



# Fiji Wins Hong Kong 7s

by Emil Signes

## Hong Kong March 23-24, 1991

Timoci Wainiqolo, a 27-year old farmer, and the sole player not on Fiji's 1990 championship squad, came on as a reserve in the second half of the 1991 Cathay Pacific Hongkong Bank Invitation Sevens final. It was his try in injury time that broke a 14-14 tie and gave Fiji their second straight world 7s championship victory over New Zealand.

This year's final was every bit as good as last year — perhaps better — as the lead changed hands three times.

New Zealand and Fiji have proven that they are *alone* at the top of the world sevens heap. It is true that the Barbarians, helped by the world-class speed of Andy Harriman, kept Fiji close for much of their semifinal, but one sensed that the Barbarians (England's Representative) were not on the same level.

The first Northern Hemisphere side to win the Hong Kong Sevens since 1981 should be a true national side. England, who have refused to field a side under that name since their embarrassing loss to Spain in 1986, should be forced to do so at Hong Kong next year.

### Tournament Structure

The format of the Hong Kong Sevens has been very successful and is now being copied by sevens tournaments throughout the world. Three teams in each of 8 brackets



The Barbarians Andrew Harriman attempts to turn the corner on Fiji's Tomasi Cama during a semifinal of the 1991 Hong Kong 7s. Fiji beat the Barbarians 22-14 and went on to beat New Zealand 18-14 in the championship final. (Photo - Lerch)

compete in a round-robin format; the top team in each bracket advances to the Cup round, the second to the Plate, and the third to the Bowl. On Sunday there are three brackets of 8 teams, each competing at their own level in a single

elimination competition.

### Saturday

There were three upsets during Saturday's play: Canada knocked off Argentina (based on recent years, that's not really an upset), Taipei knocked off Japan, and last

year's Bowl champion Germany kicked a last-second penalty to beat Korea 13-10.

### CUP CHAMPIONSHIP Pool Matches

In its pool matches, Fiji beat

Singapore 48-0 and then topped Spain 30-0.

The All Blacks were equally impressive, beating Taipei 40-0 and Japan 40-0.

### Quarterfinals

I continue to be amazed at how tournament organizers stick the island teams so near each other in the brackets, when their rivalries are so intense. This year Samoa and Tonga were in Pool A and then Samoa faced Fiji in the first quarterfinal. Despite an opening try by Samoan winger To'o Vaega, Fiji stormed back for a 21-6 victory.

The Barbarians outclassed Australia 16-6, marking Australia's second consecutive defeat in the quarterfinal round; Australia seems badly in need of a new winning combination. The 1990/1991 group doesn't have the right combination of pace and savvy to win at this level.

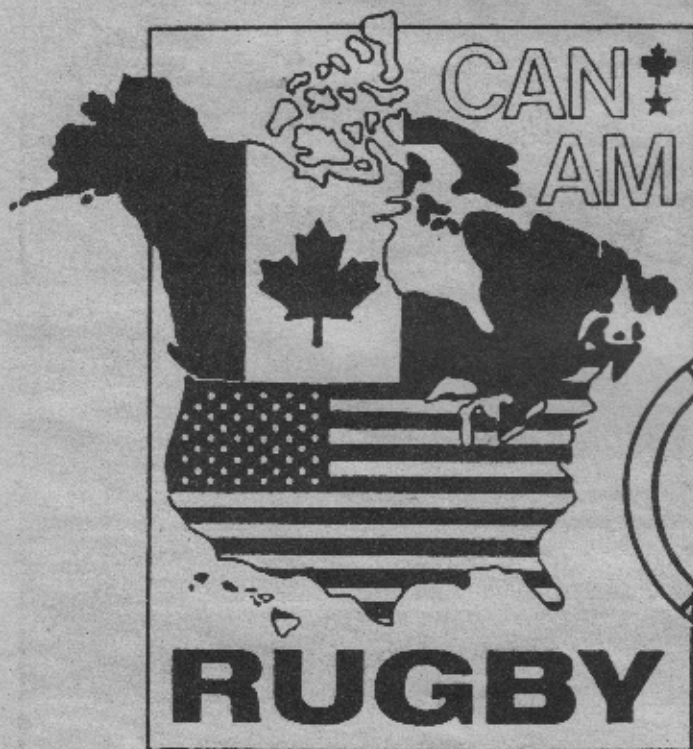
The third quarterfinal was considered the upset of the day, as Canada overwhelmed Scotland, 24-4. Based on a Thursday scrimmage against Scotland, however, none of the Eagles were surprised at this result.

