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NEWS

SAMOA ARE CROWNED 2010 OCEANIA U19s CHAMPIONS

The 2010 Oceania U19 Championship concluded on Friday 3 September with Samoa running out Champions at Apia Park, Samoa, as they disposed of the Cook Islands in scintillating fashion. However, even an unsavoury incident in the spiteful encounter between American Samoa and Papua New Guinea couldn't dampen the passion the other teams took into their matches. All teams came to work today to go to war against their Island cousins. For a few, it will be their last time playing at this level as they move into the senior ranks of their respective home Unions, so they were determined to leave their mark.

First up we had Tahiti v Vanuatu. Tahiti has had their fair share of challenges to overcome during the Tournament, however in traditional island style they gave their all, and got stuck in from the get go.

A great try scored by Vanuatu's James Kalsakau opened the scoring for the day of the Finals. Vanuatu's opening play was expansive with numerous raids into the Tahiti quarter, however their momentum was stopped by a determined opponent. Tahiti rallied, returning serve as their outside centre sliced through some flimsy defence to score next to the post. The battle seesawed and teams went to the break with Tahiti ahead 12 - 5. Vanuatu opened their second half account straight after half time with sustained pressure up the middle and then spun it wide to score in the corner. However the hot conditions and Tahiti's annoying loose forwards and speedy backs were too much for Vanuatu, and Tahiti scored late in the half to record their

first win of the Tournament. Tahiti 17 - Vanuatu 10.

American Samoa and Papua New Guinea were next off the rank, and a spirited but spiteful encounter ensued. Papua New Guinea were playing for pride after being bundled out of IRB Junior World Trophy qualification contention by the Cook Islands, and American Samoa, the newcomers, were looking to send a message to the Region that they would be a force to be reckoned with in future competitions. However, passion spilled into dirty play and the game was marred by an unsavoury incident in the 17th minute which caused the referee to consider calling off the match. Fortunately, the game continued, however tension amongst the teams remained and the match played out minus the spirit that had been generated over the course of the Tournament. Papua New Guinea won the match 34 - 5.

Samoa v Cook Islands was the match that everyone was waiting for, and would decide the 2010 Oceania U19s Champions. Both teams came out pumped to take the prize, however it was Samoa that were never headed, and whilst the Cooks charges were gallant, they were no match for the Samoa juggernaut. Samoa quickly skipped to a 12 point lead, however the Cooks opened their scoring though a penalty goal, which slowed the game momentarily and gave its players a well needed chance to grab some of the hot Island air. Samoa continued to roll towards half time and went the break 29 points up.



Following a much needed respite from the hot conditions and some air back in their lungs, the game continued where it left off. The Cooks grabbed a much needed try and had another couple of great chances to score, but the ball missed going to hand or their momentum was extinguished by a well drilled and structured defence. The Cooks had one last chance out wide with numbers, however a floating pass to their right wing went to ground and was seized upon by his Samoan counterpart who storm down field to score under the post. This last try seemed to sum up the contest. The Cook Islands tried everything, but just couldn't seem to get past their Samoan cousins.

Samoa were worthy 2010 Oceania U19 Champions, and enjoyed the spoils of their victory. The Cook Islands and the other Participating teams take away a lot from this Tournament, and look forward to being bigger and better at the next Oceania U19s Championship in 2012.

To download a full copy of the official results and scorers from the Tournament please visit the FORU website at the link below:

http://www.oceaniarugby.com/tournaments/2010_under_19/2010_u19_official_results_and_scorers.html



2010 OCEANIA SEVENS CHAMPIONSHIP DRAW RELEASED

The Australian Rugby Sevens will test their Commonwealth Games medal credentials when they take on world champions Samoa for tournament honours at the 2010 Oceania Sevens Championship in Darwin next month.

Two of the IRB Sevens World Series top three performers headline the eight Pacific Island nations which will converge on Australia's Top End from 1-2 October for the Australian Rugby Union hosted event at Astar Rugby Park.

