

DIII East Pool 1 Keeping Things Simple

Written by RUGBYMag Staff
Thursday, 19 May 2011 15:31

The Men's clubs in DIII East Pool 1 aren't overanalyzing the competition in preparation for the Round of 16 coming up this weekend. Fort Bragg (N.C.), Virginia, Syracuse and the Cincinnati Kelts are trying to keep things simple in their preparation and focusing on their own strengths instead of their opponents'.



Captain Augie Dominguez looks to spread the ball against Gainesville. (Photo courtesy of Cecil Wolbe)

“Our approach this year has been not to worry about the other teams’ strengths and weaknesses, but to focus on our game and doing the basics well,” Ft. Bragg Captain Agustin Dominguez said. “We feel that if we concentrate on what we need to do as opposed to trying to change tactics depending on the team we play, that we would be better off and be able to get more continuity.”

Bragg is the fifth seed in the East and will face Virginia in the first round. The North Carolina club went undefeated in the spring, beating Gainesville and Columbus/Benning in the USA Rugby South Finals.

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The team includes some military personnel and as a result the team's starting XV is different almost every week and establishing continuity can be difficult, according to Dominguez. But it does have its benefits. "Because of the demands of the military, we know that we are typically in better condition than most teams and can wear them down if we are patient," he said.

"This is why we focus on the basics and try to set a mindset where we play hard and are doing the simple things right," Dominguez said. "Keeping things simple allows us to have some sort of continuity in our game despite have a different starting lineup every game. The constant state of controlled aggression will wear the other team down, causing them to make more mistakes that we can capitalize on as the game goes on."

Virginia only lost one game in the regular season and that was to DI Norfolk Blues. In the regional playoffs, the team took down Blacksburg in the Mid-Atlantic semifinals but fell to Old Gaelic (Pa.), 26-24. The loss in the final was still enough to earn the Mid-Atlantic second seed and fourth overall.

Last year, Virginia made it to the semifinals of the national tournament, losing to Old Mission Beach Athletic Club (Calif.) by 17 points.

Dominguez believes that the athleticism on his team will be the difference between the two sides. "Where we can really make a difference is in the loose when we are creating quick recycles and getting our players into space," he added.

In the other game in the pool, Syracuse, who are ranked eighth, have to compete against first-seeded Cincinnati Kelts. But team President Dan Sanderson stated that his side won't be intimidated. "I'm sure they are all very talented having made it this far, and expecting stiff opposition," he said. "That being said we are not afraid of any opponent and we have been focusing our attention on our own preparation."

Syracuse has practiced in the rain a lot the past few months and so if the conditions on Saturday call for it they will be ready.

According to Sanderson, the Chargers' defense will impact the game most. "Defense wins championships and that has been the goal for 25-plus years of Syracuse Charger Rugby. We aim to achieve that in 2011," he added.

The Kelts won the Midwest championships and are ranked first overall in DIII East. They'll look to take that momentum into the Round of 16 and hope to capitalize on the high ranking.

Syracuse plays Cincinnati first at 10 a.m., followed by Bragg vs. Virginia at 11:45 in Manassas Park, Va. on Saturday. The winners will go on to play in the Elite Eight on Sunday.