This is Part 2 of Ed Hagerty's Q&A interview with USA 7s team Head Coach Al Caravelli.

RUGBY: When and where is the Pan Am 7s scheduled and what countries will attend?

Caravelli: The Pan Am Games are scheduled for October 29th and 30th in Guadalajara, Mexico.

Teams in our pool include: the US, Canada, Uruguay and Mexico.

The other pool consists of Argentina, Brazil, Chile and, I believe, Guyana.

These are the top four teams from the NACRA (North America - Caribbean Rugby Association) region and the top four teams from CONSUR (South American Rugby Organization)

RUGBY: How is the US preparing for the Pan Am Games?

Caravelli: The US will have a fitness/preparation 7s camp in San Diego, over a three day weekend in September, for players who aren't in the 15s World Cup. Then we'll assemble in October, a week before the Pan Am Games, for our final preparations.

One of the challenges we face is that our pool of 7s players contains a number of players also selected to the US 15s World Cup squad. We could lose anywhere from 7-12 of our 7s players to the 15s team.

When they get back from the 15s RWC, they will have to make the mental & physical transformation to 7s.

RUGBY: Are you aware of how your competition is preparing for the Pan Am Games?

Caravelli: I've heard that Argentina is headed to Europe for three weeks to play in two tournaments: one in Barcelona and the other in the South of France.

Chile is going to South Africa for three weeks.

Brazil will be spending a month in New Zealand.

Canada is hosting the international level Vancouver 7s, which will be attended by Mexico and Guyana.

RUGBY: What was the purpose of the Mid-Atlantic RFU 7s Combine (Wilmington, DE) and how did it go?

Caravelli: The Combine was an open player-tryout staged by the Mid-Atlantic RFU coaches. It attracted 100+ participants, ranging from 15 years old to mid-20s.

The Combine did some fundamental 3 on 2 and 2 on 1 work, had contact drills, scrums and lineouts, and swivel lines. It tested players as regards fitness and speed and then provided them with an assessment on where they needed to be.

MARFU's was one of the best run and in-depth Combines I've attended. The energy was high and the enthusiasm of the kids was excellent.

Chris Harvey and the organizers from the Wilmington and University of Delaware RFCs did an excellent job putting the MARFU Combine together.

RUGBY: Are there plans for similar 7s Combines?

Caravelli: To be clear, these Combines are all run by the Territorial Unions. I supply anything they might lack in terms of timing equipment or the yo-yo test. I'm fortunate to be invited by the TU coaches/administrators to take part.

I'll be attending the West RFU Combine in Denver, CO, on June 24th. I believe Southern California's Combine will be held on at UCLA on August 12th or 13th. I'll be glad to attend it if invited.

We're waiting to hear from the Pacific Coast.

RUGBY: How is your venture with crossover athletes going?

Caravelli: I got into a discussion at the MARFU Combine with a player's father, who asked why I had an infatuation with crossover athletes. I explained that **every** player at the

MARFU Combine, and in America for that matter, was a crossover athlete.

No American kid learns to play rugby before he first learns to play football, baseball, basketball, lacrosse or soccer. Nearly **every** US player is a crossover athlete, which is what makes us so good and well rounded.

It's the media that continues to be infatuated with "the crossover athlete", while nearly all American rugby players are crossovers. In the past, we've fast-tracked athletes who have achieved measures of success in other sports, but we now realize that they must put in the same amount of hard work as every other player on our National Team in order to achieve success.

This year we've placed promising crossover athletes on clubs around the country and had coaches teach them rugby's fundamental skills. Hopefully, we'll eventually see them playing for a team at the National Club 7s Championship. And, if they do well enough, they'll be invited to the National All Star 7s Championship.

Bringing crossover athletes into rugby is an ever-evolving process. The crossovers of the future will be athletes that played rugby from a young age through HS, represented the US in age-grade programs, and then received scholarships to play football or other traditional US sports.

Once they finish their school commitments, they come back to rugby. Two athletes who have followed this course are Nate Ebner and Thretton Palamo.

