BOULDER, Colo. – USA Rugby has launched a new initiative to help identify future Women's Eagles in both 15s and 7s. Tryouts will be held at regional Olympic Eagle Training Centers (OETC) in February to assist both squads in building rosters for the 2014 World Cup and 2016 Olympics, respectively.
An application process will be used to determine which rugby players and crossover athletes receive invitations to a regional tryout.

"The initiative was founded to really determine the best athletes we have here [in the US]," said Pete Steinberg, head coach of the 15s team. "So many athletes get overlooked because they don't have a way to present themselves to national team coaches."

Building on the 15s program's successful 2012 pilot of Eagle Training Centers, the OETC weekends have been established as a 2013 entry point for athletes looking to join the 15s and 7s national teams.

"While the [7s] World Cup is this year, we are already looking for athletes that are potential players for the 2016 and 2020 Olympics," said Ric Suggitt, 7s head coach.

Steinberg also had a similar sentiment with the 15s World Cup right around the corner as well, in saying the OETCs are "a chance for players to force their way into the player pool."

In order to apply, athletes need to complete the online application, which includes inputting physical assessment data, a rugby and athletic performance history, and coach's recommendation (if applicable). After all application data has been reviewed invitations will be extended to the distinguished athletes.

The application can be filled out through the Become an Eagle tab on both the Women's Eagles and Women's Eagles Sevens pages on the USA Rugby website.

Once at the OETC, the invited athletes will train alongside current Eagle pool players in various activities and assessments. Further OETC camp invitations will be made on a performance basis during the initial tryout weekend. Outstanding performance this spring at the OETCs could lead to outstanding candidates being invited to a 7s Camp in May or an invitation to the 15s team's Top 60 competition held in May.

Locations for OETC camps include Amherst (MA), State College (PA), Atlanta (GA), Chicago (IL), Denver (CO), Palo Alto (CA), and San Diego (CA).

The OETC camp will be held at all regional locations at the end of February (actual dates for each OETC to be announced). Subsequent OETC camps have been tentatively scheduled for March and April. The final two camps will be only for athletes selected by the coaching staff.

The development focus points for the OETC camps will include strength and conditioning

programs, skill development, as well as developing a high performance lifestyle including nutritional, mental, and life skills

In addition to the Top 60 competition in May, the Women's Eagles 15s team is slated to host France on its international tour as well as compete in the Nations Cup during the summer months. Steinberg mentioned that those selected out of the top 60 "will be the core of the squad that will prepare for the World Cup."

The 7s program will also be competing during the summer months, traveling to Russia for the World Cup in June. A major focus for the future however remains with the 2016 Olympics in Brazil. Players that show well in at the OETC's this spring can be invited to 7s camps in September, October and November.

"We are always looking for the next generation. The Olympic Eagle Training Centers are the first step for an athlete that wants to represent Team USA in the Olympics," said Suggitt.

15s Upcoming Events
Top 60 Elite Performance Series - May 18-26
3 Test Matches vs France - June (Dates TBA)
Nations Cup - July 27- August 11th

7s Olympic Development Program
Location: Chula Vista
NASC - August 12-18
Elite Pathway Camp - September 12-15
Olympic Dare to Dream Camp - October 07-12
Elite Pathway Camp - October 17-25
Elite Pathway Camp - November 07-10