

Olympians To Compete In RugbyTown 7s Tournament

by Kurt Woock

Writer for and on behalf of the City of Glendale

RugbyTown USA will become center stage for rugby 7s in the United States from August 25 to 27, as *Infinity Park* hosts the sixth annual *RugbyTown 7s* tournament. Twenty teams from around the world, including a team comprised of Fiji's gold medal-winning team from the Summer Olympics in Rio, will compete for a \$10,000 cash prize.

The tournament has grown to become a destination event. Mark Bullock is the Director of Rugby at *Infinity Park* and the tournament director. "As the years have gone on, the level of competition has improved; the tourney is now truly an international tournament," he said. "Teams from overseas want to come here." Bullock attributed the tournament's growth in stature to a few factors. First, the level of competition has always been high, a reputation that begets more competition. The \$10,000

Teams Competing In The 2017 RugbyTown 7s Tournament

Atavus All-Stars
British Army
Canadian Maple Leafs
Cayman Islands
Denver 7s Selects
Glendale Merlins
Negro y Azul
Ramblin' Jesters (UK team)
Royal Air Force Spitfires
Rugby Utah
SoCal Griffins
Tiger Rugby
Upright Rugby Rogues,
Ontario, Canada
USA All-Americans
Viti Barbarians (Fiji)
US Air Force
US Army
US Coast Guard
US Marines
US Navy



Photos by Seth McConnell

At Left: Rugby Utah and Negro y Azul compete in the 2016 Bowl Final at RugbyTown 7s.

At Right: Upright Rugby Rogues from Canada and the Royal Air Force from the UK are just two of the international teams that will return to the 2017 RugbyTown 7s tournament.



cash prize gives teams something tangible to chase.

Bullock said that the tournament's environment has also earned the tournament high marks from visiting teams. The weekend, which consists of dozens of games, is run efficiently. Each team is given a liaison to help ensure they have everything they need in order to be ready to play on time. Each team is provided a locker room or area to prepare, snacks provided between games, and a banquet for all players at the end of the weekend are all welcome acts of hospitality. The community comes together, providing not only fans that fill the stadium, but also restaurants that are within walking distance of the stadium and hotels that assist teams that are often on a shoe-string budget arrange lodging.

Finally, *Infinity Park* itself is a major draw. Many in the area — and throughout the country — know that *Infinity Park* is the first stadium in the country built for rugby. Bullock said that *Infinity Park* stands out to international teams as well. "Unless they are playing in a venue in Twickenham or Murrayfield, they generally are not going to be playing in facilities nicer than this."

Tournament Details

The tournament's format is structured to ensure a high level of competition through the entire weekend. The 20 teams are grouped into four pools of five teams. In pool play, each team plays every other team once (one pool consists of the rugby team from each of the five branches of the U.S. armed forces, a setup that doubles as the national tournament for these teams). At the conclusion of pool play the teams in each pool are ranked. All the teams that won the most games in their pool are grouped together in a new pool. The teams that won the second-most games are grouped together, and so on. From there, the tournament transitions into a bracket-style tournament, where the winners in each round continue to play other winners. At the conclusion of the tournament, four teams receive awards, one for the overall victor in each of the seeded pools. The defending champions for each level are: Cup Champions & \$10,000 prize winners:

Denver 7s
Plate Champions: British Army
Bowl Champions: Rugby Utah
Shield Champions: RAF Rugby 7s

Each of those teams will return this year. One team participating for the first time this year will draw interest and immediately be a contender for the top prize. The *Viti 7s* (pronounced "vee-tee") from Fiji will take the field with nine players who won gold in Rio. "For them to say, 'hey we want to go to Colorado to play,' that's a pretty big statement," Bullock said. "That demonstrates the level of competition this tournament has."

Another change to this year's tournament will be the introduction of the *Glendale Merlins* team, which previously played under the *Glendale Raptors* name.

Attending The Event

Those interested in attending can purchase single-day tickets or group rates are also available. Those in attendance can also take advantage of the annual *Glendale Bruises + Brews Beerfest*, a festival that features craft beer, spirits, and ciders. *Bruises & Brews* takes place on the afternoon of Saturday, August 26 on *Infinity Park's Festival Plaza*, which is adjacent to the tournament field, and tickets are available that give entrance to both the festival and the tournament.

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