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NEWS

AUSTRALIA WIN THEIR FIRST EVER OCEANIA SEVENS TITLE

Australia Scored a stunning 34-12 win over reigning IRB Sevens World Series Champions Samoa to claim their first ever Oceania Sevens Championship in Darwin on 2 October.

Australia's win caps off an outstanding 2009/10 IRB Sevens World Series and positions Michael O'Connor's men beautifully ahead of their tilt at the Delhi Commonwealth Games.

It was the first time that Australia had beaten Samoa this year and Australian Coach Michael O'Connor was delighted.

"That's the only team we haven't beaten this year so I'm glad we've been able to get that monkey off our back" said O'Connor.

Whilst disappointed, Samoan coach Stephen Betham wasn't ringing the alarm bells.

"Obviously it's always disappointing to lose but I'm happy with how some of the new guys performed and it has been a great preparation for us for the Commonwealth Games" said Betham.

In the 3rd/4th final, Tonga, down to six men for the final 2 minutes, scored a try on fulltime to beat a vastly improved PNG side 12-7. PNG have been the real bolters at the Oceania Championship and will surely put the shivers through some opponents at the Commonwealth Games next week. Tonga showed great composure to beat PNG and qualify for Hong Kong as well as the Wellington and Adelaide Legs of the IRB Sevens

World Series. PNG will join them and Cook Islands in Wellington and Adelaide.

The Cook Islands have qualified for the Wellington and Adelaide legs of the IRB Sevens World Series with a tight 15-5 victory over Niue to claim 5th spot at the Oceania Championship - a significant improvement on their disappointing 2009 Tournament.

In the playoff for Seventh spot, Tahiti notched up their first victory of the tournament with a 19-7 victory over Vanuatu.

Australia, Samoa, Tonga and PNG headed from the tournament in Darwin to India with six tough games under their belt in preparation for the Commonwealth Games which started on 11th October.



Australia 2010 Oceania Sevens Champions
Photo: Zoomfiji



NEW ZEALAND WIN GOLD AT THE 2010 COMMONWEALTH GAMES RUGBY SEVENS

New Zealand won their fourth successive Commonwealth Games gold medal, beating Australia 24-17 in the final of the 2010 Games in Delhi.

It was an enthralling climax to the second day of competition which also saw South Africa win bronze, Samoa win the Plate and Papua New Guinea deservedly collect some silverware, defeating Canada 17-10 in the Bowl final.

Following a dramatic end to the first day with Kenya beating Samoa, there were a further 18 matches for the crowd at the Delhi University stadium to savour, ending with New Zealand's historic victory over Australia.

Trailing 17-7 in the second half following tries from Wallaby Lachie Turner, Luke Morahan and James Stannard, it seemed as though New Zealand would suffer their first ever defeat in the history of the Commonwealth Games.

But tries from DJ Forbes, replacement Sherwin Stowers and Kurt Baker ensured Gordon Tietjens' side went home with the gold medal in front of a packed crowd at the Delhi University stadium.

Lote Raikabula had given the defending gold medallists a 7-0 lead but without the injured Tomasi Cama they seemed unable to unlock the Australian defence.

The three Australian tries followed either side of half time, including a sensational individual effort from Morahan, but when flyer Stowers came on as a second half replacement he had an immediate impact against some tired legs.

Australia's silver medal is their first since a bronze in 1998 and although they will be disappointed, the medal caps a successful year, with Michael O'Connor's side winning their first leg on the World Series since 2002 at the 2010 London

Sevens.

Final word from IRB CEO/Secretary General, Mike Miller, on Twitter in Delhi (@irbmikemiller): "Congratulations to New Zealand for winning a fourth-successive Commonwealth Games Rugby Sevens Gold. Heartbreak for the young Australians, but they go home with a first ever Commonwealth Games Rugby Sevens silver."

In the bronze medal match, South Africa dramatically claimed their first medal since 2002, beating England 17-14 having trailed 14-5 at half time.

Bernard Botha scored the opening try of the match but converted tries from Matthew Turner and Dan Caprice gave the 2006 silver medallists the lead going into the interval of the penultimate match in the competition.

Cecil Afrika and Lubabalo Mtembu clinched the title in a nervy second half, however, as Paul Treu's men held firm to deny the efforts of the spirited Ben Gollings at the death to claim an historic bronze medal.



