Meet the Nine Nelson College Rugby Scholarship Alumni

2023 Recipients – Max Doerfler & Oliver Kirk

Max Doerfler applied as **a** 16-year-old junior and honor student from Saint Thomas Aquinas High School in Overland Park, Kansas, where he had also played football and soccer. Max also played with the Eagle Impact Rugby Academy (EIRA) on their Ireland Tour.



Max told the USRF: "The Nelson College rugby scholarship offered an experience of a lifetime! I loved the experience there. I learned so much about the sport of rugby and developed myself in multiple aspects of rugby and grew as a man."

Nick Withers, Nelson College's Senior Economics teacher had this to say about Max:

"I had the privilege and pleasure of teaching Max Senior Economics. A great class with a diverse group of students. Max came to class with a great attitude to studies and life. He was focused on joining the US Armed Forces, something we seldom see amongst our teenage boys. He quickly had the respect of the class. He was mannerly, punctual, and academically a real asset. He was inclusive of everyone in class. Outstanding to see a young man of such grounded disposition, have focus, friendliness and motivated to learn."

Max captained the St. Thomas rugby team his senior year and led them to a spot at the Boys HS National Championships. Unfortunately, he tore his ACL just before the national tournament which also caused him to defer his start at the U.S. Military Academy at West Point that Fall. He started at West Point a year later he is currently in his 2nd year, doing well and playing well as the starting #8 on Army's 1st XV Rugby Team. Max recently told us "So far West Point has been great, and I have had no regrets coming here. I love the team and the culture – it's very special."

Oliver Kirk, applied as a 16-year-old junior and an honor student at Walter Payton College Preparatory High School, a selective enrollment magnet high school in Chicago. He started playing rugby as a 5-year-old for the Chicago Wapiti Club. Oliver also played with the Eagle Impact Rugby Academy (EIRA) on their Ireland Tour.

Oliver wrote to the USRF after his 2023 season in Nelson, “Traveling to New Zealand to live, attend school and play rugby at Nelson College has without a doubt been one of the best experiences of my life.”



Oliver was invited back by the school the next year, so he played on the Nelson College 1st XV for two seasons – 2023 & 2024; and, received “Player’s Player of the Year Award from teammates both years for leadership, commitment and character.

Oliver led the Nelson College 1st XV to an undefeated 2024 season, the Miles Toyota and South Island Championship, the #1 ranking among New Zealand High Schools and on to the New Zealand High School National Championship Final.

Upon his return to the U.S. after the just completed 2024 season in Nelson, Oliver wrote to the USRF: “I'm two days into orientation at University of California at Berkeley and have been thinking about the road that led me here. I'm certain that I wouldn't be here today were it not for the belief and generous support of the U.S. Rugby Foundation.” Upon entering Cal Berkeley and joining the Cal Bears Rugby Team, Oliver went out and earned, as a true Freshman, a starting front row position on the Cal Varsity 1st XV.



On May 3rd, 2025, Cal beat Life University 55-38 to win the 2025 U.S. National College Rugby Championship, with Oliver scoring an impressive try. At season’s end, Oliver was named a rugby Collegiate All American. Just turning 19 in February he was also selected for the USA Rugby U23 team on their undefeated tour of South Africa this past summer.

On May 2nd, 2026, Cal beat Navy 36-22 to win the 2026 U.S. National College Rugby Championship to cap off a 35-2 overall 2025-2026 season record. Kirk their sophomore starting loose head prop also earned All-American status for a second year; and was named to the USA Team for the Junior World Championships in June and July of 2026 in Georgia.



Max Doerfler and Oliver Kirk were reunited over the 2023-2024 winter break when both were invited to participate in the USA U18 Player Winter Camp out in California. Photo – Max on the right.

Dan Kirk, Oliver's dad, told the USRF: "Carolyn [Oliver's mom] and I cannot thank the Foundation enough for the support. This was an enormous boost to Oliver's rugby and, more importantly, his life experience. The people he met, the travel he experienced, the self-discipline he developed – all of it had established such a strong base for him to begin his collegiate career. We are deeply grateful."

2024 Recipients – Connor Bender & JW Sarkees

Connor Bender applied as a 17-year-old junior and an honor student at Saint Ignatius High School in Cleveland and the incoming captain of the school's rugby team. He was named MVP of the team, which won the Midwest Tournament. A multi-sport athlete (football, lacrosse, baseball, swimming, and basketball), Bender narrowed his high school focus to football and rugby. Bender was invited to play for the EIRA touring side on their Ireland tour the summer of 2023.



