

Super Rugby Americas League Attracts Tough Competitors To Glendale

by Laura Lief

Returning for a second year as part of the Super Rugby Americas (SRA) league, the American Raptors team faces fierce competition. In addition to the Glendale team, the SRA league is comprised of six other franchises — defending champions Peñarol Rugby (Uruguay), Cobras Brasil XV, Selknam (Chile), Yacare XV (Paraguay), and two teams from Argentina, Dogos XV and Pampas. All the clubs will be traveling to and from South America and the United States, with several games slated to be played at Infinity Park throughout the 2024 season.

“With the goal of providing a pathway to international rugby for high caliber players, and creating a fanbase that brings new players to rugby, SRA continues to provide a unique competition over twelve rounds, with teams playing matches at home and on the road,” says Frankie Deges, Media & Communication Manager for Super Rugby Americas. “Additionally, with the inclusion of the American Raptors in 2023, SRA represents the coming of age of the Superliga Americana de Rugby that was first played between 2020 and 2022.”

Launched two weeks before the world



Photo by Seth McConnell

Tough Tackle: Watson Filikitonga gets tackled during a match against Selknam last spring.



Photo by Seth McConnell

Full Force: Feofaaki Pulu carries the ball in an American Raptors match against Yacare XV at Infinity Park.

went into lockdown due to COVID-19, Superliga Americana de Rugby successfully returned in 2021 and 2022. Many have recognized this tournament as the catalyst for Chile’s first-ever qualification for *Rugby World Cup*, and Uruguay beating the USA Eagles to take the first spot in the Americas Qualifying system.

Strong Team

Comprised of 35 players, the American Raptors staff is excited for the year ahead and is thrilled to have a talented pool of returning and new players.

“The American Raptors’ mission to develop the best young American talent is hitting full stride going into their second season of competing in SRA,” says Patrick Guthrie, Chief Operating Officer of the American Raptors. “Marking a strategic blend of experience and fresh young talent, the Raptors have expanded their lineup by adding 19 promising new players while retaining the skills of 16 seasoned athletes.”

Key players include Mikey Grandy, who is returning for his fourth season, and Di-ego Fortuny returning for his second year, as well as newcomers Ignacio Mieres and Facundo Ignacio Pomponio. The club began its 2024 season with a three-match road trip to Argentina and Uruguay before returning to *Infinity Park* for six straight home games. They will finish the season back on the road traveling to Brazil, Paraguay, and Chile.

Raptors games can be streamed on ESPN+ but the best way to enjoy rugby is attending games at Infinity Park. Since its inception in 2007, Infinity Park remains the first and only municipally-owned rugby-specific stadium in the United States. Known as *Rugby-*

HOME GAME THEMES

- 3/17: **Raptors Green Out (St. Patrick’s Day)** | Giveaway: Green Raptors t-shirt | Wear green to celebrate the Raptors’ first home game.
- 3/24: **Western Day** | Giveaway: Raptors Bandanas | Wear your best cowboy/cowgirl attire to Infinity Park.
- 4/7: **Military Appreciation Day** | Giveaway: Camo Koozies | Honoring those who served and active military members throughout the game.
- 4/14: **Mental Health Awareness Day** | Giveaway: Stress Balls | Raising awareness and promoting positive mental health.
- 4/21: **Colorado Day** | Giveaway: Raptors Keychains | Celebrate everything Colorado with local mascots, local colleges, and Colorado food staples.
- 4/28: **Autism Awareness Day** | Giveaway: Fidget Spinners | Raising awareness about Autism at the Raptors last home game of the season.

Town USA, Glendale continues to welcome rugby teams from around the world to play at the 4,000-seat facility.

In addition to serving as the American Raptors headquarters, Infinity Park has hosted several international men’s and women’s rugby matches over the years including the 2019 *Pacific Nations Cup* and all three 2023 *Rugby World Cup Qualifiers* for the United States men’s national rugby team. The venue also served as the United States stop on the 2018- 2019 *World Rugby Women’s Sevens Series* and is home to the annual *RugbyTown 7s tournament*, which takes place annually during the third weekend of August.

For more information about the schedule, and to buy tickets, visit <https://americanraptors.com/schedule-and-tickets/>.

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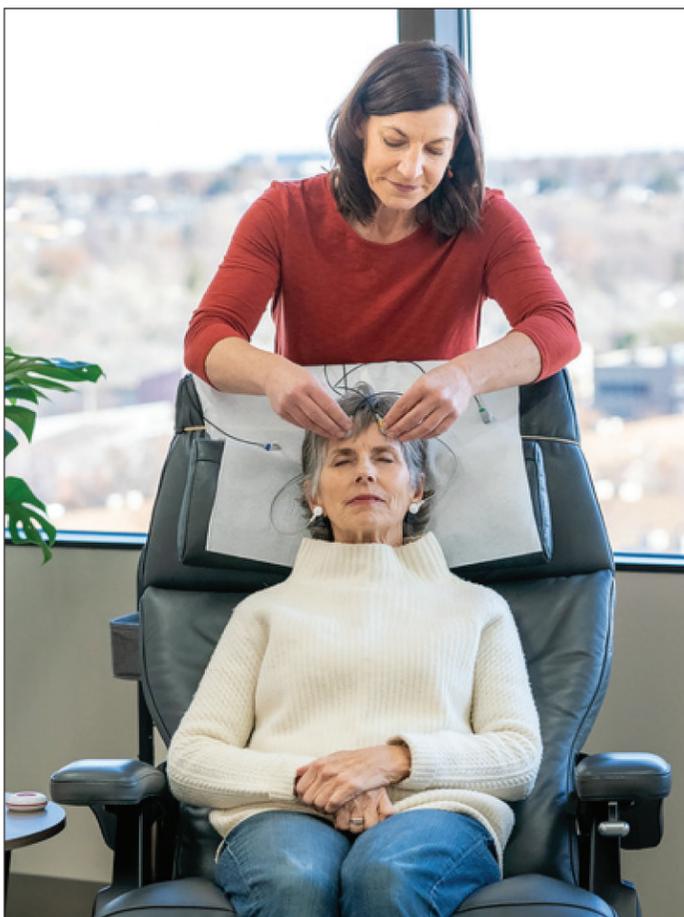
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Colorado Ranked 7th Best To Start A Business In 2024

With around 20% of new businesses failing within one year, and inflation making entrepreneurship even more difficult, the personal-finance website *WalletHub* has ranked Colorado the nation’s seventh most fertile state for planting and growing new ventures.

The website compared the 50 U.S. states across 25 key indicators of startup success. The data set ranges from financing accessibility to labor costs to office-space affordability.

Colorado ranked 5th in number of startup firms per capita; 10th in average growth in number of small businesses; and 18th in average length of work.

Colorado Had One Of Nation’s Smallest Credit Score Increases

Personal-finance website *WalletHub* ranks Colorado 12th among states with the smallest credit score increases. The state’s average credit score increased by 1.16% between Q3 2022 and Q3 2023. The average credit score in Colorado was 700 in Q3 2023.