World No.1 Samoa top Pool A which also features Papua New Guinea, Adelaide Sevens favourites Niue and Tahiti.

Australian Coach Michael O'Connor's side have been drawn as the No.1 seed in Pool B after recording Australia's best result since 2002 of third overall at the recent World Series.

Tonga, Cook Islands and Vanuatu will also compete in Pool B.

The seedings were determined based on the current IRB Sevens World Series standings or the final standings at the 2009 Oceania Sevens Tournament in Tahiti.

"The Oceania region is the most competitive Sevens environment in the world and the Oceania Sevens Championship will showcase not only the excitement of Sevens Rugby, but the skill and class of the nations from this region that are world famous exponents of the game," said William Glenwright, Tournament Director and IRB General Manager, Oceania.

"With two of the top three teams in the world competing, together with other world class Pacific Island nations, many of whom have experienced success on the IRB Sevens World Series circuit, this will be an outstanding tournament."



The Australians will use the Oceania Sevens tournament as key preparation in their bid to claim a first-ever Commonwealth Games gold medal in India on 11-12 October.

Captain Patrick McCutcheon's team will base themselves in Darwin for a training camp from 27 September – 5 October to acclimatise to the conditions they are expecting to encounter in New Delhi.

To download a copy of the Tournament Draw please visit the FORU Website at the link below:

http://www.oceaniarugby.com/2010_oceania_sevens_draw_release.html/ref/5566



OCEANIA REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT WORKSHOP A GREAT SUCCESS

The Annual Oceania Rugby Development Workshop held in Nadi last month has been proclaimed as a 'great success' in accrediting coaches, match officials and administrators and identifying strategic priorities for the growth of the Women's game in the Oceania Region.

Held from 9th to 13th August in Nadi, Fiji, this annual workshop for IRB Member Unions in the Pacific again delivered a range of programmes and initiatives including workshops on the Olympics, Women's strategic planning, an OSEP Administrator program, Trust Development Grant meetings, a Trainer and Educator course and a Sevens Rugby course. All Member Unions of FORU, except for the Solomon Islands, were represented at the weeklong event.

A presentation on the Olympic movement by Dr Robin Mitchell and Dennis Miller of the Oceania National Olympic Committees proved invaluable to participants. It detailed the structure of the Olympic Movement and the Olympic Solidarity Program. It also emphasised the importance of Unions developing relationships with their National Olympic Committees. It was a timely presentation and one that was received with great enthusiasm by the participants as this was the first Regional Development workshop to be held since the decision to include Rugby on the Olympic Program for 2016 and 2020.

Bruce Cook the Rugby Services Manager for Oceania and Lee Smith Regional Development Manager, facilitated a workshop relating to the development of a strategic plan for Women's Rugby in the Pacific. Participants from nearly all Unions including Australia and New Zealand did not hesitate to be part of the planning process. This information will now be integrated into a plan which will then be distributed for comment by Unions.



With the assistance of IRB Training Manager Mark Harrington, Richard Skelly NZRU Coaching Manager, Lee Smith and Franck Boivert an IRB Trainer; a group of development staff members from all attending Unions participated in the IRB Educators Course. Whilst all did not achieve competency, those that didn't will be assisted and helped through the process over the next 12 months. In addition to this 20 local coaches attended the IRB Sevens Level 1 course, whilst Fiji RU Development Staff were acquainted with both the Sevens Coaching Pathway and the revised 15-a-side level 3 course.



A series of individual Union meetings took place between IRB Oceania staff, Will Glenwright and Bruce Cook, as well as newly appointed IRB General Manager Development Morgan Buckley, to review their Trust Development Grant Applications for 2011.

The same Union personnel, who were involved in the Development Grant process, also took part in the Oceania Sports Education Programme Communities Training Programme that was delivered in a workshop by Joe Lumaris an OSEP Trainer from Papua New Guinea. Those who were successful in achieving accreditation will now be able to deliver this course in their Union.

