

1st Ever National Women's 7s Camp Showcases Talent

by Emil Signes

Conshohocken, PA
August 15-18, 1996

The first-ever national women's all-star sevens camp took place over four days in the Philadelphia suburb of Conshohocken, Pennsylvania, culminating in three matches. The camp is the first step in preparation for the first-ever Hong Kong Invitation Women's 7s, which takes place on March 15-16, 1997 — one week before the men's World Cup 7s.

The lineup of the final match, which included the top 20 players, was as appears in the lineup below.

- Red Hawks**
Erina Queen (Mudhens, Seattle)
Tracy Moens (New Orleans)
Sheri Hunt (San Diego Surfers)
Kim Cyganik (SE Harlequins)
Jen Lucas (Washington Furies)
Candi Orsini (Florida State)
Heather Heaton (MD Stingers)
Moiria Redcorn (OK Roses)
Tracey Hayes (Austin Valkyries)
Michelle Persica (Austin Valks)
- Blue Lightning**
Nancy Fitz (Washington Furies)
Krista McFarren (MD Stingers)
Maureen Henry (Philadelphia)
Terese Taylor (Twin Cities)
Keirsten Lawton (Beantown)
Ronni Petzinger (Morris Pride, NJ)
Lisa Rowe (Maryland Stingers)
Julie McCoy (Ozark Ladies)
Mary Beth Spirk (Maunie Maguires)
Julie Williams (Morris Pride, NJ)

Eagles
Six of these players — Cyganik, Orsini, Fitz, Taylor, Lawton and Rowe — will be representing the US in September's quadrangular tournament with New Zealand, France and Canada in Edmonton, while three other Eagles — Moens, Hunt, and McFarren — also competed. Another Canada selectee, Sallie Ahlert, was injured on Saturday.

Background
Efforts in this country to get a women's all-star program started go back to the late 1980s. Nothing happened, however, until Sallie Ahlert took over the West 7s program in 1993 and promoted a series of camps and tours (Cape Fear in 1994, Ontario in 1995, Las Vegas in 1996). Sallie was named USA Rugby Women's Sevens Coordinator in 1995.

The problem with establishing a national program was that there was nowhere for a national team to go. Women's players in Hong Kong, however, decided to put together a women's invitational tournament for national teams beginning in 1997. For those that wished to participate a year early, an international club and select side sevens tournament was held in Hong Kong in 1996. The US women's community showed support for the concept and an Eagle-laden Atlantis team walked away with this preliminary tournament.

USA Rugby accepted the invitation for 1997 and appointed me as coach. My first priority was to select a team, and then to establish a program that will ultimately provide us with a) at the top, a deep depth chart for our national team, b) at the grass roots, more people playing sevens seriously, and c) in between, more high-level international and domestic sevens tournaments in which many of our better players can compete.

Selection Process
Two camps will be used in the



(Front, L-R): Lawton, Schneider, Machen, Whitney, Hunt, Moens, Redcorn, Sleezer, Friel. (Second Row): Lee, Hayes, McCoy, Heaton, Pazdral, Taylor, Weeg, Henry, Outwin, Williams, Orsini. (Third Row): Mannino, Collier, Wykes, Rayside, Persica, Spirk, Cyganik, Petzinger, Smith, Lenz, Rowe. (Back): Ahlert, Pfefferman, Lucas, Granger, Queen, Moose, Napili, Lutz, Rodriguez-Redondo, Fitz, Petersen, McFarren.

as well as an item by item review of sevens principles and situations. With 44 players and one field, this was no mean feat, and the logistics were: four groups of 11, each with one coach — two groups working on the field, and two groups working on situations that didn't require a lot of space (dropouts, scrums, lineouts, etc), rotating from one exercise to another.

PHILADELPHIA CAMP
Lead Up
Invitations to the camp began going out in June. With a goal of 45 attendees, 55 invitations were issued. With a final participation of 44 players, we were right on target. The 44 participants comprised 29 clubs, 15 LAUs and all seven territories.

Part of the camp's purpose was to bring in promising sevens players from the collegiate ranks, and ten of the 44 participants — Collier, Grebos, Henderson, Lenz, Lutz, Mannino, Napili, Petersen, Rodriguez-Redondo, and Sleezer — came directly from the college ranks. Five attended this year's Collegiate Invitational Camp.

None of these players disappointed and some were positively brilliant surprises.

Coaching, Management and Support

Rarely has a better coaching staff been put together for a U.S. sevens event. The assistant coaches were:
Bill Russell Eagle 7s
Al Caravelli Argentina 7s
Drew Fautley East, Atlantis
Pete Steinberg Penn State Coach
Steve Siano Eagle 7s

Each coach was assigned to work with a given team on Friday and Saturday's competition consisted of a five team tournament. The result was 10 games of exciting, high quality rugby with players in a "teamwork" mode.

