

# Championship Rugby At Destination RugbyTown USA

by Kurt Woock

Writer for and on behalf of the City of Glendale

This spring, *Infinity Park* will host two major national rugby tournaments, the *College 7s Championship* May 19-21 and the *Club Championships* June 3-4. Both tournaments are run by *USA Rugby*, the national governing body for rugby in this country since 1975.

These tournaments will be added to the list of national and international tournaments that have come to *RugbyTown USA* in its first decade. *Infinity Park*, built in 2007, was designed and built specifically to be a rugby venue, a first in the U.S. Its grass field, full range of concessions, video scoreboard, comfortable locker rooms, training facilities, and mild climate have made it popular among players and fans alike. *Infinity Park's* unique open seating setup,

free parking, and low-cost admission prices have also made it a go-to destination for families or anyone looking for an affordable sports experience.

Forty college rugby teams will compete for the 2017 *College 7s National Championship* at *Infinity Park*. The tournament will feature 16 Division I men's teams, 12 Division II men's teams, and a 12-team women's bracket that is open to all school sizes. "We have been fortunate to partner with not only fantastic hosts and facilities for our major collegiate events, but rugby-mad communities that have shown support for our game time after time," said USA Rugby College Director Rich Cortez. "Our student-athletes will be playing their best, and it only makes sense to have them play on the championship-caliber fields of these fine facilities."

The 4,000-seat *Infinity Park* will accommodate area rugby fans and teams' traveling fans. Area hotels are partnering with USA Rugby to provide lodging to those travelling from out of town, and, for those who can't make it to Glendale, the tournament will be broadcast online. Each team in the tournament can have up to 15 players on its roster. For each match, teams may dress 12 players, and they will be allowed five substitutions per match. During the elimination matches, extra time will be played in periods of five minutes, and whichever team scores first wins immediately.

The Club Championships come to Glendale in June. The tournament will begin in Tucson and Pittsburgh, where 40 teams from five divisions will compete for the chance to play in the final at *Infinity Park*. Linda Cassady, Glendale's deputy city manager, said that these events are great introductions for those new to rugby. The excitement that comes with a national championship series and the high number of games that come with the fast-paced 7s



Photo by Travis Prior

Speed, power, stamina and finesse is always on display at Rugby 7s tournaments.



Photo by Seth McConnell

Presenting the championship trophy at the USA Rugby Club National Championships is always a highlight.

variety of rugby give new fans an opportunity to pick up the game quickly and stay engaged all day.

The tournaments also present a new opportunity for rugby players, many of whom have never played in a stadium built for rugby. Cassady said that *Infinity Park's* main pitch and its adjacent pitch to the south of the stadium will have live broadcasting crews, and some players inside will see themselves projected onto the giant video

scoreboard, for the first times in their careers. She expects people will take note of the value Glendale has placed in making *Infinity Park* a rugby destination. "We want *RugbyTown* to be the pinnacle of rugby," Cassady added. As rugby takes root in the U.S. in the form of clubs, college and high school teams, youth leagues and programs, and more, Cassady said she'd like to see "all roads lead to *RugbyTown*."

The tournaments will also put Glendale in the spotlight for out-of-town visitors. "That's the whole point of building the stadium," Cassady said. "That's the promise we made when we built *Infinity Park*: It creates a great opportunity to see Glendale, eat at our restaurants, and stay at a hotel close to the stadium." That investment will be on full display when these two national tournaments come to *RugbyTown USA*.

**Defending 2016 Club Champions Are:**

- Men's Division 1:** Mystic River Rugby
- Women's Division 1:** Seattle Saracens
- Men's Division 2:** Tempe Old Devils
- Women's Division 2:** Life West Gladiatrix
- Men's Division 3:** Fairfield Yankees



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