Written by Alex Goff
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Club rugby in Utah has had a confused history of late. With various DI or Super League clubs coming and going, it's easy to assume that all clubs from that state are unreliable.

But the Provo Steelers Rugby Club are here to remind you that they are still here, and still playing rugby.

"Every competition we've been in, whether we've had to travel to Northern California, or play in Utah, or play in Colorado, we've shown up and played," said captain and lock forward Timote Halasima.

Halasima, 28, has been playing rugby for 13 years, and went straight from high school to Utah Valley University to Provo. He has seen it all. When Utah had a four-team league where they almost had to beg some of the clubs to play, Provo won the league and won the crossover playoff games with Southern California teams. Now, with the Steelers in the West-North league with four teams from Colorado as well as the Kansas City Blues, he sees a new chapter for the club.

That chapter started with a tie against Glendale and a win over the Denver Barbarians in the fall. New coach Suliasi LeFai expects even more from them in the spring. An old Steelers player originally from Tonga, LeFai is bringing in new ideas and a new energy.

“We’re excited,” said Halasima. “We like it a lot. The coach is bringing in some new things. Jason Garcia is training our team and we’ve been working really hard with him. It’s been really nice having him around. Playing in Colorado – we like that. The competition level is higher for us. We always met these guys in the Round of 16 and it’s always nice to play some good teams like that.”

Halasima said while his club might be characterized as one that doesn’t travel well, he says travel has not been a problem.

“This club has been around since 1979,” he said. “We sit down with the players and say this is where we are going this year. This is what we need. And we do it. The community helps us out big-time.”

And the club helps out the community. Players help build homes for the handicapped, retrofitting them, putting up sheetrock. The work they do in the community comes back in the form of assistance in their travel expenses.

“We’re really glad to have a proper schedule,” Halasima said. “We’ve always traveled and always played wherever we’ve been asked to play. With this dependable league, we’re excited about it.”

Things are looking up for Provo also in their recruiting. Known for a long time as a somewhat older group of players who rattle teeth and pummel defenses, they have gone somewhat younger and faster this year.

“The kids coming out of high school and playing with us are exciting athletes," said Halasima. “They have a lot of speed and agility, and with the veterans still here, it’s a good combination.”

Provo sits 1-0-1 so far in the league, and will re-awaken their league season March 9 when they host the Kansas City Blues and then play at Denver Highlanders and Boulder. They will also play a friendly against the Utah Islanders, a new Salt Lake City club put into DII but with DI aspirations.

Provo has a favorable schedule, playing their three toughest opponents in Utah and being on the road for the other two. While the Highlanders are another club on the rise, it's quite possible Provo could finish the season 4-0-1.

That is no surprise to the Steelers. They know they have a talented team. And with the hard work they have been doing during the winter break, they are eager to prove it.