New Zealand beat Australia 24-17 to claim their fourth successive Commonwealth Games Gold medal

Photo: www.irb.com



Medal competition lights up Comm Games

New Zealand became the first side to reach the final, beating England 33-12 in a repeat of the 2006 gold medal match, when New Zealand were 29-21 victors.

Forbes (two) and Cama got the defending champions off to a flying start before Isoa Damudamu hit back for England. But Raikabula and Cama cemented the victory for Tietjens' men.

The second semi final between Australia and South Africa was a closer affair and although Ryno Benjamin put Treu's men on the front foot after two minutes, Turner, Liam Gill and the influential Stannard ensured O'Connor's side were guaranteed their first medal since 1998.

New Zealand had earlier beaten RWC Sevens 2009 winners Wales 33-10 in the quarter finals despite conceding the opening try to Ifan Evans, with Baker (two), Ben Smith, Hosea Gear and Toby Arnold securing victory.

England set up a repeat of the 2006 final after a hard-fought victory over Samoa, a side they lost 15-12 to in one of the most dramatic matches of this year's World Series in Edinburgh, edging a tough encounter 7-5.

Alatasi Tupou gave Stephen Betham's men a 5-0 lead after a period of possession and territory on the England try line before Greg Barden drew the scores level and Ben Gollings added the conversion to give England a crucial two-point lead in a very tight affair. It is the second successive time England have beaten Samoa at this stage of the competition, having won 17-14 in Melbourne.

Kenya caused the biggest upset in the final pool match of the opening day, beating Samoa 12-10, but Australia proved a step too far in the quarter finals, with the 2010 London Sevens champions reaching the semi finals with a 27-5 victory

thanks to two tries from Stannard.

South Africa and Scotland completed the quarter final line-up, and it was Treu's side who reached the semi finals with a 10-7 victory thanks to a decisive try from Benjamin. Scotland had scored one of the tries of the tournament through Mike Adamson with the last play of the opening half, but their hearts were broken early in the second.

Samoa too strong for Scotland in Plate final

Samoa scored six tries as the reigning World Series champions put the disappointment of missing out on a medal behind them, beating Scotland 34-0 in the final.

Afa Aiono and IRB Sevens Player of the Year Mikaele Pesamino both scored two tries against a Scotland side who will have done head coach Stephen Gemmell proud in his final Sevens hurrah.

Earlier the two teams had reached the final after respective 38-12 and 22-17 victories over Wales and Kenya, following their losses in the medal quarter finals.

The eventual winners avenged a Plate semi final loss to Wales in 2006 as Stephen Betham's men crossed for six tries against the current RWC Sevens holders, whilst Scotland beat Kenya dramatically in sudden death extra time with Lee Jones the hero.

Having earlier lost 27-5 to Australia in the medal quarter final, Kenya were unable to build on their 100% record and dramatic victory over Samoa on day one.



Afa Aiono in Samoa's Pool decider v Kenya
Photo: www.irb.com



Papua New Guinea beat Canada in Bowl final

Papua New Guinea recorded a memorable victory over World Series regulars Canada to win the Bowl final 17-10 at the 2010 Commonwealth Games thanks to two tries from Albert Levi.

It was just reward for PNG who entertained the crowd at the Delhi University stadium with some exhilarating Sevens throughout the tournament, scoring three tries against reigning World Series champions Samoa and narrowly missing out on a huge upset with a 17-12 defeat to Pool C winners Kenya on day one.

Earlier Canada and PNG had come through two thrilling semi finals with Geraint John's side beating Uganda 22-17 despite trailing 12-5 at half time and the eventual winners proving too strong for Tonga, winning 24-5.

Henry Liliket gave a Sevens master class in the opening half, showing great strength and speed to score the first two tries before turning provider for PNG's third through Shadrach Ghabiliha, with 18-year-old Eugene Tokavai sealing the victory.

In the first semi final Uganda had opened up a 12-0 lead after Lawrence Wakabi, picking up where he left off earlier in the day, and Ambrose Kamanyire scored the opening two tries of the match, but Canada hit back with the next four tries.

Nathan Hirayama and Conor Trainor both scored twice - the former taking his tournament tally to seven - and although Kamanyire scored his second of the match, Canada held on to reach the final.

