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# NEWS

## COOK ISLAND RUGBY'S PLACE IN HISTORY

By Bruce Cook

A scratch team of Rarotonga boys including the late Sir Albert Henry played the 1924 All Blacks Invincibles on their way to the United Kingdom, and drew 0-0. This was the only team that the 1924 Invincibles did not defeat. In fact they were the only team who kept the All Blacks scoreless on that tour. Although this could never be considered an official international, it is still talked about by the Rugby folk in Rarotonga. So where did this famous but now forgotten match take place?

On a recent visit to the Cook Islands, I was taken to see Queen Makea's Palace in the town of Avarua by the Cook Islands RU CEO Ben Koteka. He is very proud of his heritage and certainly knows his Rugby, and didn't waste any time telling me whilst pointing to a large grassed and undulating area in front of the palace.... now with palm trees randomly scattered around its edges with some on the 15 metre mark near the 22 metre line.....that this was where the Invincibles played against the Cook Islands in 1924. Was he having me on? I had never heard of this, but then again I wasn't up on my history of NZ rugby during the early decades of the 19th century.

The ground in front of me is directly in front of Queen Makea's Palace on the main street of Avarua. I finally found an old picture from the 1900's and then a report from a visitor to Rarotonga. Here is what she had to say.

*"I had not been in Rarotonga more than a day or two, when my hosts took me to call upon the queen, intimating that she would feel hurt if the newcomer was not presented to her. We walked through the blazing sun of the tropic afternoon, down the palm-shaded main street of Avarua town, to the great grassy enclosure that surmounts the palace of the queen. One enters through a neat white gate; inside are one or two small houses, a number of palms and flowering bushes, and at the far end, a stately two-storeyed building constructed of whitewashed concrete, with big railed-in verandahs, and handsome arched windows. This is Makea's palace."*

It was through these white gates that the pitch was located, with one end near the road and the other directly in front of her Palace. I wondered what the locals thought of the match, and any of the Queen's descendents. Was there a large crowd, was it vociferous, or was it in awe of the yet to be tagged 'Invincibles'? Unless there was a local newspaper then, we may never know. It would have been surreal to be there, with no ground announcers, no hot flame blowers, no dancing girls....well maybe the locals with grass skirts.... but not the pom-pom girls that are found in the Super 15, no physio's, no TMO, no bunting and no half time interviews with players. Bring on time travel I think to myself.

But here I was, standing on a place that is part of rugby history...unbeknown to most. There's no plaque to mark the occasion, no crowds milling around the pitch coming to see where it all took place, just an errant coconut dropping from one of the palm trees and almost clattering into my skull.

Turned out he wasn't kidding, and when I got back from those glorious isles, I decided to do a little research on the matter.

The Invincibles was a nickname given to the 1924-25 New Zealand Rugby team which toured the United Kingdom, Ireland, France and Canada. Between September 1924 and February 1925, the team played 32 games including four test matches, one each against Ireland, England, Wales, and France. They won all 32 games, scoring 838 points and only having 116 points scored against them.

Albert Royle Henry (1907-1981) who played in this match when he was just 17 years old, and went on to become the first Premier of the Cook Islands in 1965. Henry was re-elected consistently in the elections of 1968, 1972, 1974 and March 1978. Upon becoming elected Premier, Henry did much to unify the Cook Islands and to promote its newly awarded self-government. His government quickly approved the proposed constitution, which awarded self-rule to the Cook Islands while maintaining New Zealand citizenship



for its residents.

As with many Pacific Island nations, Rugby has been the main sport since the early 20th century. Visiting ships from Australia, New Zealand, the UK and Japan, have kept the game going. However, Cook Island Rugby has mostly taken the form of an informal folk sport until recently.

Also, the Cook Islands have suffered another problem common to many other surrounding nations such as Samoa; with potential players opting to play for bigger nations. Both brothers Graeme and Steve Bachop were eligible to play for the Cook Islands but chose to play for their country of birth New Zealand.

As with many of the Pacific Island Nations with a lot of talent, and not a lot of population, the Cook Islands have tended to do well in Sevens. Many Cook Islands players often go to New Zealand, especially Auckland where there is a large Cook Island population.

So if you get to visit Raratonga on business or pleasure, make sure you drop into this idealic setting, where the Invincibles came, saw.....but didn't conquer.



