Women’s Rugby to Host Playoff Game

PULLMAN, WASH. – The women’s rugby club team had a nearly unblemished regular season, and has been rewarded with home field advantage in their first playoff game. The Cougs will play UCLA Friday, April 1, at Valley Road Playfields in the first round of the Pacific Mountain Rugby Conference playoffs. The game will start at 5 p.m.

UCLA will be a tricky team for WSU to prepare for because of a lack of familiarity. The teams do not play regularly, as they are in different divisions. However, Club President Josie Markoff thinks that going in with limited scouting could be beneficial for the team.

“It might be better going into it blind and thinking they’re a really good team. We have to play at our best,” Markoff said.

WSU’s preparation for the season’s biggest game will not differ significantly from what they have been working on all season. Under new coach Christy O’Shea, the Cougs have worked on improving their fitness and ball handling all season. The team’s work under O’Shea’s guidance is paying dividends as Markoff noted that they are as fit as they have been all season going into the playoffs.

One facet the team will be especially focused on in preparation, is maintaining their back line. The back line was a significant issue in the Cougs 89-0 loss to Central Washington in the regular season finale. Markoff said the back line needs to stay all together and flat, or it risks being broken. WSU will need to shore up the outside, where CWU had a lot of success attacking, in the playoffs.

Markoff thinks the team is capable on improving on that performance, however, and remained positive about the playoffs.

“I think we have a good chance (against UCLA),” Markoff said. “We're a good team, we just have to fill some of the gaps we've been missing.”
Last season WSU was able to win their first playoff game, against California, before falling twice to Stanford. A trio of key players graduated from that team, but the Cougs return a significant amount of experience from last season.

“Having returners on the team is important for leadership, especially for new girls who have never played,” Markoff said.

If the Cougs are able to knock off UCLA they will travel to UC Davis April 8–10 for the regional playoffs. For more information you can visit the team’s Facebook page.

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