Written by Pat Clifton
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When the Boston Irish Wolfhounds step on the pitch at Infinity Park Saturday to face the host Glendale Raptors in the DI men's club semifinal, they'll be staring at a contrasting bunch.

The Wolfhounds are in their first year back in DI after spending four seasons in the Super League. Glendale is still in DI after being publicly denied by the Super League. The Wolfhounds finished the regular season second in their league. Glendale eviscerated its. The Wolfhounds are coached by an expat, and the Raptors by an old football coach. But the biggest difference between the clubs may be their styles of play.

"They basically are what I would consider an English-style rugby team, with people running off the A-channel, big human beings," said Glendale coach Mark Bullock.

"Big, big backs running in the midfield channel. Big forwards running off the A-channel, one off the rucks. Their scrum is really solid, actually I consider it quite strong, and they like to run blindside off of a scrum.

"We are going to try to do what we think we're pretty good at, at least are fairly efficient at, and that's moving the ball wide and moving it into space. We would prefer to keep the ball wide and out into space, and ideally to make their players have to run and move a little bit more."

According to Wolfhounds coach Dave Gonzales, their straight-forward style of play is dictated by necessity, not by an inability to swing the ball from sideline to sideline.

"You've got to remember that New England can often resemble Western European conditions,

and also the players and coaches can often have that historical background over here. Remember, we haven't played rugby in the sun all year…so when you're playing on boggy fields in wind and rain, it can dictate what you're going to do and who survives and who does well," said Gonzales.

"No rugby player likes wind and rain. We want to move the ball around. We want to play that style of rugby, and so the conditions can stop and hinder that, but we can play open rugby, I hope, as well as the next team. We just need the conditions to do so."

The Raptors played a team full of, as Bullock puts it, "large human beings" in the Round of 16 in Chula Vista, Calif. -- Provo. The Raptors lowed down the Steeler attack by getting into their large-bodied runners before they could work up a head of steam, and the game plan for Boston is the same.

"I would say that Provo was probably good preparation for us for the type of style Boston is likely to play," said Bullock, "so I would say absolutely, how we played against Provo would be how we would play defensively against Boston."

Adding to Glendale's attack on the perimeter Saturday will be wing Dewon Reed, who was unavailable for travel to Chula Vista. Reed's lateral quickness and speed makes him a dangerous player in space.

Gonzales will be coaching in his second national semifinal in a month and third national playoff in the past year Saturday. Gonzales coached Harvard to a DI college Final Four in May and Mystic River to the Club 7s National Championships during the summer.

"It's been a crazy month. Every month is crazy, but this one's had a lot of planes, trains and automobiles," said the busy coach.

"I think that the 'Hounds are in a better position to perform at this level than Harvard was, absolutely (the Crimson lost 62-21 to eventual champs Davenport). There's going to be more parity in terms of player access, horsepower, training time and those types of variables, so we're going into this on more of a level playing field."

Boston and Glendale play Saturday inside the Infinity Park stadium at 6:30pm local time. As of yet, USA Rugby has not announced if they're going to webcast the match. For live updates, you can follow Pat_Clifton on Twitter.