Connor wrote to the USRF: "Thank you very much for affording me this opportunity to attend Nelson College and allowing me to grow my rugby career. I truly enjoyed my time there. One of the program's biggest highlights was meeting and becoming friends with so many of the kids there. Another thing that was the coaches and their passion for coaching. They truly want to make sure you are getting better and have your best interests in mind. Another thing that I loved about Nelson College was the kids in the boarding house and all their different personalities. Being at the boarding house felt like you were a part of a big family. I also loved walking around the city of Nelson, even though it is a small town it is fun and easily walkable from the school."

Nick Withers, Nelson College's Senior Economics teacher had this to say about Connor:

"As a teacher, sports coach and manager (and father) every now and again you can find yourself in a situation which has an everlasting positive effect on you. Conner Bender was instrumental in leaving me one such impression.

After a hard Rugby Tournament (which Nelson College did well in, and Conner played brilliantly) I found myself driving a long mountain pass back to Nelson. In the dark hours the boys started singing … Nelson College songs. Conner led the way, with all the guys singing from the top of their lungs. I drove through the night, with these tired boys, just loving the comradery, the sport, the trip. In the days that followed I found myself telling others of the joy and privilege I had in taking Conner and his team mates away."

Fall of 2024 Conner returned to St. Ignatius High School and completed his senior year as captain the rugby team. Under Connor's leadership, in the Spring of 2025 St. Ignatius went on to win the 2025 U.S. National High School Rugby Championship.

In the Fall 2025 Connor entered The U.S. Naval Academy at Annapolis to begin his collegiate studies and to continue his rugby career as a member of the Navy rugby team.

JW Sarkees, who had been playing rugby since the 4th grade, applied as a 17-year-old honor student at D. W. Daniel High School in Central, South Carolina. Sarkees led his varsity soccer team to State Championships in 2022 and 2023 and also played with the Eagle Impact Rugby Academy (EIRA) on multiple Ireland Tours.



Upon his return to the U.S. from Nelson in August 2024 JW wrote to the USRF: "My experience living in New Zealand and attending Nelson College as a recipient of the US Rugby Foundation's scholarship program has been life changing for me. It has opened more doors than I can count, both in rugby and life, and I am grateful to have had the opportunity. I left New Zealand with friendships and memories that will last a lifetime.

I loved the fast paced rugby that we were playing and see that as one of the biggest differences between U.S. and International rugby. Also, the team was always on the same page, and everybody would do their job. There were accountability and respect and a lot of fun. Hands down, the coaches at Nelson were incredible. Not only were they top quality coaches with the best experience and taught me a bunch of new skills, but they also helped me to sharpen my old ones. They were also great role models and great people off the field. Their rugby coaching skills were just one part of who they really were. I also loved the multiple trainings per day. For the first time in my life, I was constantly playing rugby nonstop. And I never grew tired of this.

The teams we played against were very good. They were all quality sides coached by super smart coaches. I believe that good competition makes the game even more fun to play. I also enjoyed trading gear with them and seeing the various hakas. The country of New Zealand was also beautiful; there was so much green. The sunsets and sunrises were so pretty, and I got to explore with my family [who visited JW during the 2-week term break in July] all down the South Island which was amazing.

The team and community in Nelson really embraced me, Connor Bender and Oliver Kirk. Various families opened their homes to us to share meals or stay the weekend with them. Everybody was very kindhearted and down to earth. It felt like I was a part of another family. It truly felt like every single boy on the team would do anything it took to help the team and to help each other."

Joey Sarkees. JW's mom and a former rugby player, wrote to the USRF: "We spent time with JW and had the opportunity to watch him play and meet his peers, coaches and friends. The community has really embraced all the boys and it's clear they are loved. JW's play has improved incredibly based on what we saw. He seems to be embracing every moment even outside of rugby events as well as embracing the culture. It's been life changing for him.

We also had the opportunity to spend time with both Connor Bender and Oliver Kirk's families as we all met for dinner in Nelson. All in all, we are grateful for this experience and what it has brought to JW and the boys especially as we are now beginning college applications / recruiting. The U.S. Rugby Foundation nailed it with this scholarship program. Thank you all for all you do!"

