

7s World Series Just the Next Step for Te'o

Written by Pat Clifton
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Last summer, having just graduated high school, Mike Te'o couldn't crack Belmont Shore's top 12. Fast forward a year and a few months, and he's broken into the Eagles squad for the first leg of the IRB 7s World Series in Gold Coast, Australia.

Making the squad is just the latest accomplishment in what's been an unbelievable hot streak for Te'o. In the last five months, he's won a DI 15s National Championship with Belmont Shore, the Junior World Trophy with the U20s, turned 19 and won a 7s Club National Championship with Belmont Shore.

"Of course I was shocked. A part of me knew I was going to get selected, and I was lucky enough to get selected," Te'o told RUGBYMag.com.

"The past couple months have been crazy. I would not have expected this a year ago, with all

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these tournaments. It's just been a blessing. I love it. I'm having fun doing it, and I just want to keep doing it."

Te'o moved to Chula Vista, Calif., without a contract, to train at the Olympic Training Center immediately following club 7s nationals. When the Eagles went to Ottawa for the Rugby World Cup 7s qualifier, Te'o went home to Los Angeles for a couple of weeks. He's been training in Chula Vista ever since, staying at the homes of contracted players.

Te'o will get most of his playing time at scrumhalf and flyhalf, but could fill in in the forwards as well.

Tai Enosa and Shalom Suniula are circuit veterans who also play the halfback positions, so it's unlikely Te'o will be asked to start right away. But, he says, he feels he can adapt to playing on the international level pretty quickly.

"Even though I don't have circuit experience, I think I have a good feel of how it is. I know it's not the exact feeling because I'm not there yet, but when I get there, hopefully, I'll just fit right in," Te'o said.

He's asked some of the team veterans how to cope with being a circuit debutant.

"They just told me to stay calm, 'You'll feel like a lot of pressure's on you. Just stay calm and play your game. Don't chase the game, let it come to you. No matter what, just stay positive and it'll come natural."

Te'o has been seemingly unflappable when it comes to facing firsts, avoiding those deer-in-the-headlights moments. He graduated from high school rugby to DI men's club and age-grade international 15s seamlessly, and from Belmont's second 7s side to the National Championship team's brightest star in short order. If there's anything that comes natural to Te'o, it's having things come natural.

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