Written by Pat Clifton
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Who represents the West at the Club 7s National Championships Aug. 6-7 in San Francisco will be decided Saturday on the perimeter of Dick's Sporting Goods Park in Denver, Colo.

Four teams enter the qualifier bracket with a legitimate shot at punching their ticket to San Francisco, but the West has just three bids to Nationals.

The Dallas Harlequins, Denver Barbarians, Glendale Raptors and Woodlands Exiles are all tied atop the West leader board with six qualification points a piece.

At time of print, the pools and seeds for Denver had not been released, but an 8-team field of two pools is expected, with two of the first-place teams in each pool. If a first-place team advances to the finals, they'll have sealed their bid to Nationals.

Aspen and the Kansas City Blues have an outside chance at reaching Nationals, but would need to win the tournament and have at least two of the teams tied for first not make the semifinals.

Who are the favorites to reach the semifinal round? The Woodlands Exiles looked really good in the Kansas City qualifier July 9, adding a former NFL running back (Yamar Washington) and a pair of Canadian National 7s players (captain Phil Mack and John Moonlight) to the squad they had in Dallas.

The Exiles have made a couple other additions since, and will again be with Mack and Moonlight. The most noteworthy of those additions is Mark Aylor, a regular on the Life University Super League side and a former 15s Eagle with 11 caps.

“Look for a more dynamic run from the Exiles, as Mark allows for the team to be more explosive,” the Exiles’ Dr. David Pope said.

The Glendale Raptors went undefeated in the first qualifier in Dallas, banking their all-important six points. They followed that up with an undefeated weekend in San Diego July 9, beating Belmont Shore and OMBAC, among others.

The Raptors are led on the field by flyhalf Ata Malifa, who will be looking to continue his statement-making couple of months. What’s his statement? Perhaps that he should have been receiving more attention from the Eagles coaching staff.

Shae Tamati is a dynamic forward for the Raptors, as is Spencer Scott. Both love to ruck and tackle, and they excel in those areas. Scott was injured in Dallas and played sparingly. Back at full strength, he makes Glendale even stronger close to home. Of course, Dewon Reed has to be mentioned when talking about Glendale. He won the Man of the Match in the Dallas final, dotting down three tries. He was also the MVP of the 15s DI National Championship final. Few, if any, have been in better form than Reed the last two months.

The Denver Barbarians should have won in Kansas City. They fell to the Exiles in a controversial finish, and the argument can be made that a poorly marked field cost them the title and what would be the lead in the West standings. Therefore, the Barbos are a real threat to win in Denver and advance to yet another National Championship.

The Quins are a young team with not a lot of experience playing together, but they are exceptionally talented. Flyhalf Zac Mizell is their engine, and center Hunter Leland and prop Gonzalo Ruiz are big-time playmakers. With two solid performances under their belt, they have the talent to explode in Denver.

Barring an upset, Aspen is playing the spoiler Saturday. They too have a lot of talent, headlined by the waterbug-esque Peceli Rinakama. This is a new-look Gentlemen squad, with several new players, and their lack of cohesion was obvious in Kansas City. Nonetheless, they have the capability of upsetting anyone in Denver.

You can follow Pat Clifton on Twitter at pat_clifton. He will be tweeting live from Dick’s Sporting Goods Park via that account or rugby_magazine.