Martin Sarkees, JW's dad and a former rugby player, wrote to Jono and the USRF:

"JW's been home for a little over three weeks. I cannot thank all of you for such a wonderful experience. As time builds, the experience will only become sweeter and sweeter for him. Everything we experienced was first class and we always felt the boys' best interest was at heart. Not easy to say in today's world. JW was embraced by not just the players and coaches but the entire community. That kind of communitywide culture of care and affection starts at the top. "Thank you" Jono [Jono Phillips, 1st XV Head Coach] and congrats on a great season."

JW returned to D.W. Daniel for his senior year as captain of the Greer 76ers Rugby Club. The Fall of 2025 JW entered Penn State on a rugby scholarship. As a Freshman, JW was getting considerable playing time as scrum half on the Penn State 1st XV. At the end of the 2025-2026 season JW was named, joining with Oliver Kirk (Kirk, Sarkees; L & R in photo), as a member of the USA Team for the Junior World Championships in June and July of 2026 in Georgia.



“2024 Tres Amigos” at Nelson College: With Oliver Kirk returning to Nelson College for the 2024 rugby season, he was happy to serve as a welcoming party of sorts to Connor Bender and JW Sarkees upon their arrival and during their early days at Nelson. Showing them the ropes and introducing them around. Since then, all three have bonded and formed a strong friendship.



The photo at right shows the boys celebrating with the two trophies Nelson won at Marlborough, NZ earlier in the summer of 2024: Whangamoa Challenge Trophy (between Nelson and Marlborough) and the Trustee Bank Cup (between all the South Island teams). Sarkees, Bender, Kirk (left to right)

2025 Recipients – Jamie Clegg, Chuck Gehl & Kolo Kahanu

Jamie Clegg, a 6’ 4” / 215 lb. second row forward for Bozeman’s Gallatin Wranglers, applied as a 17-year-old Senior at Gallatin High School in Bozeman, MT. His family having recently moved from Ft. Collins, CO to Bozeman and Clegg had been selected for both the Colorado U-18 All-State and the Montana U-19 All-State Sides. A karate black belt, Clegg narrowed his high school focus to rugby, student leadership, animal rescue, and youth sports recruitment. Clegg attended the Eagle Impact Rugby Academy’s (EIRA) 5-day winter invitational camp in Arizona.



As Clegg was wrapping up his time down in nelson he wrote to the Foundation: “With my time in New Zealand almost up, I have been taking a moment to reflect on the experience before I leave. I am incredibly grateful to have been given this wonderful opportunity. During my time here, I have worked hard and feel I’ve improved in just about every way possible. Frankly, I’m a whole new rugby player. I’ve made some incredible connections and experienced some truly remarkable things. Learning how rugby is played here, the expectations, the way things are

taught, and how to execute at the next level, has left me feeling significantly more prepared for my leap into college rugby. I am very excited for what the future holds."

Jamie returned to the U.S. in August 2025, and that Fall entered the University of Arizona in Tucson to begin his freshman year and to embark on his collegiate rugby career as a member of the Arizona Wildcats Rugby Team. Currently headed into his sophomore year he is excited to get back on the pitch and has big aspirations for the upcoming season. Off the field, Jamie has been involved in an internship with the University Police Department and is taking strong steps to prepare for a career post-college. Over the summer, he attended the Leinster Syracuse Rugby camp as a coach and worked with the under-14s.



This past season, Jamie and Oliver Kirk had an opportunity to meet up and share some Nelson College memories when Cal visited the University of Arizona and met for a match (photo, Jamie on the right).

Chuck Gehl, applied as a 16-year-old High School Junior in Missoula, MT, and was a 6'0" / 250 lb. prop for his High School Rugby team – the Missoula Stampede. Missoula Stampede has been the Montana State Champions – and Gehl has been their starting prop – every year since his freshman year. Gehl had been selected to play on the Montana U-16 and U-19 select sides each year as well. An avid downhill skier, hiker, and mountain biker, Gehl was also Captain, since his sophomore year, of the high school wrestling team and had qualified for the Montana State Varsity Heavyweight wrestling championship. Gehl attended the West Point Rugby Camp, and this past December attended the EIRA's 5-day winter camp in Arizona.



Nelson Colle
Chuck Gehl,

Chuck wrote to the Foundation: "I want to say how grateful I am to be here. It has been an amazing experience. I still can't believe that it has already been four and a half months. The rugby here is fantastic! The school experience has been great. I love being able to take two rugby classes here because back in the States, I could never imagine that happening. I have

had an amazing time here and I just want to thank the U.S. Rugby Foundation for sending me. I am not only a better rugby player for being here, but I have also learned so much about the culture and the people that live here in Nelson. Everyone in the boarding house has been so nice, and it has been very cool to meet and make good friends with kids from all over the world."

