



INFORMATION PAGE

Week of February 18th, 2005

1 IRB Sevens in Los Angeles

From the IRB web site

New Zealand a class apart

New Zealand won their third IRB Sevens title in succession here in Carson Los Angeles as they wrestled the USA Sevens title from plucky Argentina with a 34-5 final win at the Home Depot Center.

New Zealand's victory, won through a combination of sheer determination, a fine combined squad effort and the influential brilliance of stand-in captain Orene Ai'i, takes them to 72 points in the overall IRB Sevens standings, 20 ahead of closest rivals Fiji.

An early try from Tafai loasa, who provided the thrust and industry in midfield in Liam Messam's absence, got the kiwis off to the best possible start and, although Argentina responded through a try from Schusterman, a further ten points were added before half time by a breakaway from Hunt and a second from loasa.

Argentina, who did fantastically well to reach the final with just 11 men to pick from, rallied, Bosch, Tiesi and Fleming all strong, but tries to Ellison, Hunt and Ai'i sealed the 34-5 win.

"We knew we'd need to play well against them, "said coach Gordon Tietjens, "they're a strong side and we lost here to them in the final last year.

"But I'm very proud of my guys. These things don't win themselves, they dedicate themselves to training hard, eating right, all the things you need to do to be the best. Three in a row is great, but it comes with a lot of sweat and tears."

Gordon Tietjens' outfit must now be considered clear favourites for both the IRB Sevens 2004/05 crown and the Rugby World Cup Sevens 2005, which takes place in Hong Kong from 18-20 March.

Route to the Cup final

Argentina took early control of their semi final against England, who oddly chose to kick a lot of possession away in a bid to win the territorial battle. In the end the Pumas ran out comfortable 17-0 winners.

New Zealand's passage to the final was equally convincing. They led 24-0 at half time having capitalised on Australian mistakes, and stretched the lead to 31-0 before conceding two late Australian tries to leave the score 31-12.

Australia had triumphed over France in the third quarter final 24-5 to book their semi berth and will be pleased to register 12 points from the USA competition.

Plate success for Fiji

In the penultimate match of the day Fiji ran out winners in the Plate, beating Samoa 24-21 in an enthralling final.

Dranivasa, Nanuku and the fabulous Roko - well and truly back now - all touched down for the Fijians, but Samoa hit back through Lemi, Perez and Fa'amatuainu and in the end only Fuli's try stretched the Fijians to comfort.

The Bowl final saw an abrasive Canada run out convincing winners over darlings of the crowd, Kenya.

Githinji's men had beaten Uruguay 26-10 to reach the final stage, while Canada pipped Scotland 17-10, but in the final Canada set out to stop the speedy Kenyans from playing, and their tactic worked well.

"We know what they can do if you give them the space, so we really aimed to get in their faces, be physical, be aggressive, and it paid off," said coach Ric Suggitt.

"We're aiming for top eight finishes, but a final win is a final win and we'll take the points. This has been great preparation for the World Cup in a month's time."

Tonga prove a step too far for Mexico

Tonga, meanwhile, won the Shield final against a brave Mexico 40-0. Tonga overcame hosts USA 35-12 to reach the final, while Mexico won over the West Indies amid jubilant scenes to book a place in the final in their first IRB event. The final itself, however, proved a step too far.

"The tears and emotion after the semi showed how much it meant to us," said coach Jamie Johnston.

"I just can't yet put into words how much this will have done for Mexican Rugby. To play in a tournament of this magnitude is huge for us. In about two weeks we'll realise what we've achieved."

Earlier in the day former USA captain Dan Lyle presented England's Ben Gollings with a trophy to recognise his new status as the leading all-time points scorer in IRB Sevens. Gollings passed Fiji's Waisale Serevi in Wellington last weekend.

2 Recognition of great work by USA Rugby

The spectacle described above was made possible by the Staff and volunteers of USA Rugby. I had access to all areas of the stadium, and I must take this opportunity to let everyone know what an outstanding job was done. Whether on the field, in the bowels of the stadium, or on the concourses, I could not help but notice the number of USA Rugby people who were quietly and efficiently carrying out their responsibilities, often in dark and unglamorous locations.

Congratulations to USA Rugby! Your ability to host and organise a world class Rugby event is firmly established.

3 Recognition of great work by the Officials

This tournament would not have been possible without the excellent work of the referees, assessors and sideline officials, of which there were **forty-five**.

From the USA, unless indicated otherwise: Mark Aitkenhead, Davey Ardrey, Wayne Barnes (England), Brett Bowden (Australia), Paul Bretz, Lois Bukowski, Graeme Bullen, Parker Carlisle, Tom Coburn, Tammy Cowan, Richard Every, Grace Gavin, Kevin Gaws, Mike Geach, Steve Griffiths (IRB), Charlie Haupt, Chris Henshall, Greg Hinton (Australia), Craig Joubert (South Africa), Mark Koiwai, Kati Kovacs, Tim Luscombe, Tom Lyons, John McConnell, Jem McDowall, Patrick McNally, Don Morrison, Paul Mowser (Trinidad and Tobago), George Nicholson (Barbados), Mark Ormsby, Simon Page, Richard Parker, Dave Peters, Allen Piggott (Canada), Anthony Pontiflette (Trinidad and Tobago), Alasdair Robertson (Cayman), Kevin Rowe (New Zealand), Bridget Tanian, Dana Teagarden, Bob Toomy, Mark Wheeler, Gary Wise (New Zealand), Jim Wolfinger, Scott Wood and Mark Zetterberg.

I again congratulate USA Rugby for assembling such an outstanding group of individuals who handled their responsibilities with aplomb.

Particularly pleasing to me was the participation of four Caribbean touch judges. The whole experience was a huge boost to their refereeing careers, and will, by extension, benefit Rugby throughout NAWIRA. I congratulate Mark Wheeler, Chair of the United States of America Rugby Referees Association, and NAWIRA Technical Representative, for taking the initiative

to extend the invitation. Excellent! It was a milestone for West Indies Rugby when four of their officials were involved together in some of the most intense and hotly contested matches in the Tournament.

Best wishes to all,

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

Tom Jones
Regional Development Manager