

Arkansas State Joins South Independent

Written by Pat Clifton
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The South Independent Conference has bolstered its credibility as a legitimate competition with the addition of Arkansas State. The Red Wolves are still going to compete in the College Premier Division, but will enter their developmental side in the South Independent.

ASU coach Matt Huckaby said it was important to get into a DI conference for a few reasons.

“One for sevens, two for a developmental league. We’ve got 50 kids now and we need a league to develop players and keep moving, and if we’re going to have something called a Premier Division, it’s important for those premier teams to have another meaningful competition to develop all their players that aren’t premier level yet,” he said.

“If it was just DI across the board, then we’d go back to playing A games and B games, and that’s all fine and good, because we can get A games and B games...Then, if the CPD crashes, if they weren’t going to let us in the SEC, which financially makes more sense for us, and logistically, we had to have a way to the DI championship.”

The South Independence Conference is expected to be one of the 12 qualifying tournaments for the inaugural 7s national championship, which is added incentive for the Red Wolves.

Arkansas State had been weighing its options for well over a month, and wanted to exhaust all possibility of entering the Southeastern Collegiate Rugby Conference before entering the South Independent.

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"They would not let us in the SEC, although we've traditionally competed with all those teams for 13 or 14 years, whether it was DII playing Auburn and Alabama up through DI Tennessee and Florida. They formed the SEC league and they're making it SEC exclusive, because of their marketability," lamented Huckaby, who also expressed gratitude for the South Independent for including the Red Wolves.

"We are very grateful that the Independent Conference has given us a home, and are looking forward to helping develop the league.

"It was kind of scary. We were getting resistance to getting into these DI conference, and at the same time the CPD is going, and I've got a lot of faith in it, and I think the powers that be, we're going to make this work. But if it happened to fail, we would kind of work ourself out of some games."

The South Independent has also confirmed the inclusion of Florida Atlantic, a team which was not listed in USA Rugby's press release announcing the certification of several conferences, including the South Independent. The conference will be split into North and South divisions, with the champion of each meeting in the conference championship match.

North

Middle Tennessee State
Arkansas State
Kennesaw State
Life
Georgia Southern

South

Florida State
Central Florida
South Florida
Florida International
Florida Atlantic