

Glendale DII's Don't Want to Take Back Seat

Written by Cody Secker
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Located in the rugby capital of America, the Glendale Raptors always seem to be around the national championship picture. With DI being the most consistent, the DII squad has been forced to take a back seat, but this year something seems to be brewing with changes to the program.

Former DII coach John McGuire, while still involved with the club, has moved elsewhere and takes over for Vail RFC this upcoming summer. Last year's backline coach and former Springbok Andre Snyman takes over on both levels for the Raptors and already has his team dialed in.

"I think the team and coaching staff has really lived up to the expectations," Snyman told RUGBYMag.com. "We're all working together to improve ourselves and the rugby program. There are a lot of new faces and with a new coaching staff; I think the players are doing really well with all the new changes."

Very true, especially for a squad that is now starting to develop confidence in themselves, the coaches and the system that's been implemented. The Raptors are tops in the DII West-North Division with a 3-0 record while having a good share of blowouts (69-3 over Queen City) and close games (31-24 over Colorado Springs; 29-22 over Park City).

"It takes a while for a team to settle down into a groove and gets to know each other, we expected close games, as we are all adapting and adjusting to the programs changes," Snyman mentioned. "I do think the players really made a difference and played well by pulling it together and play to the team's structures and game plans."

Players like Greg Mohrman (flyhalf), Mike Doran (No. 8) and Ben Cappa (wing, fullback) who are back from last year's squad who made the playoffs last year. Snyman also mentioned: James Fouche (flyhalf), Tomos Preece(fullback), Danny O'Donnell (center), Colin Douthit (lock), Hayden Teehan (hooker), Jesus Flores (hooker, flank) and Dallas Kempton (loose forward), guys who have come in and taken to the systems fluidly and been able to contribute immediately.

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And when asked the question of how he expects his team to maintain success and whether they are playoff-ready, Snyman answered confidently: "Hard work and commitment at training is part of the success and hopefully the players have bought into my coaching ways and philosophy.

"This team made the playoffs last year and I'm confident that they can do it again," he added. "It's one of the team's goals and we want to be part of the playoffs. I also believe that we have the depth in the squad to achieve these goals."

Next for Glendale is this weekend on the road against Northern Colorado (2-0) who is one of the teams that could threaten the Raptors for a first-place bid.