Then there are top DI athletes that choose rugby such as Zach Test, Kevin Swyirn, Paul Emerick, Mike Palefau and Todd Clever, to name just a few.

RUGBY: Do the crossover athletes get special consideration? Or, at the end of camp, are they selected based on how they stacked up against all the other candidates?

Caravelli: Prior to this year we did fast track promising athletes, with limited rugby experience, to camp without playing a domestic season. But we're no longer doing that.

Last year we experimented with Miles Craigwell, who played club 7s all summer. Craigwell played in both the National Club and National All Star 7s Championships and was subsequently invited to our National 7s Camp. He did well at the National 7s Camp and made the US National Sevens Team.

And that's the course we're going to follow. **No one** will receive preferential treatment.

Playing 7s during the domestic 7s season will show us the commitment of athletes who have played other sports in big stadiums, with numerous amenities and resources available to them. We'll see the commitment they have when they take that first step to becoming an Olympian by playing domestic club rugby

RUGBY: Miles Craigwell and Leonard Peters are crossover athlete success stories. Others crossovers have tried out for the 7s team and didn't make it, or played for awhile and moved on. How would you grade the crossover experiment so far?

Caravelli: Virtually every American rugby players is a crossover athlete.

As far as young men who have played high level collegiate football or been invited to an NFL Combine, the best formula is to have them play in our domestic competitions and work their way up through our pathways. Doing that will garner the most success.

RUGBY: How can we professionalize the US 7s team?

Caravelli: We believe the US National Sevens Team is a very professional organization in the way we run things and the way our athletes handle themselves. There's really no difference between the way our staff and players prepare than any other team in the world.

The only difference is that other teams are doing it on a full-time, funded basis and can afford to spend more time together. Our young men must balance work, school and family commitments.

If we can't go full-time professional, it's just going to take the US longer and require more hard work to move up the world 7s ladder.

A team such as Spain, which currently lies second on the European 7s circuit, is assembled six months of the year. Spain goes to eight tournaments a year on the European circuit & the SWS. Two months before the London 7s, they move into the Spanish Olympic Training Center and then play all summer on the circuit. National 7s Teams such as Russia, Brazil, China and Portugal are also moving up very quickly.

The US 7s Team can improve but it's going to take a lot more time; time that we may not have if we plan to qualify for the Olympics and get to the podium. A lot of people talk about 2016, but it's really 2014, because that's when the qualifiers start.

RUGBY: Are there differences in how the Olympic and Pan-Am Games handle player eligibility compared to the International Rugby Board (IRB)?

Caravelli: There is a difference. To represent a country at a multi-sport event like the Commonwealth, Pan-Am or Olympic Games, you **must** be a citizen of that country and possess a passport.

In order to play international rugby for a country, on the other hand, the IRB only requires that a player live in that country for three consecutive years.

RUGBY: How do you answer those who criticize the performance of a largely amateur US 7s Team, which faces fully professional sides from countries where rugby has been a national pastime for more than a century?

Caravelli: We never excuse bad performances due to not being a fulltime team.

The US has never won an international 7s tournament and last year was the first time we ever made it to a final - at the Adelaide Tournament. Only six teams made it to a World 7s Series final last year and only four teams won championships.

The World 7s Series has been going on for 12 years and New Zealand has been crowned overall champion in 9 of the 12 years. The other three overall winners were South Africa, Fiji, and Samoa. Players from those four countries are all full-time pros.

The US has the athletes, coaching and infrastructure that are necessary to eventually win an International 7s Series Tournament; but it’s going to take time. There’s a big difference in the

rugby played here domestically and the game that's played on the 7s Series. While the US might have one player with good speed, our opposition will have several guys running 10 flat 100 meters. Our opposing teams are comprised of top, pro athletes who have chosen rugby over other sports.

America loves a winner. Our largely amateur players are asked to work hard, prepare to the best of their ability, be professional and leave nothing to chance. If they do all those things 100% of the time, whether they win a tournament or not, they would have accomplished all that they set out to do.

Winning will be the by-product of that hard work.