

# Hong Kong Women's 7s: New Zealand Three-Peats

- Black Ferns Survive Scare From Eagles in Semifinals -

By Emil Signes

## Hong Kong March 23-24, 2000

New Zealand, as expected, easily dispatched Australia, 36-10, to win its third consecutive Hong Kong Women's Sevens.

In what might have been, the US held a 10-5 lead into the last two minutes of their semifinal before succumbing to the Black Ferns, 17-10. It was the only game of rugby since 1991 — sevens or 15s — in which New Zealand has won by less than 20 points.

It was a game that should have been the final, but the US has only itself to blame for not making it so.

### Thursday

There were no big surprises in Pool A, where New Zealand easily dispatched all opponents. One mini-surprise was favored Wales' draw with Hong Kong. Wales went on to give Samoa all it could handle in a 22-10 loss, but the expected New Zealand-Samoa 1-2 pool finish was assured by the end of the day.

In Pool B, however, the US struggled against Australia. After taking a 7-0 lead and having a second try called back, the US gave up a second half try to Australia resulting in a 7-7 tie and leaving the pool in doubt until Friday's action. The Netherlands' abysmal performance in an 8-try loss to Australia, however, made matters tough for the US.

Kazakhstan was the big surprise of Pool B. They led Australia 7-5 into injury time, when a last second burst down the sideline gave Oz the win that they needed. The US-Kazakhstan game was 0-0 at halftime before the US put across two tries in the second half.

### Friday

In the two matches that mattered, the US defeated Netherlands 29-0, while Australia put 56 points on Singapore, gaining the bracket championship by virtue of 25 tries to 23 for the US. More serious, however, was the US's loss of Ines Rodriguez to a broken femur, suffered during



The US Women's 7s Team. FRONT (L-R): Greg Schor, Diane Schnapp, Yancy Graf, Kristina Caravelli, Jane Mitchell, Sue Parker, Lisa Rowe, Laura Cabrera. BACK: Tracy Moens, Emil Signes, Erina Queen, Anita Pease, Ines Rodriguez, Kerry McCabe, Al Caravelli.

the game against the Dutch. The injury delayed action by a full half-hour, and showed a disturbing lack of preparedness for such a major event. (See sidebar)

At the end of the pool play, these were the standings:

Pool A	W	L	T	Pts
N. Zealand	5	0	0	10
Samoa	4	1	0	8
Wales	2	2	1	5
Hong Kong	2	2	1	5
Thailand	1	4	0	2
Arabian Gulf	0	5	0	0

Pool B	W	L	T	Pts
Australia	4	0	1	9
United States	4	0	1	9
Kazakhstan	3	2	0	6
Netherlands	2	3	0	4
Japan	1	4	0	2
Singapore	0	5	0	0

### Semifinals:

New Zealand 17,  
USA 10.

The US pressured NZ every time it had possession, and — finally — got some good offense of its own with great support patterns. Following a long kick that put NZ in its own territory, the US recovered possession and Jane Mitchell stretched the field. Mitchell fed Diane Schnapp who in turn fed Erina Queen who cut into an alley between four defenders for the try. It was the first try against NZ in the tourney and the first ever for the US sevens team against the Black Ferns.

NZ came back and scored after a quick tap from a penalty and the half time score was 5-5. Early in the second half, Erina Queen took the ball from a well-set US ruck, and faked the first defender into sliding out. She stepped inside, broke through the gap, and outpaced some speedy New Zealand defenders 40 meters for the go-ahead try.

At the five-minute mark, the US was awarded a penalty kick and on the ensuing lineout, for the first time all weekend, the throw to the lifted jumper was low enough to be disturbed by a NZ hand, resulting in a knock on and a NZ scrum. From the scrum, the NZ center took the ball to the outside, beating the defense and scoring in the corner. The conversion made the score 12-10. On the ensuing kickoff, a bobbled ball bounced right for Annaleah Rush, who scored in the corner, making the final score 17-10.

The game will forever be etched in our memory with a mixture of satisfaction at having been the first team in years to put NZ under effective pressure, and eternal regret about not being able to finish them off.

