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Heartland 7s, hosted by the Kansas City Blues in Kansas City, Mo. Saturday, is the second of three West qualifying tournaments. First-place Glendale will not be in attendance, so it's possible they'll slip in the standings over the weekend. Likewise, the defending Heartland 7s champion Chicago Lions will be playing in Milwaukee in Lakefront 7s, so a new champ will be crowned.

Aspen, coached by Andy Katoa, is making its debut in the summer series. They enter the contest as the sixth seed, having not attended the Denver tournament. However, they project to finish higher. James Aldridge, a former Notre Dame running back and one of 7s National Team coach Al Caravelli's crossover projects, is expected to boot up for Aspen, along with several other talented young recruits.

Unfortunately for the Gentlemen, they find themselves in a very difficult pool. They're joined by Omaha, the host Blues and five-time defending West champs, the Denver Barbarians. The Barbos finished third in Dallas and the Blues second.

The Blues are captained by Kenny Scott, a speedy winger from Kansas State. When Scott catches the ball in space, he's not an easy tackle and often ends his long-striding runs in the try zone. The Blues are also bolstered by Joe D'Agostino (Scott's teammate at K-State) and David McDonough, a shifty midfielder from Truman State.

Denver, like Aspen, won't be joined by some of the names you've perhaps become accustomed to seeing on their roster in recent years, but Maximo DeAchaval and Ben Haapapuro are still in the fold and playing well. What the Barbos lack in speed and explosiveness they make up for in skill, chemistry and experience.

The Omaha G.O.A.T.S are the unknown of this pool. They've had a successful DII 15s team the past couple of seasons, reaching the Elite Eight in 2010, but haven't fielded a 7s qualification side in that time. Nearby colleges, Nebraska and Creighton, play solid 7s, so they have a good player base from which to draw.

Pool B is headlined by the Dallas Harlequins, who finished second in the first qualifier, the Woodlands Exiles, Kansas City Rogues and St. Louis Ramblers. The Ramblers are making their debut on the 7s circuit this summer, so they too are unknowns.

The Woodlands Exiles finished third in their pool in Dallas, just missing the chance to point. They have the talent to do much better in Kansas City, especially given their draw for pool play.

The Rogues went a disappointing 0-3 in Dallas, but were within a try at halftime against both Glendale and the Barbos. They will field a stronger lineup in Kansas City, which will be headlined by former Jamaican international Donald Walter and former FCS safety Theodore Hughes, both of whom were absent in Dallas. The Rogues also have a golden chance to point this weekend, largely because of their pool draw.

Dallas is the hands-down favorite to win Pool B. They looked rusty and in need of cohesion in their own tournament, but it was obvious they possess the talent and skill to improve in a hurry. Zac Mizell conducts the orchestra on offense, and Hunter Leland and Gonzalo Ruiz are two of the main benefactors.

If the Harlequins finish second or better in Kansas City, they'll be at least tied for first-place in the West. Same goes for the Barbos, if they win it all. The West gets three bids to Nationals, and if anyone besides Glendale, Denver and Dallas wants one of them, they'll need to do well Saturday.

Current West standings
Glendale Raptors: 6
Dallas Harlequins: 4
Denver Barbarians: 2
Kansas City Blues: 1