

New Proving Ground At Stanford For Rugby Stalwart Hannah Stolba

by Marco Cummings

Writer for and on behalf of the City of Glendale

Having proven herself as a consummate pro and reliable fly-half for both the *Glendale Raptors* and *USA Eagles*, Hannah Stolba is taking on new challenges in rugby — this time as a coach.

Stolba recently joined *Stanford University* as an assistant coach for the men's and women's rugby teams in the winter and spring quarters.

"Stanford was a pretty easy decision for me," said Stolba. "I had actually applied for the full-time position last year but serendipitously didn't get it and I say that because it fits my lifestyle a little better to be able to get out there for 4 or 5 months but not have to move completely. I had gotten to spend a few weeks out there last spring guest coaching and I loved the program."

At Stanford, Stolba has been reunited with former Raptors and USA coach Josh Sutcliffe, who now serves as current head coach of the Cardinal — one of the oldest and most storied collegiate rugby programs in the United States.

"I want to be a part of a program where I get to coach in a true club structure so I work with both the men and the women," Stolba said. "Stanford has the perfect set up for that and it's why it has been the only program I have applied at. I knew Josh

from working with him as a set piece coach for the USA women and from running around at practices with the Glendale men and then was a part of the USA rugby coach development program when he was running it. Josh has a great program and is working hard to grow a unique program like Stanford's."

Said Sutcliffe, "This is great example of Raptors' influence because it builds rugby connections. With the men's and women's teams training alongside each other, relationships develop, friendships form and the support from your rugby family is bigger. I think that clubs with multiple teams (women's, men's, multiple divisions) create a better community atmosphere that can grow and be shared."

As a player who has played numerous matches across seasons and cycles for both club and country, the game of rugby has become second nature to Stolba when on the pitch. But coaching is new ground for the 34-year-old, and with it comes the opportunity for learning a different perspective to the game.

"There are all kinds of things to learn as a coach, that is a lifelong process if you want it to be," she explained. "But transitioning from a player is a blessing and curse. It gives me a certain lens to look at the game through for sure and can be a



Photo by Seth McConnell

Hannah Stolba of the Glendale Raptors and USA Eagles (National Team) takes the ball upfield against Women's Premier League opponents at Infinity Park.

hindrance in some aspects but it also allows me to be thinking about what the players may be seeing or needing from us and adjust to that. We all see things through our own experiences and I think that is more of a struggle than anything. It's a great challenge for me as a coach to make sure that I am listening to the players and each

other much more than I outwardly communicate. There is always more to take in and learn than there is to tell."

Stanford marks just one of numerous rugby pit stops for Stolba during the *Women's Premier League* (WPL) offseason. She was recently one of numerous *Glendale Raptors* players selected for inclusion at the *Women's Eagles National All-Star Competition* (NASC) which took place from Dec. 29, 2016, through Jan. 3, 2017, at *Tigertown Complex* in Lakeland, Fla.

The future has yet to unfold for Stolba, but that fate will most certainly continue to revolve around the sport of rugby.

"I'm uncertain about my future plans as a player. I loved playing in New Zealand last year, it gave me a new passion for the game. I hope to carry that over whether it is only as a player, only as a coach or both," she said. "We have a real opportunity at Glendale to set a precedent in America for what a true rugby club can look like. I appreciate every opportunity that I have had with Glendale Women to be a part of and to help grow the club."

Mexico Vacation

Continued from page 18

ing inside the United States. What exactly Mexico would or could do seemed a great deal more vague.