Australia 26,  
Samoa 10

In the second semifinal, Australia's excellent defense kept Samoa's potent offense from operating too efficiently.

### Final:

New Zealand 36,  
Australia 10

I will quote from the online "New Zealand Rugby Newsletter," written by someone who identifies himself as "Inky," because its description makes us Americans yet more conflicted about a) how well we played and b) what might have been.

Utilizing the classic seven-a-side game plan, where a patient search for gaps and decisive speed when one is found are crucial elements, the NZ Women's Sevens side added a flair that the other teams could not match. Their almost clairvoyant understanding of each other's style, the angled passes and runs to create holes where they did not already exist, showed that they were a class above the rest.

They dispatched Australia in the final, in front of an appreciative crowd at the main stadium, by 36-10. Hannah Myers, Dianne Kahura, Anna Richards and Tammy Wilson scored first-half tries, and Annaleah Rush got a couple in the second spell to keep the Aussies at bay. One of my sources suggested that the large assembly of local gamblers would have put good money on them to beat many of the men's teams.

### Plate - Kazakhstan

Netherlands 12, Wales 7. An upset to most observers and one that left the US wondering just how the Dutch had given up eight tries to Australia. Kazakhstan 46, Hong Kong 0. The Kazakhs consistently proved that they are for real.

Final: Kazakhstan went on to defeat the Netherlands 20-7 to win the Plate.

### Bowl - Japan

Singapore 19, Thailand 0. Singapore's first win ever at Hong Kong. Everyone who watched them play and improve since their 1997 appearance was thrilled for them. Size has always been a factor, and in Thailand they had an even smaller opponent. Thailand, however, had defeated the Arabian Gulf in the pool play, so they were pleased.

Japan 46, Arabian Gulf 0. Japan plays excellent technical sevens, and also continues to improve.

Final: Japan crushed Singapore 55-7.

### Final Standings

1. New Zealand
2. Australia
3. USA
4. Samoa
5. Kazakhstan
6. Netherlands
7. Hong Kong
8. Wales
9. Japan
10. Singapore
11. Thailand
12. Arabian Gulf

### USA Women's

#### Road to Hong Kong

The selection process never really starts or stops. Coaches, selectors, advisors are always on the lookout for players that project to be part of a world championship effort. Last year, one important venue was the Women's Invitational Sevens at Philadelphia-Conshohocken in conjunction with the Men's Club Sevens championship.

Based upon that event and several others, 32 players participated in a camp in New Orleans on January 14-16. Following a series of tests and competitions, the following players were selected:

Laura Cabrera, Ozark Ladies  
Yancy Graf, Kansas City Jazz  
Kerry McCabe, Beantown  
Jane Mitchell, Berkeley All Blues  
Anita Pease, Maryland Stingers  
Sue Parker, Maryland Stingers  
Ines Rodriguez, At Large  
Lisa Rowe, Maryland Stingers  
Erina Queen, Emerald City Mudhens  
Diane Schnapp, Berkeley All Blues

#### Preparation

Thanks to our annual raffle and help from Asera, Inc., we were able to bring the entire team together for a camp weekend in Bethlehem, PA on the last weekend of February. Thanks to Mary Beth Spirk, basketball coach at Bethlehem's Moravian College, we had access to a huge indoor facility about half the size of a regulation rugby pitch (and high enough to do kickoffs!)

#### Hong Kong

The team next assembled in Hong Kong on Sunday evening March 18. We trained twice Monday and Tuesday followed by a short "walk through" on Wednesday morning prior to Thursday's games.

While attending the Hong Kong Tens, we ran into rugby coach and equipment entrepreneur George Simpkin, who had just developed shoulder and chest pads designed specifically for women. Although not yet in full production, most of the team ended up satisfactorily equipped.

The usual rookie skits, fine sessions (beware of being "last thumb!"), and other tension breaking rituals such as nicknames were part of the all-too-short build up to the tournament. In fact, we probably only had about 3-4 free hours before we played.