Chuck returned to Missoula for his senior year of high school looking forward to a very fun final high school rugby season. His team, the Missoula Stampede, had just won their third state championship in a row and Chuck led them to a four-peat. Upon completing his senior year in high school this past spring Chuck decided to join the Montana Army National Guard – allowing him to both serve his country and attend college – and he is now off at basic training in Fort Jackson, South Carolina. Upon his return his plan is to attend either the University of Montana or Montana State University (the deciding factor being which school has the best rugby program!!!) where he will be super excited to be back playing rugby.

Chuck's parents Sharon and Mike wrote to the Foundation: "Chuck matured a lot down in New Zealand and he developed a direction and goals. Chuck always had passion for rugby, but he came back with a real love of the game. We think rugby will be a part of his life for eternity. Experiences that will carry through for the remainder of his life.

Chuck is already talking about giving back, wanting to help out with the Missoula Stampedes (our local club team) spring season, something that I don't think he would have been pursuing had he not gone to New Zealand.

On another note, we got to see the opening game of the All Blacks season while down there visiting. Getting to watch them play in person is a whole other experience than seeing it on TV. It was a great experience for us, and I do believe the icing on the cake for Chuck while he was down there.

We think what the Foundation is doing is phenomenal. It's an experience Chuck will never forget, and it will be a fantastic opportunity for others."

Kolomona Kahanu (2025) applied as a 16 year-old Junior from Pahoa, HI and a Junior at Timpview High School in Provo, UT. Kahanu was listed as a 6'0" / 180 lb. scrum half. Fearless on defense, he was very accomplished and could play anywhere along the back line. Kahanu played on the Hawaiian State Championship team; on the 1st Place team in the 2023 U-16 States Tournament; was Player of the Match in the 2024 Utah Spider Fest; and was selected for the "Dream Team 7" during the 2024 National 7's Tournament in Ohio. Fluent in Hawaiian, his first language, Kahanu led his high school team to a 2nd place finish in the Hawaiian State

Soccer championship and a Hawaiian Island Championship in the competitive open ocean canoe racing. In December 2024, Kahanu attended the EIRA's 5-day winter camp in Arizona.



Kolo recently wrote to the Foundation: "My time here in New Zealand has been amazing. The rugby was exactly how I thought it would be, tough, physical, and high-level. I'm proud that I got selected for every single 2nd XV game, which I know isn't easy to do here. The games have been challenging but fun, and I've learned a lot from the coaches and my teammates.

One of my favorite classes is Te Reo Māori (Māori language arts). I've really enjoyed learning the language and more about the culture. It's something I was looking forward to before I came, and it's been even better than I expected. (Note: Kolo is fluent in the native Hawaiian language, his first language.)

The culture here is awesome. Everyone's so close to each other and welcoming, which made it easy to fit in. Between school, rugby, church, and boarding, I've made some super good friends that I know I'll stay in touch with after I go back home.

Overall, I'm super grateful for this opportunity. I've learned a lot, had so many cool experiences, and made memories and friends I'll never forget. I can't wait to get home and share the experiences I've had here with my community."



"Ekola Hoa" – The 2025 version of the "Three Amigos". Two sturdy forwards from the Big Sky State and one fearless and versatile back from the Big Island. Jamie, Kolo and Chuck (left to right) bonded well over their scholarship time down in Nelson.

This Fall, Kolo will stay in Hawaii and attend Hilo High School and play rugby on the Islands

Kolo ultimately aspires to be a pro rugby player and feels he may need to jump start his career via

college. He is showing interest in Cal Berkeley, Grand Canyon and a few others. He will expand that list once his transition back into the States has settled down.

Upon his return to Hawaii, Kolo's family wrote to the Foundation:

"Aloha,

First off, Mahalo Nui for making this experience such a memorable one for Kolo and us. His stay there helped him develop as a young man, personally, socially and in academia as well as the sport that he loves and with hopes to become a professional rugby player.

Kolo said he had a blast!!! He shared with us stories, Haka, and Mele's that he learned while being there. He was well cared for and met some lifetime friends while there in New Zealand. Staff, Coaches, students and players were so kind to Kolo which made it even harder for him to leave as they all became Ohana.

We are so grateful for the opportunity given and are so humbled by the generosity from the Foundation.