The workshop dinner was combined with a visit to a local village to embed us all in the Fijian culture and to reinforce the strength of this culture that has been held in tact over the centuries. With Fijian village and extended family support such as this, the youth of this society have firm standards with which to meet the challenge of the modern world.

The International Rugby Board and the Federation of Oceania Rugby Unions would like to acknowledge the support of the Oceania National Olympic Committees (ONOC) who jointly funded the Regional Development workshop – without their help, the workshop would not have been the success it was.

VANUATU'S FIRST IRB EDUCATOR

Following the Regional Development Workshop referred to in the previous article, Vanuatu now has its first-ever International Rugby Board-certified Educator. He is Edward Joseph, the current VRU National Development Officer based at VASANOC.

Mr Joseph earned this recognition during the Course conducted in Fiji from 9-13 August 2010. This is a first for Vanuatu and Vanuatu Rugby.

He also earned his Level One IRB Coaching Sevens Certificate during the same course. The picture below shows Mr Joseph with his Certificates.

VASANOC CEO congratulated Mr Edward Joseph for this achievement and encouraged all the DOs and NFs to make use of such opportunity to build up the national sports human resource.



RWC 2011 TIMES ANNOUNCED

Rugby World Cup 2011 marked another milestone yesterday with the announcement of kick-off times for Rugby's most prestigious event.

The announcement comes after the opening of applications for Individual Match Tickets as fans around the globe look to book their place at the world's third largest sporting event.

"We have achieved a good balance," said Martin Snedden, CEO for Tournament Organisers Rugby New Zealand 2011.

"If New Zealand is to make the most of the platform RWC 2011 gives us to showcase our country to the world, then we need to ensure we maximise the global television audience for key matches.

"What has now been agreed with event-owner Rugby World Cup Limited will help all hosting regions to promote themselves to the world and help fans, both domestic and international, to get on with planning their RWC 2011 experience with the start of the Tournament now less than a year away."

"The mix of match times should really contribute to the whole festival atmosphere of the Tournament. Ten of the 48 matches will be played in the afternoon including the New Zealand v Canada pool match. A further 12 matches will begin by 6pm and another seven at 7.30pm," added Snedden.

Eden Park, the venue for the inaugural RWC Final in 1987, will herald a nationwide six week celebration of world-class Rugby and REAL New Zealand Festival events when it hosts the Opening Ceremony on Friday, September 9 starting at approximately 7.45pm. The Opening Match between New Zealand and Tonga will kick-off at 8.30pm.



TUTORIAL:

BY LEE SMITH

IN ANTICIPATION OF RWC 2011

Cast your mind back three years to the first game of the 2007 Rugby World Cup. In this game, which Argentina at won by beating the host French, the Argentineans won their share of possession, and either kicked for territory or contestability, the high ball. This kicking game isolated one of the French back three and play made from this. This was sound tactics, because winning is all that matters for the most likely Cup contenders.

This blueprint was followed by the teams who made post-pool play and especially the semi-finals with the exception of Fiji, who very nearly blew the blueprint as they scored tries by their own initiative against South Africa.

And Argentina changed their spots in the third/fourth playoff against France, a game that seldom matters and a style of play that was played by teams who were the underdogs in pool play miss matches.

So, what we had was two styles of play, the most successful of which was to gain at least you're sure of possession, kick and chase - be it down the field or a contestable highball and take advantage of opponent's lack of patience when they used the ball in hand from an inferior field position. The advantage more often comes from a penalty goal or a drop goal rather than a try.

This is not a criticism of the style of play but an explanation of the reality of the situation exemplified throughout post - pool play in Rugby World Cups throughout the tournament's existence. Aligned to this method of attack is strong defence that will exploit the impatient team when it plays beyond its skill set.