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For Al Caravelli and me, this meant a four-hour search through the highways and byways of Hong Kong looking for a tarpaulin to keep the players out of the sun during Thursday's games, played on an open field. We went into the busy streets of Hong Kong equipped with a page of Chinese characters designed to get us to a mountaineering shop. We were concerned, however, that they might say, "These men are assholes (or maybe just imperialist lackeys). Eliminate them!" But we survived and succeeded.

The annual ferry trip to Lamma Island for some great Chinese seafood took place this year without anyone getting sick from the ride.

The tournament banquet was great fun, with each team performing a skit. From Samoa's beautiful island melodies to Singapore's cute dance featuring the words "my side, my side, my front my back my side" — the experience of being in a room with people from all over the world enjoying themselves was very rewarding.

We were pleased to see the US men's team support us. We were also there to watch their games, and they joined us in the stands for the closing games on Sunday. From my perspective, relations between men and women Eagles are as good as they've ever been, and that's a "good thing."

**Outstanding Performances**

It's tough, when everyone plays well, to single out individual players,

but I'm going to do it anyway.

Ines Rodriguez (our leading scorer, two hat tricks) was probably our MVP, and we could certainly have used her in the New Zealand game. Erina Queen scored two tries against New Zealand and always seems to raise her level to that of whatever opponent she faces. Kerry McCabe was everywhere: supporting, tackling, winning ball.

But it doesn't stop there. Anita Pease and Diane Schnapp were truly inspiring captains. Laura Cabrera's speed and tackling skills were in evidence time after time. Lisa Rowe's skill and speed provided an excellent link and she made some key tackles in the New Zealand game. Jane Mitchell's set-up ability helped create the first try ever against New Zealand. Last but not least, the two "bookends", crafty returning veteran Sue Parker and young rookie Yancy Graf provided speed and firepower all tournament long.

**Thanks**

Thanks to all the non-players who helped out and supported us through the tournament: Al Caravelli, Tracy Moens, Greg Schor and Dee Jones. Special thanks to Dee for taking over the care of Ines Rodriguez during the interminable wait for help (see below).

Finally thanks to Mauricio Sanmartin and Dan Maes. Both provided opposition during our practices and fulfilled other roles as well: Mauricio kept [rugby7.com](http://rugby7.com)

updated throughout the tournament, and Danny filmed every game. He even humored me and taped four men's games from their tournament as well.

**Scoring Summary:**

Player	T	C	Pts
Rodriguez	8	9	53
Cabrera	5	1	27
Parker	3		15
Queen	2		10
Rowe	2		10
Schnapp	2		10
Graf	1		5
McCabe	1		5
Pease	1		5
<b>Total</b>	<b>25</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>145</b>
Opponents	4	2	24

**Women's Rugby in the Sevens World Series**

The women's tournament had some important spectators, including HKRFU president Peter Duncan and a couple of IRB representatives. Both Al Caravelli and I had extensive conversations and got tentative commitments to recommend limited women's participation in a few of the World Sevens Series tournaments. Among those mentioned were Wellington, Tokyo, and possibly (!) Las Vegas. No funding of course (what else is new), but we're confident that increased exposure to women's sevens will make those in power realize the attractiveness of funding it.

**Eagles 4-5 In Far East**

Despite the presence of World Cup veterans Kevin Dalzell, Dave Hodges and Kurt Shuman, the Eagles returned from the Far East leg of the World 7s series with a combined 4-5 record at the Hong Kong and Japan 7s. With an overall record of 10 wins and 25 losses after competing in eight of the nine World 7s Series events, the Eagles go into the World Cup qualifying event in Santiago, Chile (May 5-6) with a very real chance of being eliminated from next year's 7s World Cup.

**Hong Kong 2-2**

**Hong Kong March 24-26, 2000**

The US posted a 2-2 record in the Hong Kong 7s, including a win over sometime nemesis Korea.

The 7s team beat back Korea 17-12, cruised past China 40-0 and fell to Fiji 54-7 in pool play. The two wins put the Eagles into the Plate round where they fell to an in-form Croatian side 42-7. Croatia went on to the plate final and a narrow defeat to France.