The last quarterfinal was a totally expected 30-0 whitewash of the French by New Zealand.

### Semifinals

The first Cup semifinal was much tighter than expected, and the Barbarians actually held a 10-6 half-time lead over the favored Fijians. Fiji, however, led by two Noa

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Nadruku tries, came back and claimed a very exciting 22-14 win. New Zealand, definitely in the easy half of the draw, easily beat an excellent Canadian side, 26-0, and the stage was set for the great final that followed.

**Final**  
Foreshadowing the "no-quarter-asked" game that was to follow, both New Zealand and Fiji greeted each other with traditional war dances: first the Fijian "scibi" followed by the All Blacks' rendition of the Maori "haka."

Noa Nadruku, who was to become the MVP of the final match, beat his man, former Utah State running back Timo Tagaloa, and put scrumhalf Pauliasi Tabulutu away for the first try in the left corner.

Nadruku also started the second scoring movement by breaking a Dallas Seymour tackle to give captain Alifereti Dere the try and Fiji an 8-0 lead.

New Zealand came right back, however, after Eric Rush, later named "Best and Fairest" of the entire tournament, won possession at the ensuing kickoff. Scott Pierce ended up with the try and Terry Wright's conversion made the half-time score 8-6.

**Second Half**  
Pierce also scored early in the second half to put New Zealand into a 10-8 lead.

Next it was time for 1989 and 1990's "Best and Fairest," Waisali Serevi, to show his stuff. He chipped over the top and scored his own try, which he converted to give Fiji a 14-10 lead.

An Alan Crowley pass to Pat Lam then pulled the All Blacks even, and Terry Wright missed a difficult conversion that would have given them the lead as the scoreboard clock passed the 10-minute mark.

Now into injury time, Tabulutu made the crucial break, and, with 1990 hero Mesaki Rasari as intermediary, Wainiqolo became 1991's hero as he touched the ball down for the final score.

New Zealand	Fiji
Lam 1	Rasari
Rush 2	(c) Dere
Seymour 3	* Rauluni
Crowley 4	Tabulutu
Pierce 5	Serevi
Tagaloa 6	Nadruku
Wright (c) 7	Cama

**National Holiday**  
As the crowd of 30,000 chanted "Fiji, Fiji," the Prime Minister of Fiji, Ratu Sir Kamisere Mara, declared Friday March 29, the date of the team's arrival home, a national holiday.

"There's going to be one hell of a welcome for them," said Fijian journalist Samisoni Kakaivalu.

**PLATE CHAMPIONSHIP**  
In the Plate semifinals, the Eagles played an excellent match to defeat Tonga 20-14, and Argentina scored a tight 12-6 victory over defending Plate Champions Hong Kong.

The Plate final was a one-sided 36-6 romp by Argentina, traditionally a Cup team, over the injury-plagued American Eagles. That story will be told in a separate article. (See page 10)

**BOWL CHAMPIONSHIP**  
Korea and Thailand won relatively easy semifinal matches (26-3 and 13-6) to move them into the Bowl final.

In the Bowl final Thailand went down 36-0 to Korea, traditionally a Plate team. Korea had been dropped to the Bowl the previous day when a 40-meter penalty kick by Germany got the newly-reunified nation into the Plate round.

**Leading Scorers**  
The tournament's leading try scorers were:

Noa Nadruku (Fiji)	10
Eric Rush (NZ)	6
Gonzalo Cameradon (Arg.)	6
Dallas Seymour (NZ)	5
Michael Lynagh (Aus.)	5
Lee Hyung-jac (Korea)	5

(12 with 4 tries)

Waisali Serevi led all kickers with 21 conversions, and his three tries made him the tourney's high scorer with 54 points. The Eagles' Tommy Smith was 7th in the conversion department with 8.

**International Pecking Order**  
The Cathay Pacific Hongkong Bank Invitation Sevens has, in conjunction with other international tournaments, given us information with which to compare the status of international sevens teams. Based on what I've seen, my personal rankings (five levels of roughly equivalent teams) follow: (Alphabetical within level)

- Level 1**  
Fiji, New Zealand
- Level 2**  
Australia, Barbarians [England], Western Samoa
- Level 3**  
Argentina, Canada, France, Hong Kong, Ireland, Italy, Romania, Scotland, Tonga, USA, USSR, Wales
- Level 4**  
Germany, Japan, Korea, Netherlands, Papua New Guinea, Spain, Taiwan, Thailand, Tunisia
- Level 5**  
Arabian Gulf, Brunei, Malaysia, Singapore, Sri Lanka

**Tournament Sponsors**  
The Cathay Pacific Hongkong Bank Invitation Sevens has been blessed with sponsorship ever since its inception in 1976.