***The ground where the Cook Islands played the Invincibles in 1924***



***Queen Makea's Palace just past the dead-ball-line***



## DEVELOPMENT OF ATTACKING PLAY IN RUGBY UNION - PART 3

By Lee Smith

How are we going to address each of the outcomes?

### Micro Situations

There are a number of situations that I would call micro situations that involve a limited number of players. Examples of these are:

- individual one-on-one situations;
- mini-units with either:
  - an overlap (attack numbers greater than defence) or
  - an underlap (attack numbers less than defence) and mismatches.

### In order to analyse these situations

- Apply Functional Roles Analysis (FRA) and Key Factor Analysis (KFA) to positional coaching in static restart situations i.e. kick-offs, scrums, line-outs.
- Apply FRA and KFA to positional coaching in dynamic situations i.e. play from phase play, rucks and mauls.
- Apply FRA and KFA to support play by players who are not members of the front line of attack in both these situations, and identify how they get into play.

### Macro Situations

These are situations that place the episode of play in the context of the game, the tournament and even the season. These are often factors that can be taken as constants before the game commences, or are in the broad context of the game. These were listed last week but for convenience they are listed again below.

- The context of the game in the rugby season.
- The team's position on the table in relation to where they want to be and the relative position of today's opponent.
- The team's team profile, game profile and patterns of play.
- The opposing team's profile and, by comparison with ours, the game plan for today.
- Weather, the state of the field etc.
- Field position.
- The score and time remaining
- Attacking options during play that fall into 2 categories, those the opposition defence is closing down and those the opposition defence is having trouble with.

- Match officiating.

### How do we go about this analysis?

To place it in context, the players and coaches should have information about each of the macro variables above.

- We can now go from the macro to the micro. It is optional to have the group members focus on all functional roles or take a functional role each. If they focus on a role each it is essential that they do this in pairs to ensure feedback is obtained enabling the group to arrive at a consensus.
- Group members should write down their own ideas before discussing them with each other. The "Wisdom of Crowds" commences with individual work so that all have something of their own thoughts to contribute.

### Analysing Episodes

- Obtain 3-4 clips from a game to demonstrate a situation. Each should be a complete episode from the re-start to the ref's whistle indicating a stoppage.
- Based on the situation at the start of the episode write down how you would expect play to develop and what would be the best situation at the end of the episode.
- Prior to play starting identify the functional roles in the attacking line. The functional role should reflect the role to be performed, not the playing position e.g. playmaker not first five-eight.
- List in sequential order the most important key factors for that role.
- Each group finalises their roles and key factors.
- Play the clip to see what happens next and have the group members following their designated players. Decide:
  - Did the role change?
  - What cues caused the change in role?
  - What was the new role and what were its key factors?
  - Did the player identify the best role and were the key factors for that role performed successfully?
- Complete this exercise for a number of attacking clips.
- Build up a list of role changes and their related key factors. Identify the most common mistakes in role identification and role performance.
- Use these to develop practice activities that duplicate these situations.
- Perform the activities and fine tune them to better meet your needs.



## SEVENS DELIVERS AGAIN

By Nigel Starmer-Smith



*TV commentator Nigel Starmer-Smith gives his reaction to the fascinating turn of events at the penultimate round of the HSBC Sevens World Series in London, and looks ahead to the final acts of the season in Edinburgh.*

Well, let's first of all congratulate New Zealand on winning their ninth World Series title, of the 12 contested so far. Simply superb. They didn't get entirely what they wanted, which was to win the Cup title in London as well, but they did well enough and after those four earlier Cup successes in the season it was always odds-on that they would go on and do it, and with England disappointing, clearly the gap was never going to be closed.

I am such an admirer of New Zealand's team, their players, their approach and most of all their coach, the great Gordon Tietjens. I'm sure he'll be around for a while yet.

In terms of the London Sevens themselves, though, I think it was one of the great tactical victories that I've ever seen.

Clearly, if Fiji is allowed space to run with abandon they can tear anyone to shreds - look at what they did to New Zealand in the Cup semi - but this is where South Africa's coach Paul Treu was so shrewd in his coaching.

He broke it down so that they tied them in, released the ball to the short side and kept it tight. We saw the innovation of the six man lineout again from them, and the driving maul. I hope we don't see it too often (!) but on one-off occasions and used at the right times it's worked brilliantly for them, and on both occasions this season against Fiji.

Now everyone's aware of it so we probably won't see it spring such a surprise but I'm sure Paul will come up with something else.

