BOULDER, Colo. -- The Men's U-20 Junior All-Americans are on track for a banner year in 2011 building up to the IRB Junior World Rugby Trophy (JWRT) this summer in Georgia. The Junior All-Americans (JAAs) depart for a pre-JWRT camp in London on May 14. They play their JWRT Pool A opponents Samoa, Russia, and Uruguay starting on May 24.

Head Coach Scott Lawrence is immersing his players in a high performance culture and helping them prepare for the jump to international level rugby and fitness.

At a camp in February, the JAAs got a chance to experience the ultimate high performance training environment at the Olympic Training Center in Chula Vista, Calif.

Lawrence worked with the United States Olympic Committee's High Performance Team and national team coaches Matt Sherman, Dave Williams, and Al Caravelli to create a strategy for benchmarking and setting goals for the players. Each player was evaluated on skill level, nutrition, strength and conditioning, and performance psychology. Based on their evaluation each player received a comprehensive scorecard and development plan so they can work towards their goals between JAA assemblies.

"The basis of our approach is to work with coaches to aid in the identification process, use camps early on to come up with a pre-season point of view and then align our development plans with the source coaches for an agreed execution timetable during the spring collegiate season. The days of holding a camp and making a selection decision based on a one week snapshot are over," said Lawrence.

Through film review, periodic testing and an interactive performance psychology blog, all parties can benchmark progress. The "360 degree feedback cycle" employed by Lawrence and his team involves the players, their home team coaches, and of course the JAA coaching staff.

“We develop and choose players based on an entire body of work along with form at the time of competition. To do this, we need to be engaged with the programs that foster the daily training environment for athletes. In return, they engage us in a way that is athlete-by-athlete based.”

“We want these players to perform confidently and at their very best in domestic competition so that we can make informed decisions. Once those decisions are made, we'll focus our energy into executing the JAA team game plan for the Junior World Rugby Trophy," said Lawrence.

Collaboration and coordination make the transition from All-American to Eagle more seamless and effectual. Case in point: Jake Fallon.

Caravelli was at the JAA camp, noticed Fallon and invited him to a camp with Team USA. Fallon is currently training with the Eagles as they prepare for the fifth leg of the HSBC Sevens World Series.

“Jake has done really well so far and settled in well,” said Caravelli. “The more reps he gets, the more confidence he gets.”

Fallon joins eight other former All-Americans/Under-20s players who are in the current player pool. Lawrence knows that elevating to the senior international realm doesn’t just happen, but it occurs when hard work and talent intersect.

“I’m pleased for Jake and happy that his dedication to the program and himself has put him in a position to compete for a spot with one of our senior [national] teams,” said Lawrence.

PLAYER SELECTION

Other (non-JAA) players will have the opportunity to be scouted during the high school, high school club and All-Star regular seasons and championships. Coaches can also recommend players to the Junior All-American staff by completing this form: http://tinyurl.com/AAplayerno

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The JWRT will mark the end of the 2011 JAA cycle and the 2012 cycle will begin immediately after the tournament.