.

USA strength and conditioning coach Dave Williams found them a house to stay in, and they worked out at Glendale's Infinity Park and the gym of their head trainer, Michael Keating.

"There were eight of us in a two-bedroom, one-bath house. Three guys in one room, two in another and three in the living room, and that's how we lived," said Stanfill.

"We went to Costco and would pool funds and pretty much would pay out whoever would put whatever food or bill on their credit card, so it was very much not a camp-like atmosphere, but when it comes to training we were getting up usually between 5:45 and 6:45 in the morning to go train."

Joining the out-of-towners to train were Denver-based Nic Johnson and Nese Malifa

"We'd usually lift in the mornings, then right after we'd lift we'd work on passing, defense, a little bit of lineout. We couldn't really work on any plays or lineout calls or anything like that because we didn't have enough players, so it was more technical skills -- speed, jumping straight up, speed off the ground, speed in the air, and then the down portion of the lineout's really important these days. We've been working on a split landing with the two lifters hooking their arms under the jumper's legs in order to prevent a sack.

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"We also did some good scrummaging work, and that would complete our morning. We'd be done probably around 11. We'd fit some treatment time in there, because when you play rugby year-round, you're bound to be banged up the entire year. We'd have a few hours off, and then in the afternoon it was conditioning or speed work or something along those lines."

Stanfill played for the Eagles in the 2007 World Cup, and he says the time just being around teammates, which this team hasn't had much of, strengthened the '07 bunch.

"People might think it's important just to train together, but it's more important than that. It's more important to bond and do other things together. Not necessarily things involving a rugby ball or weights, but hikes, small things like that, or just hanging out together or playing board games," said Stanfill.

"All these things are great for team bonding. As the eight guys that were there, we did that. Unfortunately, we didn't have all 35 there. It's a shame because I saw what we got out of it last World Cup, and we put together some pretty decent performances, so we have to pick up where we are right now, and we have to try to make the most of it, and I know we will. We have a ton of professionals and more than a complete lineup of able-bodied guys, so I think we're going to be fine. It just would have been nice to have been nice to have more time together."