## Sevens the Global sport

It was such an extraordinary tournament when it comes to Sevens underlining the globality of rugby and the potential for so many more countries to do well, and the last 10 matches on day one will live with me for a long time.

You had the lower seeds winning seven of those 10 games, plus two draws. Only New Zealand managed to win as the higher-ranked side in those 10 matches and the whole concept of an upset win in Sevens, we've been saying it for a while now but it really doesn't exist anymore, not within the top 16 sides anyway, it's so even now and 40, 50-point wins have gone.

### London Sevens 7 of the Best

Russia, Portugal, Kenya, Canada, they are so competitive and every pool game is a trial, no longer a formality. It's now open to the world and, believe me; it's going to continue in this direction.

And among the contenders to win the title, I think it was Gordon Tietjens himself who said before the tournament started that you can throw a very large blanket over the top six or eight sides and any of them could come out and win the Cup.

### Twickenham the new home of Sevens?

And what an incredible crowd that turned up on both days to watch at Twickenham. Congratulations to the organisers. Over 54,000 on the first day and over 45,000 on the Sunday - a magnificent achievement and a sign that this event is just going to keep on growing.

In a way I was disappointed that England didn't do better, not because I'm English but because new people were coming to see the game and that's significant because the media here doesn't promote the Sevens nearly as much as it does in other parts of the world on the various stops we make.

I was hoping that England would make the final rounds in the Cup so that those newcomers to Sevens could see what a breathless spectacle it is when the action gains a real momentum and you also have a vested interest of a home side there in the mix. Also for them to have seen how good England can be because they've been very strong this season and just put in a very disappointing performance.

Talking to Ben Gollings the captain and Ben Ryan the coach, they were bemused as to what had happened.



Whether it was the stage, whether it was the fact that they had over 100,000 people at Twickenham to watch the Sevens over the weekend, maybe that played on them a little bit.

### 100 up in Murrayfield

And what of Murrayfield this coming weekend, the 100th World Series event of all time?

How is New Zealand going to react up there to already having clinched the Series crown? I know that in a way Gordon Tietjens would have much preferred for it to go down to the wire, because he's a lover of the game of Sevens almost as much as he is of New Zealand Sevens.

Amazingly, they've stuck to a rigid historical pattern because I don't think the penultimate tournament in a Series has ever been won by the overall champions.

The truth is that any of the Cup quarter finalists, as well as England of course and Scotland the hosts, could be on a par when we start all over again in Edinburgh, and the battle for second in the Series is now on with an intriguing four-horse race.
















I'm sure New Zealand will be gunning for gold though, just to make sure nobody else gets to lift a big trophy on the day.

## HSBC SEVENS WORLD SERIES STANDINGS

By Bruce Cook

With one tournament remaining in the HSBC Sevens World Series, there are 4 Oceania teams in the top 6, and 3 in the top 5. Realistically Australia may be a threat on any day, however in the context of the point's ladder they are lame ducks. New Zealand has won the title yet again, and what a depth of rugby talent both on and off the field in their playing, coaching and support staff do they show series after series.

The race for second place is on, with both Fiji and Samoa within easy striking distance of England. Both performed well in London, and with a weekend of good competitive rugby under their collective belts, we could see both the Fijians and Samoans dazzle rivals in Scotland. The weather may not be what they are use to, with highs of 12 degrees and showers forecast for next weekend. However, it may just be the tonic for them to both complete another fine season in the HSBC World Series Sevens.

		TEAM	DUB	RSA	NZL	USA	HKG	AUS	ENG	SCO	Pts
1		New Zealand	16	24	24	16	30	24	16	0	150
2		England	24	20	20	16	25	16	0	0	121
3		South Africa	12	12	8	24	16	20	24	0	116
4		Samoa	20	16	16	12	20	16	12	0	112
5		Fiji	16	16	12	20	20	6	20	0	110
6		Australia	8	6	16	6	10	6	8	0	60
7		Wales	6	6	6	0	0	12	16	0	46
8		Argentina	4	8	6	6	0	8	6	0	38
9		Kenya	0	0	4	8	0	0	0	0	12
10		Scotland	0	4	0	4	0	0	4	0	12
11		United States	6	0	0	0	0	4	0	0	10
12		Portugal	0	0	0	0	8	0	0	0	8
13		Russia	0	0	0	0	8	0	0	0	8
14		France	0	0	0	0	0	0	6	0	6
15		Canada	0	0	0	0	5	0	0	0	5

