

## Denver, Glendale Open Elite Cup

Written by Pat Clifton

Wednesday, 13 March 2013 14:22

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The Elite Cup officially kicks off Saturday when the Denver Barbarians host the Glendale Raptors at Shea Stadium in Highlands Ranch, Colo.

This will be the third of four meetings between Glendale and Denver this competitive cycle. The Barbos beat the Raptors at the Aspen Ruggerfest in September and at Infinity Park in October.

The latter match was a DI league contest. With both sides at full strength, the Barbos won 29-26 on a late penalty from Maximo DeAchaval.

This rivalry is probably the fiercest in American club rugby. Lots of people involved in different capacities with these clubs don't like their counterparts, and several players have switched their allegiances going both ways, and then back again.

Barbo fullback/flyhalf Taylor Howden is a former Raptor. Center Christian Sarmiento was with

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Glendale, then went to the Barbos and is now back with Glendale. Those are just two examples, and there are several more.

“Obviously, there’s a personal rivalry amongst some of the players, but I just look at it as another game,” said Glendale head coach Andre Snyman. “I’m trying to manage the team to not get involved emotionally on a personal level in the game.”

The Raptors have bolstered their roster since the fall, adding several talented players, like former Notre Dame running back and Aspen 7s player James Aldridge, former 7s All American and Sacramento Lion Brett Willis, former Eagle (and Barbos) scrumhalf Dave Williams, former Palmer flyhalf Chad London and former BYU and All American scrumhalf Shaun Davies. Aldridge and Willis have moved to Glendale to participate in the Olympic Development Program.

“The new players have slotted in quite nicely. The club has accepted them. They definitely make a difference, and it’s good to have other players who had injuries back again,” said Glendale coach Andrew Snyman.

“I’ve got some tough decisions to make. There’s quite a lot of depth in certain positions, and unfortunately I can only pick 23 guys. It’s going to be a tough decision for me to make towards the end of the week.”

Back from injury or duty elsewhere are guys like wing and fullback Iniki Fa’amausili, who had been training with Tiger Rugby at the Columbus ODP, lock and No. 8 Casey Rock, who had spent some time playing overseas, and back-rower Mike Kenyon, who is coming off a nasty leg injury.

“Casey Rock is back. He’s healthy. Mike Kenyon is back. He’s healthy. His fitness is not where I would have liked it to be, but he’s definitely on the recovery road. He’s played three games in the preseason, he started all three games,” said Snyman.

“Guys like James Aldridge, Brett Willis, they’re more specialized 7s players, but they transition

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pretty good into 15s as well, and at the end of the day, I'm in a very fortunate position to have all these players."

Snyman is perhaps most fortunate to have Davies. He gives the Raptors a legitimate Eagle prospect at No. 9, a position where Glendale has had inconsistency the last couple of years. Davies has been growing his relationship with flyhalf Ata Malifa early this spring.

"It looks like the combination is getting stronger and stronger at each training and each game. Obviously, Shaunie is still new to the system. I've coached Ata for two years now so he knows my style of rugby, what I'd like to achieve," said Snyman.

"Shaunie is still new, so he makes one or two errors every now and again, but he's a good enough player and has the skills to adapt quickly. It's beneficial to have on our team. He brings a different dimension."

## ELITE CUP SCHEDULE

### March 16

Glendale @ Denver

### March 23

NYAC

@ Old Blue

SFGG

@

OPSB

### March 30

Boston

@

Life

### April 6

NYAC

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@	Boston	
Old Blue	@	Life
OPSB	@	Glendale
SFGG	@	Denver
<b>April 13</b>		
Glendale	@	SFGG
Denver	@	OPSB
<b>April 20</b>		
Life	@	NYAC
Boston	@	Old Blue
<b>May 11</b>		
East 2	@	East 1
West 2	@	West 1
<b>May 25</b>		
East Champ	vs	West Champ