

# US Women Post 7-2 Record on Asian Tour

By Emil Signes

Hong Kong & Yokohama  
March 29-April 7, 2001

The US Women's National 7s team continued its successful ways by recording seven shutouts on a tour marred only by two losses to world champion New Zealand. Despite the losses, the standard of US women's sevens has never been higher, and the 22-0 loss to New Zealand in Hong Kong Stadium on March 30 was probably the best women's sevens match ever played.

## Tempe

The US team was selected at a camp in Tempe, Arizona (January 12-14) in which nearly 50 players participated. As a result of this camp, 17 selected players represented the US in four tournaments in New Zealand, Hong Kong and Japan.

## New Zealand

The team went 8-4-1 in a two-week tour of New Zealand in February. With the Hong Kong-Japan tour squad of 14 containing 11 veterans of the NZ tour, hopes were high.

## Management

Non-playing members included head coach Emil Signes (HK and Japan), manager Al Caravelli (HK), and team doctor Sue Bercuk (HK and Japan). USA Rugby Executive Director Mark Rudolph was also present in Hong Kong and joined our party for several activities.

## Preparation

For the third consecutive year, the team assembled in Bethlehem, PA for a weekend of training on March 17-18. Mary Beth Spirk, basketball coach at Moravian College and a member of the national team's coaching staff, hosted the event and secured the Moravian facilities. Mary Beth put up four players while the Signes home housed 15 people for the weekend.

The team assembled in Hong Kong on Sunday evening March 25, and trained twice a day on Monday and Tuesday. On the 27th there was a scrimmage with Sweden, and Wednesday, except for a one-hour walk-through, was a day off.

Social activities included a visit



US Women's 7s Team: Signes, McFarren, Juocys, McCabe, Graf, Pease, Queen, Cabrera, Schnapp, Rowe, Irby, A Caravelli, Bercuk. (Front) K Caravelli. (Photo- S Signes)

to the Outback Restaurant, a tourney sponsor, and the mostly American Hong Kong International School, where the players discussed their roles in "real life". There was also a visit to Lamma Island for a classic Hong Kong seafood meal.

Our liaison during the week was Brenda Bulawa, an American from San Jose who has been living in Hong Kong for more than ten years. c-KONG, her husband Derrick's firm, was the tournament's title sponsor.

## HONG KONG 7s

The tournament comprised 14 national teams and served two purposes. One was the tournament itself, the closest thing there is to a World 7s Championship of women's 7s. The other was the 2nd annual Shanghai Tang Asian Championship, with teams from Japan, Singapore, Arabian Gulf, Thailand, Hong Kong, China and title defender Kazakhstan participating.

### Pools

Pool A comprised New Zealand, Samoa, Sweden, Kazakhstan, Japan, Arabian Gulf, and China. Pool B comprised

Australia, USA, England, Netherlands, Hong Kong, Thailand and Singapore.

Rather than have all teams in each pool compete against each other, the bottom two in each pool (Arabian Gulf, China, Thailand and Singapore) competed separately to see which would join Kazakhstan, Hong Kong, and Japan in the Asian championship semifinal.

Kazakhstan would defeat Hong Kong 45-0 in the final of the Asian Championship.

Pool B was nicknamed the "pool of death," comprising as it did the three main pretenders to meet New Zealand in the final: Australia, the US and England.

### Pool A

NZ	55	Sweden	0
NZ	45	Kazakhstan	0
NZ	45	Japan	0
NZ	31	Samoa	0
Samoa	15	Kazakhstan	10
Samoa	32	Sweden	5
Samoa	39	Japan	7
Sweden	19	Japan	7
Sweden	29	Kazakhstan	0
Kazakhstan	39	Japan	0

### Pool B

USA	26	Netherlands	0
USA	10	England	0
USA	33	Hong Kong	0
USA	17	Australia	0
England	46	Hong Kong	0
England	27	Australia	0
England	27	Netherlands	0
Australia	43	Hong Kong	0
Australia	45	Netherlands	0
Netherlands	20	Hong Kong	0

### Plate Semifinals

Kazakhstan	24	Netherlands	0
Australia	31	Sweden	0

### Plate Final

Australia	41	Kazakhstan	12
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### Cup Semifinals

New Zealand	27	England	0
USA	10	Samoa	0

### 3rd Place

England	41	Samoa	5
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### Cup Final

New Zealand	22	USA	0
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Laura Cabrera scored two tries and kicked three conversions, while Erina Queen and Krista McFarren each scored a try.

1. Queen (Schnapp)
2. Cabrera
3. McCabe
4. Rowe (McFarren)
5. Pease
6. Graf (Juocys)
7. Irby

## USA 10, England 0

The second match was a defensive battle, with the US coming out on top of a very strong England team, 10-0. The US's first try, by Emilia Juocys, was from a play designed that week to counter England's defensive pattern (one of the great - and sometimes surprising - pleasures of coaching is to see plays actually work). Lisa Rowe scored the second US try. England's excellent performance throughout the weekend underscored the importance of this win.

