

Who Gets Hurt the Most?

By Alex Goff for [Rugby Imports](#)

April 11, 2003 — It's a burden or an opportunity, and we won't know really which is which until some time down the road. But the fact that the USA Rugby Super League clubs will be without their best players for the majority of the season has a deep effect on these clubs.

This isn't to say that other clubs aren't hurt. For certain the Division I clubs with Eagles on their squads will be affected, but USA Rugby playoffs don't start until May, and better DI clubs can usually handle things until then.

But fully ten Super League teams will be without key performers for much, if not most, of the season. Can they go on without them? Well, they'll have to, But will this be an opportunity for other clubs? Maybe.

Here's the rundown.

New York Old Blue: Players lost, two. Mark Griffin will most likely be unavailable for OBNY's next four games. The club will be without their captain for five out of seven matches. They missed center Brian Geraghty for a week.

OMBAC: They have been slammed.

Conrad Hodgson had to give up his captaincy in favor of Jason Wood in large part because he will be gone for five games.

"We will miss his lead-by-example ways and hard-nosed play," said Wood.

In addition, prop John Tarpoff and scrumhalf Kevin Dalzell, just back from injury, will be with the Eagles. Despite all this, they managed to defeat Aspen, betraying a depth that they weren't sure of.

Belmont Shore: They've managed before, but Kirk Khasigian and Mike Hercus are be gone for five weeks, and Al Lakonskis will be out for who knows how long after a nasty leg break in Hong Kong. Khasigian's absence isn't a huge blow, because Ray McKettigan is an outstanding hooker and is in good form. Hercus has been replaced ably and while his presence will be much needed come playoff time, Belmont should be OK without him for the moment.

Denver: Doug Rowe was with the 7s team for a short time. But their biggest loss is probably Jone Naqica, who broke his arm playing 7s for the USA earlier this year.

Olympic Club. The O-Club have been slammed. Wing Marc Vera was gone with the 7s team, and fullback John Buchholz left for 7s only to be called up for the XVs side. Loose forward Kort Schubert will be with the Eagles for five games, and the only reason they have Shaun Paga for the moment is because he has a baby on the way. There's a very good chance Paga will be called up for April 27.

For a club that struggled last season such losses can be really hard to bear.

Some other teams lose key players. **NYAC's** lost Alex Magleby for a week, **San Francisco Golden Gate** can certainly use Mose Timoteo at scrumhalf, **Aspen** will miss Alec Parker at lock, and **Old Puget Sound Beach's** loss of Riaan Van Zyl for five weeks will be felt quite deeply.

But I think the team hardest hit will be the **Chicago Lions**. True, they did just fine last year without David

Fee and Paul Emerick, who were playing elsewhere, but they could still use those guys out wide. Take away also the experienced Andre Blom (Eagles physio) and center Phil Eloff, and you've significantly impacted the Lions' backline.

These losses may be the difference against SFGG in two weeks' time and could well mean the currently 2-0 Lions will be 3-3 by the time they end their regular season at Denver.

And the teams that won't be affected? Aspen is hardly touched, and the same goes for SFGG, but especially watch out for Dallas. The timing is right for the Harlequins to score a couple of upsets and challenge for the division title. Having said all that, though, we are seeing some true depth in a few sides. The Lions won, Dallas lost, and OMBAC seems not to have missed a beat. Maybe all those apologies Tom Billups made weren't needed ...

Goff on Rugby (www.goffonrugby.com) is a web magazine covering North American rugby news. The site offer news, analysis, and statistics you can't find anywhere else. Much of the site is free, but Goff on Rugby Gold is a subscription site, where \$39.95 gets you a username and password to access the good stuff. Go to Goff on Rugby to see what our low annual subscription fee gets you. Or register at <https://www.goffonrugby.com/registration.cgi>