



## INFORMATION PAGE

Week of January 14th, 2005

Looking forward to 2005, I hope that we are able to build on the excellent progress that was made in 2004.

Unions continue to grow, as do their activity levels. Competition and development programming has increased. Across NAWIRA, there are now:

- 9,271 male pre-teen players, an increase of 51% over 2003
- 2,136 female pre-teen players, and increase of 14%
- 41,869 male teenage players, up by 10%
- 18322 female teenage players, up by 8%
- 42,518 male open grade players, 11%
- 14,506 female open grade players, 18%

This represents an overall increase from 2003 to 2004 of 13%.

Interestingly, and remarkably, the percentage increases for 2002 – 2004 are 25% male and 34% female. Excellent.

There are:

- 3,085 coaches, up by 6%, and
- 1,623 officials, which is flat lined from 2003

It is clear that player numbers are rushing ahead of coach and referees (and, I wonder, administrators?). This is a matter that Unions will address. It is appropriate, then, that in association with Unions, the IRB ran four Train the Trainer courses in 2004, and five are planned for 2005. Combined, these will qualify 160 Trainers to facilitate IRB officiating and coaching courses throughout NAWIRA.

The IRB looks forward to working with Unions to help them to achieve their goals.

Also in the Information Page this week...

### 1 **IRB Trainers of Officials in Canada**

I am delighted to announce that the following have attained the status of IRB Trainer, having successfully completed the "Train the Trainer" course held in Toronto, January 6<sup>th</sup> – 9<sup>th</sup>:

Jack Auld, Leon Bourner, Jeff Canning, June Carson, Gerry Clayton, Jim Dale (USA), Dave Dashwood, John Davies, Dan Gana, Gavan Gillespie, Alan Gray, Al Humphries, Gareth Jones, Rob Lockwood, Jim McCann, Sean McDonough, Bill McNeil, Allen Piggott, Steve Scott, Bob Weir, Byron Wood.

IRB Officials Trainer courses are planned for February 2005, in Atlanta and San Francisco.

## 2 **Rulings on Law**

Here are the three final Laws rulings of 2004. These have been sent to your Union, relating to:

- Law 10            Foul Play and Law 22 In-goal
- Law 15            Tackle
- Law 19            Touch and Line-out, and Law 21 Penalty and Free Kicks

Rulings may also be located on the IRB web site.

## 3 **Maximum playing time for Age Grade Players**

I have received a number of enquiries regarding how much time an Age Grade player may play in one day.

Law 5 Time Under-19 variation requires that play in an Age Grade match lasts no longer than 70 minutes.

In the case of more than one match in one day (at a tournament, for example) a total of 90 minutes is the maximum playing time permitted. I attach the notice from Dublin that was sent to your Unions in May 2004.

## 4 **Canada snowed in but not under**

*From the IRB web site...*

It doesn't get any easier for Canada. A disappointing start to the season in Dubai was followed by an up-lift in form in George, but just as the teams all look to prepare for Wellington and Los Angeles head coach Ric Suggitt is snowed in.

He's not actually snowed in of course - the Canadians are far too 'good' at snow for that - but there is a chance that training might be, even in Victoria, where the weather is normally milder at this time of year.

Suggitt, though, has been the national team's Sevens coach from 1999, and has obviously held sway over and his players - and the elements - well enough in that time to have more recently been given the country's 15-a-side set-up to oversee as well.

"The weather can be a problem, but we have to get on with it," he told the IRB. "It's minus 22 degrees here in Edmonton at the moment, and covered in snow, so you can imagine that Rugby isn't too easy. Traditionally we go to Victoria to train at this time of year as it's normally raining rather than snowing, but they've had a few days of snow there too, so we might need to take the snow boots! If we do get there and it's snowing we'll just take it into the gym and train indoors.

Canada are one of the 11 core teams in the IRB Sevens - the sides that play in every tournament - and Suggitt makes no excuses for what was, for him in particular, a disappointing start to the new series.

Dubai losses to New Zealand, Australia, France and Ireland were sweetened only by victory over a poor Arabian Gulf side, but in George the side improved to beat Ireland, along with Namibia and Arabian Gulf, losing to South Africa and Samoa on day one.

The up-turn in George was quite marked though, and proves that the underdog tag clearly rests more happily on Canadian shoulders than that of conquering heroes.

"Beating Fiji in Hong Kong last year was great, but the amount of stress we put on ourselves in Dubai as a result was plain to see. No excuses - we put ourselves under too much pressure and were extremely disappointed with our performance in Dubai, there's no two ways about it.

"In George we rallied to remedy that, went back to our old 'underdog' style, the hard running, the old aggression, and we went far better."

At the same time last term two modest opening tournaments were followed by a good run in Wellington, where they lost in the bowl semis. Singapore brought more points by making the final of the bowl, and a fine performance in Hong Kong saw them beat Fiji to reach the Cup quarter finals - they lost only to losing finalists Argentina - to ultimately leave with no points but a greatly boosted morale.

This year Suggitt's Sevens side is getting together for five days at a time before each two-week Sevens trip at Shawnigan Lake in British Columbia, something it has never done before, and he is hopeful that the results can now pick up, as they did last year.

"It's been a real help to us, especially this year in the build-up to the Rugby World Cup Sevens in Hong Kong. To be immersed in Sevens for three weeks at a time is fantastic - it's what the guys need, and we need more of it.

"The geography does play against us a bit with the country being so big and having dual seasons. British Columbia's season runs contrary to the other nine provinces in the country, but we make do and take the training there when the snow's everywhere else."

He is also positive that the likes of captain Marco di Girolamo and veteran Shane Thompson, who astonishingly plays a record 51<sup>st</sup> international Sevens event in Wellington, will need no incentive to get out and play decent Rugby in front of the New Zealand crowd.

"We love Wellington. If you can't play and get up for Rugby there, you won't be able to anywhere in the world - the way it's run, organised, supported is fantastic. And we need points on the board. Then it's on to LA, and with it being so close to home we better do well there!"

Best wishes to all in 2005.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Tom Jones". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style with a large initial 'T' and 'J'.

Tom Jones  
Regional Development Manager