Founded in 1946, Cathay Pacific is not only Hong Kong's airline to the world, but has received numerous "Airline of the Year" awards. Cathay Pacific recently joined American Airlines in establishing a cooperative service agreement.

Founded in 1865, the Hongkong Bank is the largest bank in Hong Kong as well as being active in most parts of the world. The Hongkong Bank owns the Buffalo-based Marine Midland Bank and is ranked among *Euromoney's* 100 best banks in the world.

**Ticket Scandal**  
Tickets for the 1991 Sevens were sold out within 45 minutes of going on sale. This occasioned a scandal within the colony that filled the pages of the next day's paper. People were walking off the ticket lines and selling tickets for three times their HK\$250 (US\$32) face value.

As a band-aid remedy to the ticket situation, temporary stands were added to the stadium, increasing its capacity to 30,000.

## 1991 Hong Kong Results

### Preliminary Round Sat. March 23, 1991

**POOL A**  
Fiji 30, Spain 0  
Fiji 48, Singapore 0  
Spain 32, Singapore 0

**POOL B**  
Western Samoa 16, Tonga 6  
Western Samoa 20, Malaysia 9  
Tonga 38, Malaysia 0

**POOL C**  
Barbarians 18, Germany 6  
Barbarians 34, Korea 0  
Germany 13, Korea 10

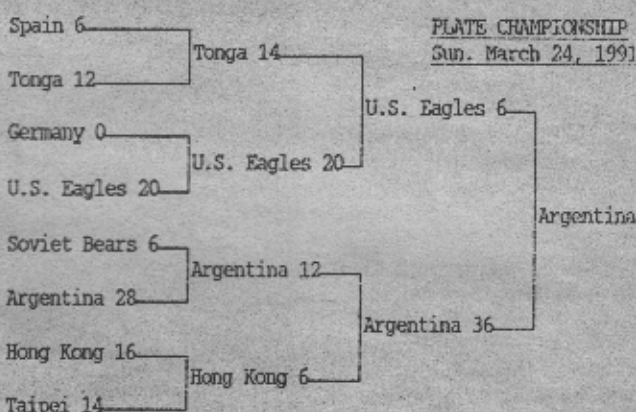
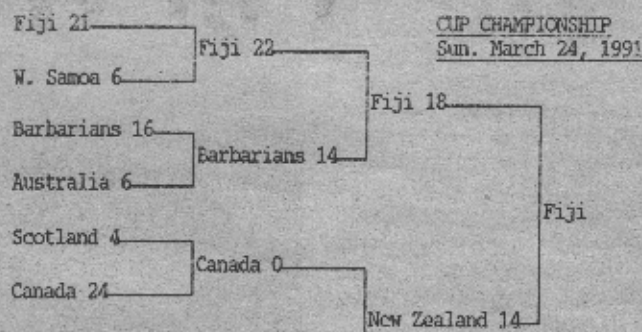
**POOL D**  
Australia 22, U.S. Eagles 10  
Australia 30, Papua New Guinea 10  
U.S. Eagles 22, Papua New Guinea 10

**POOL E**  
Scotland 20, Soviet Bears 6  
Scotland 28, Sri Lanka 6  
Soviet Bears 16, Sri Lanka 8

**POOL F**  
Canada 26, Argentina 0  
Canada 28, Thailand 0  
Argentina 32, Thailand 0

**POOL G**  
France 4, Hong Kong 0  
France 38, Arabian Gulf 0  
Hong Kong 20, Arabian Gulf 6

**POOL H**  
New Zealand 40, Kwang-Hua Taipei 0  
New Zealand 40, Japan 0  
Kwang-Hua Taipei 12, Japan 6



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# Eagles Go 3-2 in Hong Kong



by Emil Signes

## Hong Kong March 23-24, 1991

Led by first-year coach Steve Finkel, the American Eagles finished 3-2 in the 1991 Cathay Pacific Hongkong Bank 7s, their best finish since winning the Plate Championship in 1988.