The two bottom placed teams from each of the four pools on day one moved into the Bowl competition and although no medals were on offer for them, the players put on an exhilarating competition for the spectators.

Canada had begun proceedings on day two

against India and a hat-trick from Hirayama helped them through to the semi final. The home crowd were delighted, however, when Puneeth Krishnamurthy and Rohaan Sethna scored the host's points, whilst Wakabi scored two tries for Uganda in their 26-14 victory over Malaysia.

PNG earlier defeated Sri Lanka 26-12 with Levi adding to his tournament try tally with two more against the Asian side, before Tonga scored three times against Guyana to secure their position in the semi finals.



Henry Liliket unloads for Papua New Guinea
Photo: Zoomfiji

Day two results:

Gold medal match: New Zealand 24-17 Australia
Bronze medal match: England 14-17 South Africa
Plate final: Samoa 34-0 Scotland
Bowl final: Canada 10-17 Papua New Guinea
Medal semi final: Australia 17-7 South Africa
Medal semi final: New Zealand 33-12 England
Plate semi final: Kenya 17-22 Scotland
Plate semi final: Wales 12-38 Samoa
Bowl semi final: Tonga 5-24 Papua New Guinea
Bowl semi final: Canada 22-17 Uganda
Medal quarter final: South Africa 7-5 Scotland
Medal quarter final: Kenya 5-27 Australia
Medal quarter final: England 7-5 Samoa
Medal quarter final: New Zealand 33-10 Wales
Bowl quarter final: Tonga 21-14 Guyana
Bowl quarter final: Papua New Guinea 26-12 Sri Lanka
Bowl quarter final: Uganda 26-14 Malaysia
Bowl quarter final: Canada 43-10 India



TUTORIAL:

BY LEE SMITH

WHAT EMERGED FROM THE PACIFIC NATIONS CUP?

On the one hand the logistical difficulties the three Pacific Island teams are faced with in team assembly and preparation could lead us to give them credit for their performances, but when all are faced with the same problem, as they are in the Pacific Nations Cup (“PNC”), this no longer becomes an excuse. This situation has occurred at least since this competition has begun and strategies to overcome this should well be in place.

This situation existed before the last Rugby World Cup (“RWC”) and, in going into the next one; these known variables should not be an impediment as far as the teams’ performance is concerned.

If I was to put my finger on the two areas that demand attention they are fitness and consistency. Indeed these two go hand-in-hand as fatigue makes cowards of us all and when teams run out of gas the technical and the tactical are eroded.

Given that the vast majority of players play offshore this is not a reflection of the home-based fitness programme, rather it requires a single minded monitoring programme for these players over the next 18 months based on continual communication with all likely players fitness monitors and at the same time continually reinforces the teams’ game profiles and patterns of play.

Up to and including the northern hemisphere tours at the end of the year attempts should be made to overcome deficiencies. Over all these are consistency and the ability to play to a pattern that fits the personnel of each team. The problem is that deficiencies lie in fundamental areas of the game that, if they are not addressed, performance will be hampered. Amongst these are gaining possession at line-out and scrum,



playing as a unit in attack and defence and tackling with consistency. No matter how specific a pattern of play reflects the team’s personnel it is difficult to develop one which avoids these areas of weakness and still gets acceptable results.

The other element that needs to be considered is to make sure the game profile fits to team profile. This involves looking at what the teams do well, at what comes naturally as, by doing this, you are building on a sound foundation.

So when a review of the performance takes place some hard decisions have to be made regarding the way the team will approach the game in next year’s PNC and in the lead up to the RWC.

Teams may have to attack one-on-one with support coming from behind rather than attack laterally. If the line-out is unreliable you may have to reduce your options and throw the “money” ball to #2 so that, at the very least, you have possession and they don’t. By not forcing the pass in 50:50 situations you can reduce the need to go to scrums but this also places emphasis on an ingrained pattern after the tackle, whether it be on attack or in defence.

Some basic truths remain. If you don’t have the ball you can’t attack. If you can’t kick accurately you can’t get field position. If possession is not cherished you are conceding the game. If you don’t tackle you have no defence and if you have no alignment in defence you have no defence pattern. And in all things you can buy time by having depth on the ball.

