

A full-page photograph of Joe Taufete'e, a rugby player, running with the ball. He is wearing a white jersey with blue stripes on the sleeves and white shorts. He has a beard and dreadlocks. The background is a mix of blue and yellow abstract shapes.

SHINING MY LIGHT FOR CHRIST

Joe Taufete'e is a United States rugby player who plays hooker and prop for the Worcester Warriors in England and the U.S. men's national team. Taufete'e has also served as the captain of the U.S. developmental team. After having his dream of making it to the National Football League dashed because of an injury, Taufete'e started exploring the game of rugby, only to find he was extremely talented at it.

My journey to the game of rugby was a bit of an odd one. Like a lot of American rugby players, I started off playing American football, with my sights on making it to the NFL. But when that dream seemed to be off the table, I was introduced to rugby, and to Jesus, both of which ended up saving me.

When I was 16 years old, I had my eye on a girl. This girl was deeply rooted in the church environment, but I was of the world, and the whole church thing was new to me. When I tried to chase her down, she simply told me that her faith was her life and if I wanted to be a part of it, I had to choose Jesus. So I started going to church with her and her family to see what it was all about, and I soon discovered the power of having a relationship with Christ for myself.

Shortly after that, while I was in junior college playing football, I ended up tearing my ACL. This event seemed to ruin my relationship with God — I was angry with Him and blamed

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Him for taking football away from me. I didn't understand why He would do this to me. This was not what I had planned for myself. But during this time, I clung to the truth found in Proverbs 16:9, which says, "In their hearts humans plan their course, but the Lord establishes their steps."

It was also at this time that my girlfriend's family introduced me to the game they loved — rugby. At first, I saw rugby as a good way to get in with my girlfriend's family. But as I transitioned from sitting around on the couch to playing rugby, I realized I was good at this game and really enjoyed playing it. In a way, God used rugby to bring me out of the darkness I was in and back into the light.

Then one day, I received an email invitation from the USA Eagles — the U.S. national team — asking me to come be a day-camper. I was excited to be able to play the sport at such a high level! At 22, I came into camp and played the game well. Being a World Cup year, they then invited me to be part of the training squad and the pre-World Cup Tour. It shocked me! But I had to decline because my girlfriend and I were

about to get married.

However, despite the fact I chose not to join the team for the pre-Cup tour, to my surprise, I was invited to play at the 2015 World Cup with the Eagles. I joined the team for the Cup and found it to be an amazing experience.

Turning down the pre-World Cup tour was a hard decision, but God had something better for me. Being able to go to the World Cup as a young, up-and-coming player was incredible. Now, being a veteran on the national team, the position seems surreal.

I'm not the most talkative guy on the team, but I try to be a good role model for the rest of my team through my actions. I train for the game the same way I work on my spiritual walk with God — I work hard and let my actions speak loudly. I want my light for Christ to shine wherever I am and with whatever I am doing.

I have this platform and I want to use it to share God's Word. I want to be remembered as someone who represented Jesus, having followed His plan for me. Because without God, none of this would be possible. 🏈

Joe's favorite verse:

"In their hearts humans plan their course, but the Lord establishes their steps." — Proverbs 16:9



UNITED STATES

