

## Top Teams at California 7s This Weekend

Written by Alex Goff

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The final qualifying spot for the 2012 USA Rugby 7s Collegiate National Championships will be decided at Cal Poly State University this Sunday, with some of the best 7s college teams in California, and in fact the country, including Cal Poly, St Mary's College, San Diego State and UC Davis.

The teams are battling for a shot at a place in the National Championships at Texas A&M in December.



So far nine teams have qualified automatically through qualification tournaments in their region. They include; Davenport, Lindenwood, Life, Northeastern, Texas A&M, Texas, Central Washington and Cal.

On top of automatic qualification for the Championships, there will be 13 at-large bids on offer, and it's a good bet that one other team from the California Collegiate 7s will contribute at least one of those teams.

The top teams that will face off this weekend have seen plenty of each other so far this fall. This weekend's tournament will see the end of the busiest Collegiate 7s season in Californian Rugby history, with tournaments being held at St Mary's College, Cal Poly, Stanford and Santa

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Barbara. Both St Mary's and San Diego State have won a tournament this season, while Cal Poly has played in three Championship finals, cruelly losing in each one.

"We've seen all these teams over the past couple of months at various tournaments, so we know we need six solid games to take out the qualifier" said Cal Poly 7s captain Landis Nasser. "With ten top tier, very experienced teams, it's going to be a great weekend of Rugby."

St. Mary's promises to bring an imposing team, one that is largely unchanged from the one that finished with just one loss at last season's national championships.

"We are looking good for the weekend and we have some of our leaders all back healthy," said St. Mary's 7s Coach Tony Samaniego.

That lists includes Augie Heath, Mike Haley, Kelly Harris and Joey Reavy. The Gaels bring a physical presence to a squad that is known for speed and elusiveness. There's a reason for that.

"It should be a tough weekend of rugby," warned Samaniego. "If we all play like we have in the past three tournaments we should do well."

Meanwhile San Diego State has blossomed under coach Matt Hawkins.

"The boys are looking focused," said captain Mike Shea. "Hawkins has been running us through some tough practices and it's paid off. We've put a lot of effort and emphasis on our defensive play the last couple of weeks. Our defense is what we take pride in and it's something we want to improve upon."

The Qualifier will kick off with pool matches starting at 1pm on Saturday and continuing under lights until 7pm. On Sunday the playoff stages will begin at 9am with the final being played at approximately 2:30pm.

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