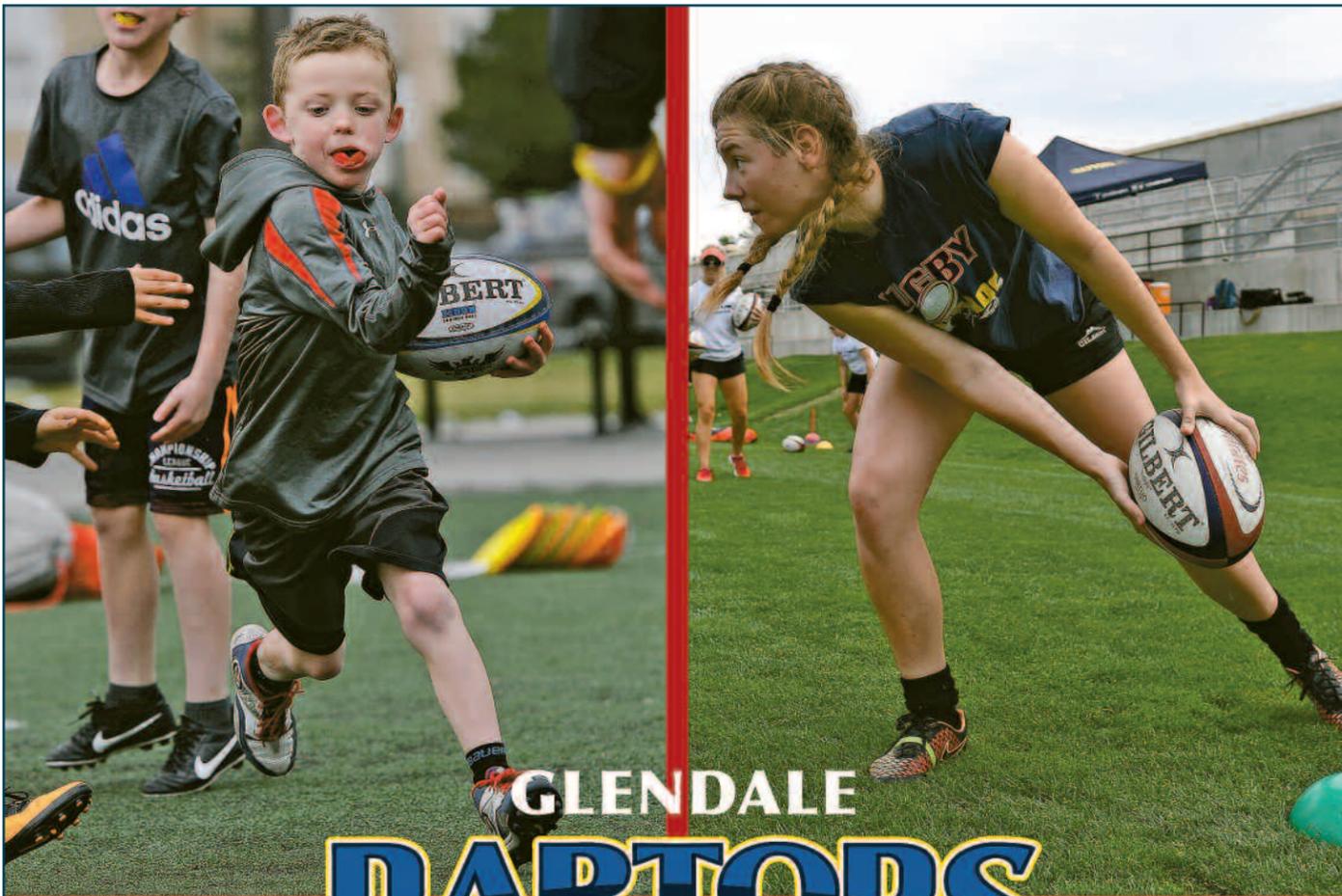
Back at the resort, restaurants do not require reservations with the exception of *Lemongrass Asian Cuisine's* hibachi meal. Most restaurants open for dinner at 6 p.m. but 24-hour room service is available. In addition, the *Coco Café* is open 24 hours featuring snacks and specialty coffees. This was especially helpful since tours departed from the resort at 7 a.m. which only allowed time for a coffee and muffin to go.

The combination of Southwest Airlines, Cancun Adventures, Dolphin Discovery, and Now Sapphire in Puerto Morelos provided an affordable and family friendly vacation. If considering this trip, temperatures in Cancun tend to be best in the winter and spring. Summer temperatures soar into the 90s by August. Temperatures for this reporter's trip remained in the mid-80s with very little rainfall.

Visit www.glendalecherrycreek.com for more on this story including more photos and direct links to all companies mentioned above.



Look Out: The chef at Lemongrass prepared a full meal on a Japanese hibachi grill. Lemongrass is the only restaurant on the property that requires a reservation.



GLENDALE RAPTORS RUGBY ACADEMY

SPRING AFTER SCHOOL RUGBY

beginners to advanced | boys and girls | grades k - 8

learn rugby and develop your skills. make friends, be competitive, join the pathway to the raptors.

March 7-April 13
Tuesdays and Thursdays at Infinity Park
4:30-5:45pm

Call 303.639.4713 with questions.



#RugbyRising



RAPTORSACADEMY.COM/AFTERSCHOOL