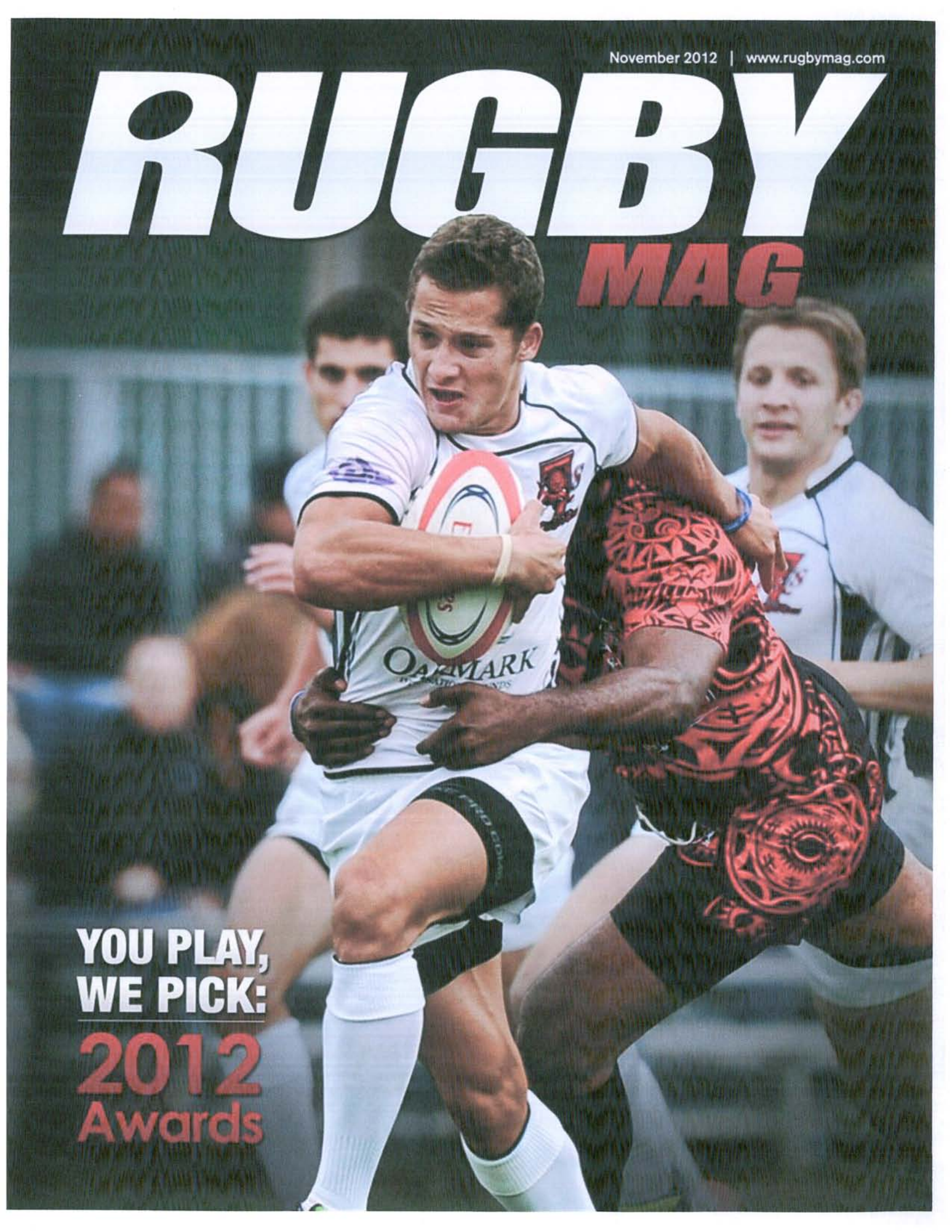


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RUGBY

MAG

YOU PLAY,
WE PICK:
2012
Awards



2012 **AWARD** RECIPIENTS

Men's Player of the Year	MIKE PETRI
Women's Player of the Year	LYNELLE KUGLER
Men's Forward of the Year	TODD CLEVER
Women's Forward of the Year	KITT WAGNER
Domestic Player of the Year	PETER DAHL
Overseas Performance of the Year	SAMU MANOA
Men's 7s Player of the Year	MIKE PALEFAU
Women's 7s Player of the Year	DEVEN OWSIANY
Men's College 7s Player of the Year	COLTON CARRIAGA
Women's College 7s Player of the Year	LAUREN DOYLE
Men's College Player of the Year	JP ELOFF
Women's College Player of the Year	AMELIA VILLINES
Boys' High School/U19 Player of the Year	ANTHONY SALABER
Girls' High School/U19 Player of the Year	CASSIDY MEYERS
Men's Breakout Player of the Year	MIKE TE'O
Women's Breakout Player of the Year	KATIE JOHNSON
Men's Try of the Year	ZAC MIZELL V BYU
Women's Try of the Year	HANNAH LOPEZ V BERKELEY
Men's Game of the Year	JR WORLD RUGBY TROPHY FINAL
Women's Game of the Year	NORWICH V WASHINGTON STATE
Men's Coach of the Year	JAMES WALKER & RAY EGAN
Women's Coach of the Year	MARIN & CRAIG PINNELL
Referee of the Year	NICK RICONO
Men's Club of the Year	BELMONT SHORE
Women's Club of the Year	BEANTOWN
College of the Year	BYU
High School of the Year	CATHEDRAL ROYAL IRISH

ANTHONY SALABER



David Barpal photo

Anthony Salaber was the Dixon High School rugby captain this past spring, and also the coach's son. Everyone on the Dixon High School rugby team in California knew that, but for any new player it would only take a few moments to realize there was no favoritism involved — the 6-5 fullback can flat-out play.

Salaber came to prominence early in the year, playing superbly for the High School All Americans in their run to the final of the Las Vegas Invitational Boys Elite 7s. With his height, passing skills, speed, and stepping ability, Salaber was a perfect complement to another of the candidates for HS Player of the Year, Hawaii's Nu'u Aiava.

The two parted ways in the spring while Salaber led Dixon to victory at the National HS Invitational. The team's one hiccup was a loss in the Northern California final to Jesuit, but they had beaten Jesuit earlier in the season, as well. At the NIT Dixon, led by Salaber, went on to sweep the field in Utah, beating Snow Canyon 20-10 (Salaber a try, two conversions and two penalties), and Xavier 20-12 (Salaber two tries, a

conversion and a penalty) in the preliminaries, and a very strong Penn squad 48-11 in the final (Salaber scoring three tries and four conversions).

