

## Griffin Reflects on USA 7s' Achievements

Written by Jackie Finlan  
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Kelly Griffin is typically an unsung hero. USA Women 7s coach Ric Suggitt singled out the forward during the Dubai tournament, championing her role as a ground-and-pounder. But Griffin came to the 7s Eagles as a star center for the Berkeley All Blues, and used the Houston 7s to remind everyone that yes, she can make the hard yards, but she can dance in the open field as well.



Throughout the two-day tournament, Griffin could be found on the line-breaker's hip, getting that tight pass as the defense closed in. And when she got into open field, the opposition underestimated her ability to step around them. Several times, defenses assumed the 5'4" hooker would spin the ball out to a more likely finisher like Vanesha McGee or Lauren Doyle, and that's when she'd cut back inside and eat up green on her own.

"It seemed to be my role this weekend," Griffin said of her support play. "I try to play whatever role the team needs. My personal goal this weekend was to chase everything – both offensively and defensively. So I think that showed in following my teammates when they got those breaks."

With one black eye and blood on the other, Griffin displayed muted happiness after the loss to England in the final. Once the disappointment of finishing second subsided, she and the team could really relish the progress they made in the last two months.

"Our ultimate goal was to win the final," Griffin stated. "We made it to the final, but it didn't turn out how we wanted. But we worked really hard and did a lot of good things. So, I think overall we can be proud."

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Griffin indicated that trust and communication were two areas of focus, and she was pleased with how the team responded.

“We improved on that a lot, especially with having the stadium and the noise,” Griffin said of the hometown crowd inside BBVA Compass Stadium. “We really had to make ourselves heard and work to hear our teammates.”

Griffin’s been on several international tours, but the noise inside the stadium was a different brand.

“I could hear people yelling at me, and I was like, ‘They’re yelling my name,’” Griffin said. “But you have to block that out and just focus on your teammates and listen for them because that’s what’s important.”

Suggitt always praises his team for their positivity and never-say-die attitude – and that’s important – but so is the execution of skills. While Griffin and team will reflect positively on their communication and heart, they know they have some drilling ahead of them.

“Finals are tiring, but Ric runs us really hard, so I don’t think it was the fitness that lost us that game,” Griffin said. “It was the little errors, the not quite playing together.”

But even with that realization, it’s difficult to not judge the USA through rose-colored glasses. Everyone – save the players themselves – were surprised to see them perform so well, and to entertain the crowd to boot.

“This feels much better than Dubai, even though we won our last game in Dubai,” Griffin compared then and now. “However, in Dubai, they would score first, we’d get down by a couple of tries, and we weren’t able to fight back. But here we proved that even if we get scored on first, we have the courage and the fitness to fight back.”

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The Eagles finished 5-1, defeating big timers like Australia, Russia, Canada and South Africa (and Argentina) along the way. The Houston 7s was a significant performance for the Eagles, a coming-out party for Griffin, and a reaffirming show for fans.