Although this year's Plate Championship final resulted in a nightmarish 36-6 loss to Argentina, the Eagles played well throughout the previous four games, and had to face the Pumas missing two injured props, Tony Ridnell and Jim Burgett.

In pool play the U.S. beat Papua New Guinea 22-10, while losing 22-0 to Australia. On the way to the Plate Championship, they knocked off Germany 20-0 and, in their best game of the weekend, beat Tonga, 20-14.

Rugby's choice for Eagle MVP was Will Brewington.

## National 7s Championships

The process of selecting a national team began at the National Club and All-Star Championships, held in Washington, D.C., in mid-August. From this event, 30 players were selected to participate in January's National Sevens Camp.

The team selected was:

Chris Andres	NOVA
Will Brewington	MOB
Jim Burgett	OPSB
Gary Hein	Oxford Univ.
Kevin Higgins	Old Blues
Tony Ridnell	OPSB
Tommy Smith (c)	Old Blues
Scott Stephens	Washington
Charlie Wilkinson	NOVA
Steve Finkel	Coach
Emil Signes	Manager



The U.S. Eagles went 3-2 at the 1991 Hong Kong 7s; (FRONT, L-R) Tom Smith, Kevin Higgins, Charlie Wilkinson, Chris Andres. (BACK) Will Brewington, Jim Burgett, Scott Stephens, Gary Hein, Tony Ridnell. (Photo - Lerch)

## Los Angeles

As a prelude to travelling to Hong Kong, the team gathered in Los Angeles on Friday night March 15 for a Saturday practice and Sunday scrimmages with the Back Bay and Belmont Shore Rugby Clubs.

## On to Hong Kong

The Eagles left Los Angeles at noon March 17 and arrived in Hong Kong on the evening of March 18. The longest non-stop passenger

route in the world (15 hours) was made two hours longer by head winds and we had to stop in Taiwan to refuel.

Despite the late arrival, the traditional first evening visit to the Godown Tavern was observed, and a good time was had by all.

On Tuesday, the Eagles trained for about three hours and covered all the fine points they'd had no time for in Los Angeles.

## Social Functions

Part of the Eagles' duties while in Hong Kong is to display themselves at various social functions. The one the players enjoy most is the AT&T-sponsored evening at the Hong Kong International School, where they get to meet and sign autographs for American students living in Hong Kong.

The following evening, we attended a cocktail party at the Ameri-

can Club and a dinner at the Hong Kong Club where we joined the Barbarians and the Australians as invited guests. The Hong Kong Club is one of the most exclusive in the colony, and the invitation was a great honor.

## Western Samoa

Building on a close friendship developed at the 1990 Sicily Sevens, the Eagles scrimmaged Western Samoa on Wednesday. It was a good, hard scrimmage in which we did many good things. We all thought the Samoans looked improved from last year, but a tough draw (Fiji) seemed likely to keep them from advancing beyond the quarterfinals.

## Scotland

On Thursday, the Eagles scrimmaged Scotland and outplayed them. The result left no doubt that we would have beaten them in the tournament; the chemistry (and team speed) just wasn't there. We also knew that Scotland would have difficulty with whichever team they would play in the quarterfinals, Argentina or Canada.

## Saturday:

## United States 22, Papua New Guinea 10

After a day of rest, the Eagles squared off against Papua New Guinea in their first match of the tournament. They got off to a good 10-0 start on tries by Charlie Wilkinson and Jim Burgett, but Papua came back to tie the score at 10-10. Two more tries by Burgett, one on a textbook execution of captain Tommy Smith's "Dubai" penalty play, not only gave him a hat trick, but the team a satisfying 22-10 win.

## U.S.

- 1 Stephens
- 2 Brewington
- 3 Burgett (3T)
- 4 Smith (3C)
- 5 Wilkinson (T)
- 6 Higgins
- 7 Hein

## Australia 22, United States 0

The Eagles' "red" defense kept them in the game for a half (0-4), but the Aussies' defense was even more formidable (and/or the Eagles' attack nonexistent), and they finally put over three second-half tries for a 22-0 win.

Jim Burgett injured his hip flexor during this game, and trainer Steve Syrstad was not confident about his ability to play on Sunday.

