



The 2018 - 2019 season was built on a very successful previous season after the men won their first Arizona Union Championship since 2010. We had another very productive pre-season, splitting time between gym workouts and time at the pitch developing skills and fitness. The pre-season kicked off with Flagstaff 10's where we combined with Camelback and Prescott to give the men multiple games. It was a rainy and muddy tournament, which really tested their tight game and ball handling skills. A good win against Red Mountain proved that the guys have what it takes to battle against upper division teams. As usual, we played in the AZ Rugby Fest, this year in the competitive division. The guys got a lot of rugby in against some tough opposition, including the Ne Mexico Select side, the Highway men and Red Mountain. Again, Phoenix took another win against AZ D2 Warthogs.

The regular season saw Phoenix facing some stronger opposition with the addition of NAU into our division. We opened the regular season with a hard-fought win on the road against a very gritty Las Vegas team (20-17). We returned home a week later and ended up with a disappointing draw against NAU (12-12). The last contest vs NAU, the men were thrashed by over 70p.

February saw us winning all three of our games against Scottsdale (38-24), Camelback (79-12), and Las Vegas (26-15). By the end of February, we were looking at an unbeaten record, and confidence was high going into the Kino Cup against the Tucson Magpies. Unfortunately, it was not to be, as the pressure and hype for the game proved a little too much for us, and we found ourselves fighting from behind early against a tough opponent, finally losing the match (15-22). The final two regular season games saw us winning against OP (61-7), NAU in Flagstaff (28-18), which was a first road win vs NAU for the club.

The post-season was a different this year with the new league structure; this year there was a inter divisional game, which Phoenix had to beat Scottsdale first to win the AZ north division in order to move onto the AZ/New Mexico Playoffs. In a game that saw us tied at the half with Scottsdale, some adjustments gave us the edge, and we came out on top (31-19).

Going into day one of the AZ/New Mexico playoffs, we found ourselves up against the New Mexico Brujos. The men put on an absolute clinic, stringing together some superb rugby, and walking away with a well-deserved win (47-14). Day two of the playoffs saw us facing a familiar foe in NAU, and it was a cracker of a game. Unfortunately, we went into the game with some players out, including club captain PJ Rovinelli. We also saw some key injuries early. But as has been the story over the entire season, the bench and subs stepped up and never missed a beat. In a hard-fought match, we found ourselves down with less than 10 minutes to play. The men dug deep, and in true Phoenix fashion turned on the heat and scored the winning try. A missed penalty kick by NAU at the final whistle sealed the deal as we won (22-21).

For the first time in quite a while, we found ourselves in the western regionals sweet 16, and traveling to California to play the undefeated Kern County for the Pacific Southwest title. Unfortunately, Kern proved to be too much for us on the day. Phoenix spotted Kern 14p in the opening 6 minutes of play but battled back to put the game within 10p. Tough defense and good phase play constantly fell short with costly turnovers inside the 22m. IN the closing 15m, 3 soft tries and multiple penalties due to ill-

discipline led to many of Kern's points and we fell to 15-43 final. However, the final score does not tell the whole story. At the end of the day, I think we all learned a valuable lesson about what it really takes to win at the playoff level.

This season showed that Phoenix Rugby is headed in the right direction. Below are the awards given out for 2018 - 2019.

Forward of the Year – Ted Bentz
Back of the Year – Chris Bey
Utility Player of the Year – Oliver Kwete
Captain's Award – Matt Gerveler
Rookie of the Year – Jack Peers
Comeback Player of the Year – Kevin Bauer
TED (Time, Effort, Dedication) – Fa'a Lakatani
Old Age & Treachery Award – Caleb Jones
President's Award – Mike Hardy

On a personal note, I would like to recognize all the players that showed up week in and week out, put in the effort to train and help out, even when you were not getting as much playing time as you may have liked or wanted. I believe it is this dedication and family bond and culture that makes this team great, win or lose.

I also want to thank the other coaches, Mike, JR, PJ, Steve (time permitting) for their help, dedication and support. I am looking forward to the 2019 – 2020 season with much enthusiasm and am excited about the future of this club.

Coach Brad
Men's Head Coach