

MacDonald Happy to Bolster Impressive O-Club Front Row

Written by Pat Clifton
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On paper, no team in the United States has a better front row than Olympic Club. Will Johnson, Harvard gridiron football player turned O-Club, Oxford University, London Irish, Rosslyn Park and Eagle prop, is back with the club with which his rugby career started.



St. Mary's All American hooker Matt Crawford has matriculated to O-Club, too, following in the footsteps of numerous All Americans before him.

And the most-capped Eagle of all time, Mike MacDonald, is back in the Bay Area coaching at Cal...and playing for O-Club.

“Coming back from the shoulder stuff, I didn’t have much of an opportunity to get back overseas, and this [coaching] opportunity came up, and I’m taking it with both hands,” Macdonald told RUGBYMag.com, adding that he is also looking forward to “being able to work with coach [Jack] Clark and coach [Tom] Billups and have their expertise and get back and fit and ready for the summer.”

After an All American career at Cal and prior to playing professionally overseas, MacDonald played for San Francisco Golden Gate, O-Club’s cross-town rival.

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“The two teams have completely changed from when I was playing for Golden Gate,” said MacDonald. “Throughout the years I’ve stayed in touch with some of the Cal players and they’ve been playing at O-Club, and just over the years I’ve gotten to know the O-Club guys. I don’t know if I’ll have this opportunity again to play with O-Club in the capacity that I am, so I thought it would be enjoyable and I’d get some good rugby out of it.”

SFGG has its fair share of Cal alums, too, like a longtime teammate of MacDonald – Chris Biller.

“There’s been some elbow pokes back and forth between us,” said MacDonald of Biller, “but he has a great track record with Golden Gate and has played with them since his time from Cal and has really stayed with what is comfortable for him. And they’ve gotten off to a great so far so I wish them the best of luck.”

Olympic Club starts the Northern California season in an 0-2 hole after forfeiting two games already due to some scheduling conflicts. But with an All American front row and a smattering of All Americans elsewhere in the lineup (Keegan Englebrecht at flyhalf, Dustin Muhn at wing, etc.) MacDonald seems confident his new club can have a prosperous season.

“It’s a relatively young team, an inexperienced squad, but there’s some good players there, so I think our first goal is to just win,” he said. “We have our first competition against St. Mary’s next weekend and that’s going to be a starting marker for us, and we’re just going to have to see where we are from that point on. We’re in this competition to not just go out and compete but to go out there and win.”