

MCAA Sevens Head Coach

May 30, 2017

Re: Head Coach, USA Rugby Men's Collegiate All-Americans Sevens (volunteer)

United States of America Rugby Football Union, Ltd.

2655 Crescent Drive, Unit A

Lafayette, CO 80026 US

Dear General Manager, Performance,

Please accept this letter of application for the volunteer position of Rugby Men's Collegiate All-Americans Sevens Head Coach. I believe that my background in rugby coaching, education, and performance analysis makes me a unique candidate for this position, and one that would complement your already strong team.

It seems like only yesterday that the Eagles lifted the cup trophy at the 2015 London Sevens. That tournament showcased the depth and diversity of the American rugby talent pipeline. Crossover athletes, domestic club players, and experienced professionals combined their talents to manifest that historic win. But no players shined brighter than the rugby talent from our college ranks. Players like Madison Hughes and Danny Barrett personify the best qualities of rugby, with a unique American flair.

It is my belief that the United States is uniquely positioned to achieve lasting success at the Olympics and beyond IF we capitalize on the potential of our college rugby competitions. With opportunities to play in both fall and spring, and an unofficial collegiate sevens series that includes the Las Vegas Invitational, USAR Club Sevens nationals, and the Collegiate Rugby Championship, the American college schedule presents consistent playing opportunities that our foreign rivals cannot match. And the college players can continue sevens specialization through the summer by connecting with club and select sides.

This is an opportunity that I recognized when I founded the University of Texas rugby sevens team in 2010. At the time the only fixtures were the LVI and the CRC. It was my belief that while UT would never have the consistent pipeline of athletes required to consistently field a strong fifteens program, we could develop a core group of sevens specialists that could compete at the highest levels. Between 2010 and 2015 we were the most active college sevens program in the country, competing in 5 LVIs, 5 CRCs, and the first 3 USAR 7s nationals. My intuition was that by consistently exposing our core players to high level sevens, the overall level of 15s play would also rise. This intuition turned out to be correct as UT moved from DI-AA to DI-A to the Varsity cup in three seasons. Of course, it is no longer a secret that 7s is the best skills development tool for 15s players, although the reverse is not true.

How do we unlock the potential of the United States college 7s landscape? My vision for the program would be to use MCAA evaluation and selection to drive consistent participation opportunities for our top collegiate sevens athletes. Many of these opportunities would be found outside of collegiate rugby—pairing club and select programs with college talent. MCAA is an individual accolade for achievement, but it also has the potential to promote effort, investment, and alignment across the college landscape, from competitions to individual programs. And frankly USAR is not in a position to leave any bullets in the chamber. Our international opponents' academy systems offer players intense focus that we cannot match outside of a structured MCAA evaluation

and development program driven by a democratic selection process that includes all regions and divisions.

I know I am a somewhat unknown quantity in USAR coaching circles. My CV hits the important points so I will not rehash it here. But suffice to say that my coaching philosophy is informed by my work as a computer scientist. In the past few years I analyzed over 600 international sevens matches, developing my own unique data set to mine for rugby sevens "first principles." But as a whole my philosophy is rests on two pillars: playing pressure defense and controlling the match tempo. Pressure defense is the centerpiece of my sevens philosophy. Recent series results show that it is not ball possession, but short field scores generated by turnovers, the lead to consistent sevens success. Who can forget the USA's heartbreaking loss to New Zealand in the 2013 Rugby Sevens World Cup, when we turned over the ball twice after long restarts resulting in short field tries. Series champion South Africa are always among the lowest teams in time of possession, yet among the highest scorers, to the extent that generating short field scores through pressure defense should be renamed "the South African method."

Staying behind the opponent in the penalty count is the key to controlling tempo, because when a team receives a penalty, they can either push the tempo by keeping the ball in play or maximize dead ball time of possession to slow the tempo. And because most of the penalties in sevens occur at the breakdown, cultivating the correct skills and tactics at the contact area—especially on defense!—is the key to ultimately controlling the tempo. Therefore, my coaching work focuses on defensive organization and communication plus fundamental contact skills. And not coincidentally I often have success with inexperienced rugby players because these skills are decisive yet easier to acquire than highly developed handling skills.

Thank you again for your consideration. I apologize for including so much information. I hope we can continue the conversation as it would be a great honor to serve along side you in this mission. Although I am applying for the head coaching position, I would be equally happy to serve in any coaching capacity.

Best wishes for your continued success,

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