The management staff, headed by Janet Marshall of Little Rock, and consisting of Sallie Ahlert of Oklahoma, Dawn White, Alissa Wykes, Vicky Crosier and Elaine Recchiuti of Philadelphia and Barbara Lerch of NOVA, did a great job, and always responded to the my many demands for facilities and various other types of support.

The committee in charge of the national championship, headed by John Flamish, was enthusiastic in its support of the concept, and provided all the help needed to make it successful.

Agenda
Thursday was an optional day. Nevertheless, 25 players attended and at the very least got their bleep tests out of the way a day early. We reviewed the basics of sevens and worked on special topics throughout the day.

Friday saw the balance of the testing, including 40-yard sprints,

as well as an item by item review of sevens principles and situations. With 44 players and one field, this was no mean feat, and the logistics were: four groups of 11, each with one coach — two groups working on the field, and two groups working on situations that didn't require a lot of space (dropouts, scrums, lineouts, etc), rotating from one exercise to another.

Saturday's ten game tournament featured play that got better as the day went on. The selected teams proved competitive, as no game was decided by more than two tries. After the games we adjourned to the national club sevens, where we were able to watch a significant number of games.

Sunday we broke into four evenly matched teams: Blue Lightning, Red Hawks, Cheetahs and Panthers. The seven players scheduled to participate in the Canada Cup sat out these matches. Following these two matches, won by the Blue and Red teams, we reselected

teams to play in the final.

Based on Sunday's play, the tournament selected Maureen "Mo" Henry of Philadelphia, who pleased the crowd with her defense and "Campese goose step," as MVP.

Testing Results
As we do more and more testing, we are beginning to realize the requirements of speed and endurance for top women's sevens players. Camp averages were a) 5.58 seconds over 40-yards, with 19-second old Tasha Mannino of Kutztown State breaking the US women's rugby speed record with a blazing 5.11, and b) level 9 shuttle 1 (43.7 units max VO2) in the bleep test. I also calculated a Speed/Endurance Index, based on a combination of both. The top seven in each category follow:

Player	Speed/Endurance Index
1. Tasha Mannino	5.11
2. Maureen Henry	5.28
Michelle Persica	5.28
4. Sallie Ahlert	5.34

Michele Friel	5.34
Ronnie Petzinger	5.34
7. Justine Sleezer	5.35

Bleep test	Time
1. Keirsten Lawton	12-6
2. Justine Sleezer	12-3
3. Krista McFarren	11-11
4. Maureen Henry	11-1
Julie Williams	11-1
6. Kim Cyganik	10-11
7. Nancy Fitz	10-6

Speed/Endurance Index

1. Justine Sleezer	79.3
2. Maureen Henry	75.0
3. Kim Cyganik	74.1
4. Julie Williams	70.0
5. Keirsten Lawton	68.2
6. Jen Lucas	67.7
7. Ronnie Petzinger	66.0

Reading the Data

What do these data mean? Well, at the 1991 East All Star camp there was only one player — Patty Jervey — who broke 5.4 in the 40. Also, both Keirsten Lawton and Justine Sleezer (a Collegiate All American this year) broke Jos Bergmann's 12-1 mark in the bleep test. It means our top women players are getting faster and fitter. We're also finding them at a young age: of the 12 leading players listed above, Mannino is 19, Sleezer 22, Lawton 24, Cyganik 25, Henry 26, Lucas and Friel 27. (Despite eight players over 35, the camp's average age was 28.)

What's Next?

By the end of September, a venue will be decided and invitations issued to our final selection camp. The camp will comprise about 30 players, including the top 20-25 from the Philadelphia camp plus top players unable to make that venue.

After the winter camp, a squad of 10 will be announced to represent the US in Hong Kong. Hopefully, we will soon find overseas tournaments to send those worthy players that don't make this squad.

The Oxy Olde Boys RFC cordially invites coaches, referees, administrators and players to

A book signing for:

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Wednesday October 2nd, 1996

7:00 pm

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There will be a reception following the event.



Dr. Robert Watkins

As part of the evening there will be a talk entitled "The Forgotten Men of Rugby" given by noted Rugby Player and Orthopedic Surgeon, Dr. Stewart J. Walsh of New Zealand. The topics will include how injuries occur, what steps have been taken to reduce risk of cervical spine injuries, and what rule changes have been made.

To order the book call Vroman's Books 800-769-BOOK
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