Once again, MAHALO NUI.

Ohana Kahanu"

2026 Recipients – Alex Drury, Bennett Glock & Kolo Kahanu

Alexander Drury went down to Nelson College as a 17 year-old Junior out of Choate Rosemary Hall, a college-preparatory school in Wallingford, CT. Alex was a 6' 1" / 205 lb. center; captain of the Aspetuck Valley Rugby Club in Newtown, CT and also played for the White Plains (NY) Men's Rugby Club. Alex played for and captained Atlantis in the 2024 Tropical 7's and National 7's; he played for the North American Lions on their 2024 Germany Tour and captained the 2025 Dubai Lions Team; he played for and captained the Eagle Impact Rugby Academy (EIRA) Team on their tours of Ireland in both 2024 and 2025; on their EIRA Netherlands and Italy Tour in 2025; and, at the Tropical 7s in 2025. Alex played for the USA at Global Youth 7s 2025 and was selected for and participated in the USA Rugby's U18 2025 Winter Camp. Alex also played halfback and safety on his high school football team; was the school's club weightlifting leader; and is an avid outdoorsman spending time hiking, biking and doing photography.



Shortly after arriving down at Nelson, Alex was selected to the Nelson College 1st XV squad and played solid rugby at both center and wing for the 1st XV. Alex scored a photo-worthy try (one of three try's vs Christchurch Boys) that made the local paper (photo at right), the second match in which he scored a hattrick (three try's). The Christchurch Boys match was his last match before leaving Nelson to captain the USA U18 team on their South American tour. He also played for the NA Lions at Rugby Town USA in Colorado.



Prior to beginning his senior year at Choate, Alex visited the rugby coaches at both Cal and West Point and is in contact with former Nelson College scholarship recipients Oliver Kirk (Cal) and Max Doefler (West Point) about those top tier rugby schools.

Alex recently wrote the Foundation: "Attending Nelson College and playing for the 1st XV there is something that I will cherish for the rest of my life. Not only did the high performance environment make me a better rugby player, I feel as if Nelson College made me a better person and taught me many valuable life lessons. In terms of the rugby, the quality, skills, and game awareness in the games gave me so much experience and made me a smarter player. The games had an incredible environment, something that I hadn't experienced before. Our coaching staff was incredible and connected with each individual player, ensuring growth.

However, when I reflect on my time at Nelson I think about my teammates and the people that I met the most. I made so many friends and connections that will last a lifetime. I am so thankful for this opportunity that the US Rugby Foundation made possible."

Alex's parents, Philip and Megan, added, "We are all very grateful to the Foundation for providing the opportunity for Alex to play rugby in New Zealand for Nelson College.

The experience was transformational for him and while incredibly impactful on his rugby playing IQ, we believe that the immersion into New Zealand's culture has further strengthened his character and maturity.

Alex has made great friendships in New Zealand which will continue with him through his lifetime. The global rugby community is truly special, and the Foundation has brought this to life for Alex early in his development to really make a difference over time."

Bennett Glock applied as a 17 year-old Junior at Saint Peter's Preparatory School in Jersey City, NJ and a 5' 10" / 195 lb. center for the Union County (NJ) Mud Turtles Rugby Team. (Bennett's high school does not have a rugby team.) Bennett regularly travels up to the Bronx

in New York City and trains and plays with the Old Blue RFC men's club's practice squad. Bennett was also selected for and participated in the USA Rugby's U18 2025 Winter Camp. Bennett is an avid snow sports enthusiast and is a Certified Snowboard Instructor at Gore Mountain in North Creek, NY.



Bennett wrote to the Foundation: "Being in Nelson was an incredible experience, and I learned a lot about myself while significantly improving my rugby abilities. The food was great. My favorite memory from the whole trip was the Christchurch tour the 2nd XV went on at the end of July. Being able to travel with my teammates and bond as a group was a memorable part of my experience. Meeting guys from New Zealand and a few who'd come over from Wales to play was especially interesting and getting to know people from such different backgrounds was one of the best parts of the experience. Rugby class was another highlight for me. Because it leaned heavily on skills-based games and fluid play, it played a huge role in my development as a player. It helped teach me to read the game and see plays I couldn't have spotted before. The level of play around me was impressive, and it was eye-opening to see how skilled even some of the less rugby-focused kids were. Being surrounded by that level of skill and knowledge of the game every day made it easy to keep improving. Overall, this was a hugely positive experience for me, both as a player and as a person. If I were recommending it to someone else, I'd tell them the biggest key to making the most of it is being comfortable with independence and creating your own fun as well as being open to learning and experiencing new things."

