

US Women Reach Final of Hong Kong 7s

Page 18 — RUGBY April 14, 1997

by Emil Signes

Hong Kong
March 15-16, 1997

After defeating six opponents by an aggregate total of 178-17 on their way to the final, the United States was brought rudely to earth when they were defeated by New Zealand 43-0 in the championship match of the 1997 Women's Hong Kong 7s.

Final:
New Zealand 43,
US 0

After a competitive first 10 minutes, in which New Zealand scored on the first and last play, and a strong beginning to the second half, the US finally caved in to superior athleticism.

New Zealand averaged two-plus points per minute in all its games, and they were worthy champions, while the US was clearly the second best team in the tournament.

Four of New Zealand's tries were by Dianne Apiti, with one apiece by Tasha Williams, Anna Richards, and Luisa Wall.

Selections

The process to select the first US women's 7s team began with a national camp in Philadelphia in August and was followed by a camp in San Diego in January. About 60 people participated in at least one of the camps — at their own expense.

Both camps were long and hard, with physical testing and skill evaluation followed by long scrimmage games. The team that emerged from the process and that represented us so well in Hong Kong was:



The US Women's Team in Hong Kong: (BACK) Pease, Hunt, Cochran, Rowe, Moens, Parker, Lawton, Lucas, McFarren, Fitz. (FRONT) Signes, Caravelli. (Photo-Hertel)

Name	Club
Janine Cochran	UCLA
Nancy Fitz	Washington Furies
Sheri Hunt	UCLA
Keirsten Lawton	Beantown
Jennifer Lucas	Washington Furies
Krista McFarren (c)	MD Stingers
Tracy Moens	New Orleans
Sue Parker	MD Stingers
Anita Pease	New Orleans
Lisa Rowe	MD Stingers
Emil Signes: Coach	
Al Caravelli: Manager	

For those interested in statistics, the team average (max, min) in speed and fitness testing follows:
40-yards: 5.41 (5.54, 5.21)
100-meters: 14.11 (14.67, 13.49)
Bleep test: 12-2 (14-6, 10-6)

As most of the team was from the Mid-Atlantic RFU, we got together for a February practice in DC.

Eagles in Hong Kong
The team met at UCLA on March 7th, and after two days of practice, arrived in Hong Kong on Tuesday March 11th. We trained once on Tuesday, and twice on Wednesday and Thursday, when we scrimmaged (and easily beat) Holland. We watched New Zealand practice: they were able to move the ball across the width of the field with five players — better, I can say with certainty, than most of our men.

All the teams stayed in the same hotel, the BP International, probably the only hotel in the world where the lobby area is larger than all the guest rooms combined. One of the best moments was seeing all the different teams — among them Fijians, Arabians, Dutch, Scots — wearing their country's track suits

show up at breakfast. The camaraderie of international sevens tournaments is really special and this was to be no different.

Pool Play

The teams were broken into two 6-team pools. Each team played five games, and the top two in each bracket contested the Cup, the second two the Plate, and the bottom two the Bowl.

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

Pool A

	W-L	PF	PA
New Zealand	5-0	188	0
England	4-1	90	50
Australia	3-2	120	51
Canada	2-3	77	80
Holland	1-4	41	141
Japan	0-5	24	218

Pool B

	W-L	PF	PA
US	5-0	161	12
Hong Kong	4-1	107	25
Scotland	2-2-1	109	64
Arabian Gulf	2-3	64	122
Fiji	1-3-1	85	120
Singapore	0-5	0	233

Eagle Matches

US 26,

Scotland 5

The US began strongly with a Lisa Rowe try in the first minute and continued its pressure on Scotland throughout the game. Tries were by Rowe (2), Sue Parker and Nancy Fitz, while Keirsten Lawton added three conversions.

US 10,

Hong Kong 7

The US had two tries called back, which would have made the score at least 20-0, but Hong Kong's try in the last minute made this game tight. The US scores were by Janine Cochran and Krista McFarren.

US 43,

Arabian Gulf 0

The US finally played to its potential against an Arabian Gulf team that had looked good in its first two outings. Janine Cochran and Keirsten Lawton each scored two tries, with one each by Rowe, McFarren, and Jennifer Lucas. Lawton converted 4 of the 7 tries.

US 53,

Singapore 0

The main task for the US in this game was not to injure the Singapore girls, "newbies" to rugby whose weight ranged from 95 to 130 pounds. Cochran and Sheri Hunt each scored a hat trick, and Anita Pease, Keirsten Lawton and Parker had one each. Lawton had four conversions.

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Lisa Rowe on the burst during the Eagle's 26-5 victory over Scotland (Photo-M. Anderson)

**US 29,
Fiji 0**

When the Fiji women play more than one tournament a year, and find the right players, they will be awesome, as there were moments when they displayed the flair of their male counterparts. But for now, they're not at that stage, and we're thankful. McFarren, Lawton, Parker and Pease each scored before Tracy Moens got our last try of the pool round, making her the 10th and last Eagle to score in the tournament. Lawton had two conversions.

CUPSEMIFINALS:

**New Zealand 39,
Hong Kong 7**

New Zealand easily defeated Hong Kong in the first semifinal, but the topic of conversation for Hong Kong throughout the evening (and the entire next week) was that they were the only team to score against New Zealand.