For that NIT title run, Dixon scored 88 points, and Salaber accounted for 53 of them.

"It was a full 15-man effort," said Salaber, predictably gracious. "I knew when we started training at the beginning of the season that this was a special group. Everyone was willing to work together."

As captain and fullback, Salaber says he has a unique vantage point from fullback in that he can see the whole field.

"I can see what's happening in the rucks, and what's happening on defense," he said. "But I also could see that we were starting to play really well."

The loss to Jesuit in the NorCal final, when Dixon already had a berth at the NIT, was a message that they weren't invincible, said Salaber. And after that, they took care of business.



Kelley L. Cox photo

Salaber had little time to rest after the NIT win. He helped lead the High School All Americans to their 3-2 tour of South America. It was a wildly successful tour, with two victories over Chile, a close split with Uruguay, and a loss to Argentina. Salaber, at fullback, had a ton of work to do as all three teams liked to kick. In the end, Salaber ended up running a lot of those kicks back, weaving around tacklers, spinning out of grasping hands, and setting up several scoring opportunities, some of which were finished off by Aiava on the wing.

“We knew they would be foot-oriented,” said Salaber. “My job was the make sure the ball didn’t go behind me, and also not to get into a kicking contest with them. We preferred not to kick it right back to them, so we ran it a lot, and that worked. We had a lot of games and a lot of guys really stepped up. I loved playing with Nu’u and that’s the great thing about rugby — two guys from completely different backgrounds who are different body types and work together and succeed.”

This fall, Salaber has been playing 7s with Cal, getting some precious game time in some tournaments, and circling back to the version of rugby that started 2012 for him. He loves 7s, and has enormous potential there with his skill set and size.

“I am working on developing my strength and skill,” he said. “I had no idea that I would be playing so much 7s when I started playing rugby,

but I love it.”

Proud dad Rob has now handed over the coaching reins to Jack Clark and Tom Billups in Berkeley. Stepping away, Salaber the elder can show a little pride in his son’s play this year, but is quick to say just one thing he thinks is most important — “he’s just a really good kid.”



Jeff Rider photo