The victory over Korea was a high point for the USA, clinched in the last minute when center Kurt Shuman finished a long possession to break a 12-12 tie. "We followed the game plan," said head coach Tommy Smith. "We kept the ball for a long periods against a good side."

The Korean team has a history of success in the seven-a-side game, and has been a nemesis for the USA at numerous tournaments. This time, however, USA flyhalf Nelo Lui crossed in the first minute and wing Jovesa Naivalu swerved his opposite and streaked 50m for the second score.

Against China, Naivalu added another four tries to his personal tally, and Shuman and Lui also

scored once each. In the Fiji match, captain Craig Hartley scored the team's only try while wing Don Younger scored against Croatia.

**Japan 7s 2-3**

**Tokyo April 1-2, 2000**

A resurgent Korean team turned the tables on the USA, beating them 42-5 and ending the Americans' Japan 7s run at 2-3.

The Eagles met Korea in the semifinal of the Bowl competition after a 24-12 pool win over Taiwan and a 31-7 Bowl quarter final result over Sri Lanka.

The USA's tournament hopes took a first blow in Saturday's opening round against France. The Eagles were locked in a 12-12 tie at the half thanks to tries from scrumhalf Kevin Dalzell and wing Don Younger.

But after the break, the French capitalized on a couple of American errors to run in two unanswered tries and record a 26-12 win, ending the Eagles hopes of an upset.

"The guys were really let down after the France match," said head coach Tommy Smith. "We had trouble getting up for Chinese Taipei." A predictably comprehensive 40-0 loss to New Zealand interceded before the tepid outing against Taiwan, where flyhalf Nelo Lui had three tries and Don Younger one more.

The circuit's final fixture will be the Air France 7s at the end of May.

**USA:** Ryan Bannan, Kevin Dalzell, Craig Hartley (c), Dave Hodges, Chris Kron, Kevin Linzey, Nelo Lui, John McGeachy, Jovesa Naivalu, Kurt Shuman, Don Younger, Jon Younger. **Coach:** Tommy Smith **Manager:** Doug Brown **Physiotherapist:** Jeff Ward.

**Terrified on the Sidelines**

Everyone involved in sport is aware of, and yet terrified by, the specter of serious injury. That's why USA Rugby has such strict guidelines on the availability of medical treatment at its events.

If Ines Rodriguez had broken her leg at most major tournaments in the United States, there would have been an ambulance at her side within a minute. But that's not the way it happened in Hong Kong. After we realized it was a major injury, frantic calls were made, and then we waited and waited.

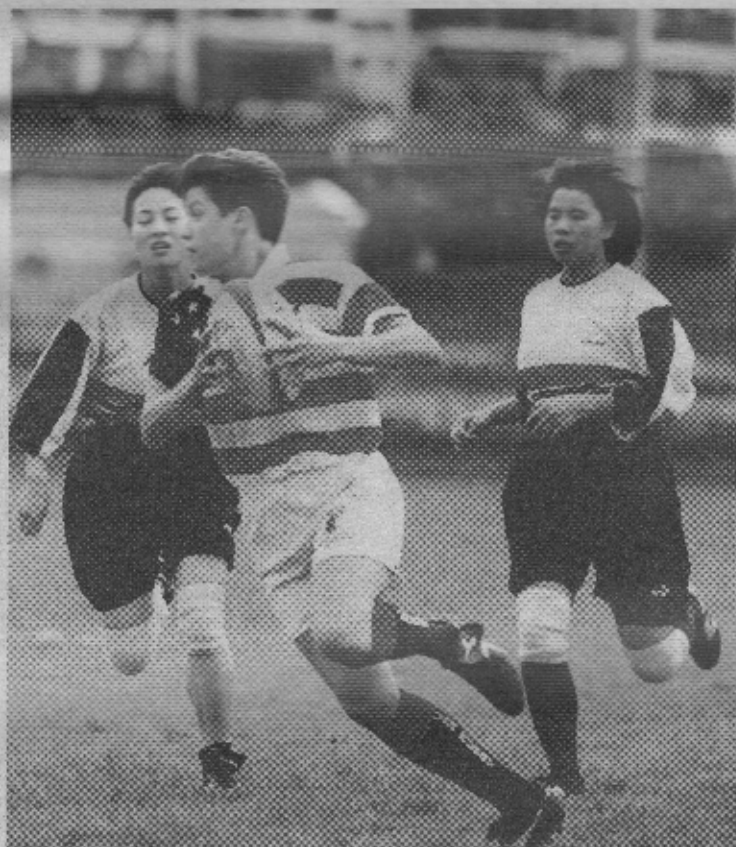
Furthermore, there was no one on the sidelines with the ability to take care of her while we waited for the ambulance. Thank God we had our own people. While they knew immediately it was a broken femur, what they didn't know was the extent of the injury. One possible complication is vascular injury. In that case, time is of the essence, particularly to avoid blood loss. Five minutes went by, 10 minutes went by, 15 minutes went by, 20 minutes went by...

