The West High School and U19 Championships were hosted in Texas, and four of the eight participants were Texas teams, but the hardware was swept by a pair of Kansas City teams, with St. Thomas Aquinas and the Kansas City Junior Blues winning the high school and U19 championships, respectively, in Austin Sunday.

The Saints and Jr. Blues are local rivals. They played three times this season, with Aquinas taking two and the Jr. Blues taking the other. They both fall under the umbrella of the Kansas City Blues, they're both coached by former Blues and they're both financially supported, in part, by the Blues. So last weekend, when they weren't competing against each other, they were helping each other.

"We stayed at the same hotel down at West, and they needed a cooler or they needed some tape, or they needed water, we definitely helped out, and they had extra stuff they passed on to us," said Aquinas coach and former Eagle Tim Kluempers. "Whatever it took for each team to make sure they had what they needed for success.

"Then at night, all the parents were bonding at the hotel bar. We watched the Leinster/Toulose semifinal, had all the parents hanging out, talking, and the best part about it was getting the parents to understand the camaraderie of rugby -- we beat the hell out of the each other on the field, but off the field the game's over and ultimately, all of these guys hopefully they'll come back and play for the Blues."

The Jr. Blues are an entrenched youth club with a history of making appearances at Nationals, but Aquinas, a single school, is in just its fifth year of existence, and reaching new heights like qualifying for its first, and possibly its last, National competition.

"We've been ranked fourth, and we put high expectations on ourselves, and we knew going in it was going to be to a battle, and this has always been our goal from day one," Kluempers said.

Aquinas also scored its first 15s All-American this season -- Cody Powell, and a 7s All-American

-- Brendan Nachbar. Kluempers hopes both have gained enough experience to instill confidence in and impart wisdom on their teammates.

“In Kansas City we do a couple switches and crashes and there’s not a lot of kicking, whereas when we get to Nationals, there’s going to be a lot of tactical kicking and things we’re not used to, and it’s helpful for not only us as coaches to relay that information, but also for their peers to help them understand what’s going on,” he said.

“And then take away the wow factor: let them know teams at Nationals put their britches on like we do. These guys have national team players, well you know what, we have national team players. They’re all just hard-working rugby guys. They’re not Superman.”

Up first for Aquinas at Nationals? Most likely defending champs Xavier.