## U.S.

- 1 Ridnell
- 2 Brewington
- 3 Burgett
- 4 Smith
- 5 Wilkinson
- 6 Higgins
- 7 Hein

## Sunday:

Amazingly, the odds-makers (as reported in the South China Sunday Morning Post) made Germany the favorite of the Plate bracket at 2-1. Hong Kong and Tonga were listed at 3-1, the Eagles at 7-2, Argentina at 4-1, the Soviets at 8-1, Taipei at 15-1 and Spain at 20-1.

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## United States 20, Germany 0

Just a few minutes before the match, Jim Burgett injured himself while stretching and pulled himself out. Scott Stephens, who had seemed reluctant to use his speed in Saturday's game against Papua New Guinea, took his place.

The game was never in doubt and German standout Mathias Entenmann's words after the match said it best: "You kicked our asses."

Chris Andres, who had to watch throughout Saturday's action, finally got to play, and played well. Scott Stephens got enough confidence in himself to go for broke and scored two tries.

U.S.

- 1 Ridnell
- 2 Brewington (T)
- 3 Stephens (2T)
- 4 Smith (2C)
- 5 Wilkinson
- 6 Hein (T)
- 7 Andres

Plate Semifinal:

## United States 20, Tonga 14

This was our first real toss-up match. The last two times we played Tonga we had won by 12 (1987) and lost by 13 (1989). This figured to be a real tough match; winnable by either side.

In fact, the Eagles got off to a fantastic 14-0 lead, playing virtually perfect sevens; the creators created and the finishers finished. Scott Stephens scored another try and Kevin Higgins, now at wing, notched his two tournament tries in this game.

In the second half, however, after a serious concussion to Tony Ridnell, Tonga stormed back with two tries to make the score 14-10 with three minutes left. The Eagles



Eagle Will Brewington has the ball out against Tonga in the Plate semifinal of the Hong Kong 7s, their best match of the tournament. The Eagles beat Tonga 20-14 but went on to lose to Argentina 36-6 in the Plate Championship. (Photo - Lerch)

not only had to kick off to them, but Jim Burgett, who had replaced Tony, was obviously not at full speed.

This was one of those moments that coaches dream about; something they've installed coming off perfectly. The kickoff defense that Steve Finkel put in couldn't have worked better. With the high ball kicked to Tonga's prop, Scott Stephens and Jim Burgett took the jumper and the outside lane, while Will Brewington and Charlie Wilkinson ran deep into the opponents' lines to clog the passing lanes. Brewington managed a full-speed interception of the clearing pass and ran it in for a try.

Steve smiled. Deservedly. U.S.

- 1 Ridnell \*
- 2 Brewington (T)
- 3 Stephens (T)
- 4 Smith (2C)
- 5 Wilkinson
- 6 Hein
- 7 Higgins (2T)

\* replaced by Burgett

Plate Final:

## Argentina 36, United States 6

In the Plate final for the first time in three years, the Eagles were confident they could beat Argentina. Their most recent match-up, in the 1990 Sicily Sevens, had resulted in a 24-6 Eagle win.

This game, however, can best be described as a nightmare. Props Jim Burgett and Tony Ridnell were unable to play due to injury and Kevin Higgins, who had never played there before, had to move to prop.

As reserves, we recruited Stuart Krohn, an American who has starred for Hong Kong during the past two years, and Vaea Anitoni, Tonga's speedy winger (who is hoping to move to Oakland).

It's difficult to lay the blame for a 30-point loss on having one person out of position, but it certainly

wasn't irrelevant. The game was a runaway (24-0 at half), and the presence of a streaker as the second half began was a pleasant diversion for fans tired of seeing the Pumas run in try after try.

At least Chris Andres' first Eagle try kept the game from being a shutout.

The team was shell-shocked by this game, but overall their performance was good. We got to the Plate final this year, and a significant improvement (either the Plate Championship or a Cup Round challenge) is well within the Eagles' reach in 1992.

U.S.

- 1 Stephens
- 2 Brewington
- 3 Higgins
- 4 Smith (C)
- 5 Wilkinson
- 6 Hein
- 7 Andres (T)

Assessment

Back for the first time since the Plate Championship year of 1988, Tommy Smith showed that at thirtysomething he can still do a great job of captaining a squad.

Charlie Wilkinson is thinking about retiring from select-side sevens after this year. Based on his on-field performance, he doesn't have to (although he probably should have let himself be taken out after dinging his head in the first half against Argentina).

Will Brewington, playing injury-

free for the first time in four years, was our outstanding player and is one of the few U.S. players with both speed and the ability to "read the field."