**US 17,
England 5**

The game for the US was our semifinal against England. A rematch of the 1994 World Cup 15s, in which England had crushed us, this figured to be a good match. And it was. For the two remaining veterans of the 1994 World Cup final, McFarren and Hunt, it represented a measure of redemption, albeit a small one.

The US drew first blood, with Lisa Rowe covering a McFarren kick seemingly a quarter inch from the dead ball line. Rowe also scored the second try on a run following a McFarren assist.

For some unknown reason, England decided to hold out three of its big guns, Emma Mitchell, Gill Burns and Jacqui Edwards, until halftime. Within a minute of the start of the second half, it seemed like a good decision, as they stormed their way to a "ruck and roll" try in the left hand corner, leaving the score 10-5 with six minutes to play. Sue Parker, however, pulled away in the next minute with an 95-meter try that took the wind out of



Keirsten Lawton brings down a Scottish ballcarrier during the Eagles' 26-5 victory. (Photo-M. Anderson)

England's sails. Lawton converted and the rest of the game was a defensive battle in which no one scored.

Plate and Bowl

Australia beat Canada 17-7 in a repeat result of their pool match to win the Plate, and Holland outmuscled Fiji 29-17 for the Bowl. This was particularly difficult for the Fiji women, who wanted to go home with some sort of hardware.

Final Standings

- 1 New Zealand
- 2 USA
- 3 England
- 4 Hong Kong
- 5 Australia
- 6 Canada
- 7 Scotland
- 8 Arabian Gulf
- 9 Holland
- 10 Fiji
- 11 Japan
- 12 Singapore

US Scoring Summary

Name	T	C	Pts
Lawton	3	14	43
Cochran	6		30
Rowe	5		25
Parker	4		20
Hunt	3		15
McFarren	3		15
Fitz	3		15
Pease	2		10
Lucas	1		5
Moens	1		5
Total	30	14	178
Opponents	10	5	60

Awards

Anna Richards of New Zealand was named MVP and the "try of the tournament" went to a Singapore wing for scoring her country's only try in the Bowl semifinal against Holland. Tasha Williams of New Zealand was the leading try scorer with 11.

POSTSCRIPT

Genesis:

Hong Kong Women's 7s

The Hong Kong Women's 7s was a product of a lot of hard work by the women of the Hong Kong Rugby Union, but as a self-proclaimed "Johnny Appleseed" of sevens, I'd like to take a little credit. A May 1, 1996 article in Hong Kong's *Eastern Express* quoted Maria Allan, who said "The United States team were in Dubai and were asking about an international fixture... and it was probably from that we thought we could have our own tournament."

The Atlantis men, participants in the Dubai 7s, were at the airport on the day following the tournament, as were the Hong Kong Police, who had won the women's bracket. I spoke to Hong Kong women's sevens chairperson Anne Marie O'Donoghue and suggested the possibility of using the success of the Hong Kong 7s to drive women's sevens play. I was thrilled to discover, via the Hong Kong press, that this conversation helped get the ball rolling.

The Hong Kong women staged an informal women's sevens tournament in 1996, which an Atlantis side won easily. Part of our reason for going was to impress whoever needed to be impressed that international women's rugby could be skillful, and our play caught the attention of the BBC's Ian Robertson, a former Scot-

players representing the best their country had to offer.

Support From the Men

Although nine teams had male counterparts in the 7s World Cup, most of whom had already arrived in Hong Kong, only the host country and the All Blacks got any support from their men. The All Blacks, in fact, brought six of their squad, including captain Eric Rush as well as coach Gordon Tietjens, to cheer on their countrywomen.

New Zealand is the model for us yet again.

Speed Deficiency

The press noted that Tasha Williams had finished second in the New Zealand track competition the week before, with a 100-meter time of 12.01. That was in spikes and in competition. Still, it probably translates to a 12.5 or 12.6 in sneakers and timed alone. Given the fact that the fastest time at our camp was 13.16 (and the fastest player on our team ran a 13.49), there seems to be a bit of a speed deficiency there.

And we were one of the faster teams at the event.

Thanks to...

Sallie Ahlert. There would be no national sevens team program if it were not for Sallie Ahlert and, given the odd way in which this tournament was spawned, it may be that this event would not even have taken place had it not been for her. She had hoped to be a player on the team, but ACL reconstruction made that impossible. Still, she was an integral part of the effort, and our success is her success.

Al Caravelli. We have not made a wiser choice in a long time than getting Al involved with the US Women's sevens program. A sevens international for Argentina in 1981, Al brought a wealth of experience, intelligence, intensity and compassion to this venture.

Other coaches that provided a lot of help during the process of selecting and coaching the team were Drew Fautley, Bill Russell, Pete Steinberg and John Tyler.

tish international.

So we claim our moments in the pre-dawn sun.

Sponsorship

Title sponsor for the tournament was Jardine Fleming, and other major sponsors included New T&T, BZW, Soc. Gen Crosby, Swire Bottlers, Fosters, Tom Turks, BP International House, Gilbert and Canterbury.

This sponsorship helped cover a lot of administrative costs, four nights' hotel, breakfasts and other miscellaneous meals, internal transportation and the banquet. The bottom line for us, though, was that this left a hell of a lot of costs in the hands of the players (travel, for starters).

Despite this fact, the 12 contending teams managed to get, if not all their best players, at least

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