So what can we expect in New Zealand, more of the same or a feast of running rugby? Has



anything happened between 2007 and 2011 that would indicate a change? We have the efforts of SANZAR requiring referees to rule in favour of the team in possession at the tackle and post tackle. In other words, the reward for a successful tackle in the ensuing contest for the ball is now less, in the contest that follows, than the rights of ball carrier, and his/her team, who has shown inferior skill in not being able to evade the tackle.

This is the issue of equity / equitability in the laws of the game.

What this means is that the team showing superior skill in the immediately preceding play receive a reward for their efforts. So the team that kicks the ball off the field is penalised by not receiving the throw in. Kicking the ball off the field is an inferior skill. They are penalised for not wanting to continue play. The team whose superior defence has forced the situation is rewarded with the throw in. The game is made up of examples of the application of this principle.

So should a team that is prepared to keep possession of the ball to attack receive a greater reward as play develops, to the team who goes forward by kicking the ball to touch, to an opponent, to a contestable situation? Is the pass / run option superior and to be encouraged and, if this is the case, what is the reward?

I suppose the universal rewards are possession, they have the ball to play with, along with time and space to do so. If we want to reward we must legislate for the team to receive greater time and space.



In contact position is contestable, so maybe the SANZAR emphasis is justified. But now we have the second aspect of equitability.

This is that the reward for the team showing superior skill is proportional to the skill and effort required, in this case, to retain possession. So if it is easy to retain possession then the reward is less than it would be if it were difficult to do so. The law works on that proposition at scrum and lineout. Up to two thirds of the players are kept in the "city" at these set pieces by law so that the reward for the team winning the ball is substantial time and space, given they showed the skill to force a scrum or lineout in the first place.

And in dynamic play contact means a contest in which success requires some of the more difficult skills of the game to be performed under pressure. The reward of time and space is also proportional to the ability of the attack to retain or, of the defence, to regain possession. If it is easy to retain possession to reward is not great. If it is difficult to retain possession the reward is substantial.

It is all a matter of incentives. So if the defence has an equal or greater than equal opportunity to win the ball, they will pull a large number of players into the contest. Should the attack be good enough to win the ball this commitment by the defence creates time and space for the attack, their reward for being able to retain possession.

Should the defence regain possession the commitment by the attack to the contest will, equally, reward the defence with time and space.

If the defence is discriminated against in contact the commitment will be limited. The attack is easily able to retain possession and the reward of time and space will have diminished by the number in the defence line being greater than those in the attack line taking away lateral space i.e. space across the field. I may also take away linear space as well as numbers may allow for defence in depth limiting kicking options.

The end product of the lack of time and space is a removal of one of the games key concepts, the ability of 14 players to put a 15th player into space so the defence line is penetrated.

It was replaced by a territory game in which the aim is to get over the gain line to create momentum. Even here the attack is at a disadvantage as the limited commitment of the defence means that their hindmost foot is closer to the gain line and they can move forward as soon as the ball sees daylight. They don't have to wait on the ball to be passed to them.

Given the situation is difficult to go forward while retaining possession, it is easier to go forward by kicking, playing off the pressure created by the chasing team and not to lose patience when the opposing team returns like with like.

So what we have to look for if we want a deviation from the successful Rugby World Cup formula is changes made in law and officiating that is going to create an incentive for the defence to contest the ball enabling the team showing superior skill, exhibited by winning the ball, time and space to attack, the reward that is their due.

I believe that the opportunity to create the situation currently exists in law and the officials should look at their prioritisation of the Law at the tackle and post tackle.

If this is not the case we will have a repetition of the tactics proven so successful in the past. In doing this will we will be reflecting what happens in sport in most tight situations under great pressure, the teams play defensively and back the defence to win. Maybe this is the reality of top sport.

The events in South Africa over the next couple of months, as the FIFA World Cup has done in the past, will probably reinforce this point. As the competition proceeds the event assumes greater importance, for the average punter, than the style of play and the priority becomes the winning of the games in the least risky way. I guess this is why finals are disappointing as a spectacle.