Kolomona Kahanu (2026), a recipient of a USRF Nelson College Scholarship last year (2025), had such a strong and consistent season playing for the Nelson College 2nd XV in 2025 that he was invited back and offered a half scholarship by the school to return this year (2026). The USRF provided a matching grant to enable Kolo's return for the 2026 season.

Kolo returned in 2026 as a 17 year-old Senior out of Hilo High School in Hilo, HI; a 6' 0" / 190 lb. scrum half for the Hawaii Youth Rugby Team called Poly United Rugby.

Last December (2025) Kolo met up with and teamed with Alex Drury and Bennett Glock (who were to become the other two recipients of the Nelson College Scholarships in 2026) at the USA Rugby's 2025 U18 Winter Camp in Charlotte.

Kolo, very active in open ocean outrigger canoe racing (his state's official team sport), and just prior to his departure for New Zealand, led his high school team to victory in the Island of Hawai'i Championship and on to the State Championship in O'ahu on March 7, 2026.

Because Kolo spent the past two rugby seasons at Nelson College he has spent 10 of the past 18 months in New Zealand – playing rugby and taking classes there. Upon his return to the U.S. this year we received the following email from his mom:

“Aloha,

Rugby in New Zealand has finally ended for Kolo. After spending a few days on O’ahu sharing the skills he learned in New Zealand with some boys there, Kolo just got home to Hilo yesterday from O’ahu, and we are so happy to finally have him home with us again!

The past 18 months have truly been such an incredible experience for him and for our family. From my perspective, I’ve seen him grow so much, not only as a rugby player, but also as a young man. Being away from home, experiencing a different school and culture, and playing rugby at that level has been such a great opportunity for him.

We recently received an invitation for Kolo to attend a selection camp for the USA 7s squad, which could give him an opportunity to be selected for the USA team competing at the Global Youth 7s Tournament at Dilworth School in Auckland this December. So, he has some exciting possibilities ahead, and we’re just taking it one step at a time. As he had just gotten home yesterday, we hope to sit down and talk about the future he has such as college, etc.

We are so grateful to the Foundation, Nelson College, and everyone who has been part of his journey. He will for sure miss the boys, the rugby, and the friendships he made there.

Thank you again for everything. We’ll send you and update on where this next chapter takes him very soon after we narrow some options. We appreciate all the Foundation has done. When talking with others, we have nothing but good things to say about the Foundation.

Much appreciation,

Tanei Kahanu”

Nick Withers, Nelson College’s Senior Economics teacher had this to say about the 2026 scholarship recipients:

“It was fantastic having three great rugby players come down from the States to play and stay at the home of NZ rugby here in Nelson – where great life-long friendships are made.

And what a great bunch! Kolo is becoming a full-fledged kiwi with his second visit back for this season. The whole school was so pleased to see him back!

South Pacific rugby is so strong amongst players and Kolo's part in this has been instrumental in a great season here in Nelson. This turned out to be a hugely competitive season with Nelson College beating Christchurch Boys High twice and maintaining the Manu Cup; and Alex, Kolo and Bennett have played a huge part in our 1st and 2nd XV programs' successes. Nelson College fielded four U17 teams where Alex and Bennett got their first taste of New Zealand grass roots rugby.

It's a great Saturday watching the boys play. Bennett has been so solid in the centers – a strong, powerful runner and hard, up quick tackler. Twice Bennett worked a set piece play that lead to a try. Alex has also been so solid all season with hard stand up tackling. All three guys have contributed much to our rugby program. It's a powerful thing to witness our Nelson College boys so welcoming of these USA rugby brothers who come down to get involved."

The USA U18 Winter Camp. Although it certainly is not a requirement for applying, all three Nelson College Scholarship recipients in 2026 took part in the highly regarded and very competitive USA Rugby U18 Winter Camp held in December (2025). This is a pathways camp where the top 50 prospects across the U.S. in the U18 age grade are invited to this 5 day intensive evaluation as USAR's pathways coaches assess these prospects for the upcoming Junior National Team Tours.



The 2026 "Three Musketeers": The 2026 version of the "Three Amigos". Two powerful, slashing backs from the Northeast and, again, one fearless and versatile back from the Big Island. Alex, Bennett and Kolo (left to right in this Nelson College photo) bonded well during their scholarship time down in New Zealand.