Then there were those who wondered if she should be moved off the field.

Luckily, Dee Jones, a trainer at the Naval Academy was there, and team member Kerry McCabe is an MD and an ER specialist. There was no way they would allow Ines to be moved. Moving her could have caused further injury and pain by not having the leg properly immobilized. Bone fragments could have caused further injury to the muscle or even the vessels. Had the bone fragments broken the skin, there'd be a serious risk of infection.

Dee immobilized Ines' leg for the entire time she lay on the ground, in excruciating pain, preventing further injury and providing comfort by keeping the leg still. She also gave Ines some pain medication.

When the ambulance arrived nearly 25 minutes after the injury, the attendants didn't have the same level of basic first-aid training found



The injury to Ines Rodriguez (above, at Hong Kong) illustrates the need for better medical care at the Hong Kong 7s.

in the US. They had no traction splint available, and Kerry had to make do with folded cardboard boxes and ripped T-shirts.

Finally, nearly 30 minutes after the injury, Ines was taken to the ambulance. And on the way (this almost sounds funny, but...), they nearly dropped her.

Although initial evaluation at Adventist Hospital (generally considered the best in Hong Kong) took some time, the care was good. In Kerry's view, the operation was timely and well done.

The tournament organizers, aware of what we would have expected in the US, explained that that's just the way it is in Hong Kong: reserving an ambulance is simply out of the

question. When Ines arrived at the hospital, however, the attending nurse told Tracy Moens that there was an arrangement with the men's tournament for quick service. She was surprised and angry that it was not employed in this case. Whatever the reasons, treatment was not satisfactory; an issue we will be raising with the tournament organizers before next year.

Broken femurs are not good things, but back at Penn State doctors said that Ines would be back on her feet — without crutches — in less than two weeks, and back playing in 6-9 months. I fully expect to see her walk off the field at 9:30 PM, on Friday, March 31, 2001, as a smiling member of the World Champions of Sevens.

New England RUGBY		New England RUGBY	
<b>2000</b>			
<b>NEW ENGLAND RFU</b>			
<b>EVENT CALENDAR</b>			
Date	Event	Location	
May 13	NERFU HS Championship	Amherst, MA	
13-14	USA Men's Div II Sweet 16	New Haven, CT	
20-21	NERFU Union Tournament	Newport, RI	
21	NERFU HS All Star Match	Newport, RI	
June 3	USA v CANADA	Manchester, NH	
3-4	USA Men's Div I Final Four	Manchester, NH	
10	USA v IRELAND	Manchester, NH	
10	CT Cup/ Barnum 10s	Bridgeport, CT	
24	Worcester 7s	Worcester, MA	
July 15	John Logan Memorial 10s	Acton, MA	
29	Newport 7s	Newport, RI	
29	Cape Cod 7s	Cape Cod, MA	
Aug 26	Hartford Kickoff Classic	Hartford, CT	
Sep 16-17	Beantown (W) Collegiates	Amherst, MA	
Dec 2	NERFU AGM	Worcester, MA	