The six younger players all performed well; those players hoping to crack the lineup next year better start working on it!

7s and 15s

Of the nine Eagles who participated in the tour, only four hold Eagles' fifteens caps. Some don't even play fifteens for their territory.

Out of the seven players who started in the final for the All Blacks, guess how many had full fifteens caps? . . . The answer: One, their captain, Terry Wright.

On the other hand, many of the other top nations fielded teams consisting almost entirely of capped fifteens players. The message: pick your best sevens side. If that happens to correspond to your fifteens side, that's cool. If not — that's cool too.

AT&T

For the fourth consecutive year, AT&T volunteered to help make the week enjoyable for the team. In addition to volunteering pleasure rides on their junk and hosting a farewell dinner, they provided us with VCR viewing capability at our hotel and free phone calls back to the States.

As well, AT&T provided funding to bring over trainer Steve Syrstad, who is also the trainer of Rugby-East. Steve was kept busy not only tending the Eagles, but also the Samoans, who called on his services more than once during the week.

AT&T's relationship with the Eagles has been a special one and we all thank them for service above and beyond the call of duty.

The Sevens Circuit

Sevens continues to expand throughout the world, and the Eagles will be participating in the Sicily Sevens in May. In addition, the Cougars, also coached by Steve Finkel and including only players from the Eagle sevens pool, will participate in the Melrose Sevens (April) and the Lisbon Sevens (June).

Both Canada and Fiji attended the Gala Sevens (April), and feelers are out for tournaments later in the year.

Brothers and sisters, you ain't seen nothin' yet!

# Finkel Implements New Strategy

by Emil Signes

While building on the style and systems developed over the last 10+ years, new U.S. Sevens coach Steve Finkel has added his own wrinkles as well, and his focused game plan has provided tangible benefits.

Furthermore, Steve has firmly imprinted his personality on the team. A former Eagle known for his fire, passion, and dedication, he understands the physical and emotional requirements of an Eagle from a personal level. He has combined a true empathy with the players' feelings with a no-nonsense approach to coaching.

Finkel's game plan consisted of three key elements:

1) Double Wing Offense

With the selection of speedsters Jim Burgett and Scott Stephens at prop, the Eagles, for the first time, had the luxury of being able to look to more than one speedster on each side of the field.

The game plan was to move the ball wide, have the wing stretch out the defense, and if nothing was on, move it back to the middle. There, creators Charlie Wilkinson and Tommy Smith would, through their agility and ability to undisciplined defenses, create a gap or overlap for a speedster on either side to use.

When Tony Ridnell was in the game, he became a third creator,

using his size and strength to drive through the opponents and create overlaps for the speedsters to use.

On its own, the double wing offense is not new: ever since the selection of Will Brewington at hooker several years ago, we've tried to have one wing on each side of the field. What was new, and effective, was the presence, at all times, of at least two wings on each side of the field.

Despite what Charlie Wilkinson says about speed versus savvy, I am convinced that it's absolutely essential to develop a team with at least four or five finishers. Steve and the selectors are to be commended for the risks they took in picking this year's team.

2) Red Defense

Steve's "red" defense consisted of getting in the passing lanes and at the first inkling of disarray in the offense, charging (together) at the opponents en masse to prevent them clearing from pressure.

It's an aggressive defense designed to keep the attackers from getting forward momentum.

It's also, however, a very dangerous defense, because once it's breached, the opponents will almost invariably score a try. But a team approach to implementing it improved the probability of success, and it was quite successful: most notably in the first half of our game against Australia.

3) Playing Defense On Our Kickoff

The more films and statistics are analyzed, the more clear it becomes that neither team (assuming roughly equivalent talent) is at an advantage at high, short kickoffs if both try to win the ball.

The seeds were sown in 1990 at both Taupiri and Hong Kong for U.S. teams to be more conscious of playing defense at our own kickoff. But there was still something missing.

In 1991, Steve made this philosophy work. He developed a cohesive game plan in which the four players nearest the receiving touchline had specific functions at the kickoff. Specifically they were to go for the player, not the ball, and as the support players' depth increased, our players would attack the passing lanes more, to prevent the clearing pass.

This exact situation created perhaps the play of the tournament. With Tonga having scored two tries to pull within 14-10, Tommy Smith's kickoff was received cleanly by Tonga. In trying to clear the ball to wide and deep support, however, the ball was picked off by a sprinting Will Brewington, who scored what proved to be the winning try in a key 20-14 victory.