1. Queen
2. McFarren
3. Schnapp (McCabe)
4. Rowe
5. Pease
6. Juocys
7. Cabrera

## USA 33, Hong Kong 0

The US played relatively uninspired sevens against Hong Kong but still posted a convincing 33-0 win. Laura Cabrera had two tries, while Yancy Graf, Emilia Juocys and Lisa Rowe each one. Diane Schnapp made four conversions.

1. McCabe
2. Cabrera (Rowe)
3. Schnapp
4. McFarren (Queen)
5. Juocys

## USA Results

### USA 26, Netherlands 0

For some reason, the US seems to struggle with physical teams like the Netherlands, and this game was no exception. Playing the Netherlands' game rather than their own, the US scored only four tries against a team that fared much poorer against both Australia and England.

Name	Club
Laura Cabrera	Berkeley All Blues
Yancy Graf	Kansas City Jazz
Tyshawn Henry	Berkeley All Blues
Pam Irby	Oregon Sports Union
Emilia Juocys	Chicago
Kerry McCabe	Philadelphia
Krista McFarren	Maryland Stingers
Chris Miscek	Twin Cities Amazons
Pat Neder	Atlanta
Anita Pease C	Maryland Stingers
Erina Queen	Emerald City Mudhens
Lisa Rowe	Maryland Stingers
Diane Schnapp C	Berkeley All Blues
Meredith Whalen	Arizona State

6. Graf (Pease)
7. Irby

## USA 17, Australia 0

On the second day of the tournament, the US defense again carried it in the match it needed to win its pool. A late first half try by Lisa Rowe, beating former Eastern RFU representative Bronnie Mackintosh to the corner, was all the US needed. But Erina Queen and Diane Schnapp both scored second half tries to seal the win.

## USA 10, Samoa 0

While its defense was flawless, the US attack could benefit from more consistency. Once again we fell into the trap of getting into our opponent's machismo mode, and struggled against the mostly New Zealand-based Samoa team. In the end, however, tries by Diane Schnapp and Laura Cabrera - and an incredible defensive chase by Cabrera - won the game for the US.

### Final:

## New Zealand 22, USA 0

22-0 sounds like it might have been an easy win, but this was a brilliantly played match in which New Zealand made the US pay for every mistake and made very few of its own.

Despite several US opportunities early in the game, New Zealand scored first on a try by Diane Kahura following a penalty. Exia Shelford followed with a powerful and evasive run late in the half for a 12-0 New Zealand lead. Two second-half tries sealed the match, but it was a moment to be proud of for both New Zealand and the US, and for supporters of women's rugby everywhere.

New Zealand's Tamaku Paul was the tournament MVP, and sources tell me that Laura Cabrera finished second in the coaches' balloting (we were not allowed to vote for our own players).

New Zealand coach Daryl Suasua praised the US team, and commented that they played very intelligently. "It's hard to say what they need to do to beat us," he added in a *South China Morning Post* interview, "What we need to do is stay ahead of them. The Americans are very strong and tough and they take a lot of the ball off us."

### Refereeing

This was probably the first international women's tournament in which the majority of referees were women, and they certainly did a creditable job. In the end, however, the interpretation of laws (by both

## US Women's 7s Team

Club	Tourney
Berkeley All Blues	HK
Kansas City Jazz	HK and Japan
Berkeley All Blues	Japan
Oregon Sports Union	HK and Japan
Chicago	HK and Japan
Philadelphia	HK and Japan
Maryland Stingers	HK and Japan
Twin Cities Amazons	Japan
Atlanta	Japan
Maryland Stingers	HK and Japan
Emerald City Mudhens	HK
Maryland Stingers	HK
Berkeley All Blues	HK
Arizona State	Japan

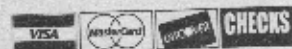
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male and female referees) tended to be different from that at the men's tournament. The consensus of both the US and New Zealand team members was that they preferred the interpretations at the men's tournament.

The differences? The referees at the men's tournament were far less concerned with penalizing the team with the ball for minor technical infringements: "get the ball out and use it" was the order of the day. No matter what philosophical treatises may be written on the evils of bridging, it remains the most common method of ball retention at the tackle, and it was penalized in the men's tournament only when players dove over the tackled player.

Attacking players that unavoidably ended up in front of the ball carrier were rarely penalized in the men's tournament, whereas the crossed arms signal was seen far too often during the women's tournament. Finally, penalties like feeding at the scrum also seemed to be more frequently called at the women's tournament.

#### China

The last time the Chinese women sent a team to the Hong Kong Sevens they were a bunch of "little girls" from Guangzhou. This year, a group of tall, very athletic women showed up. Only one, however, had ever played a game of rugby in her life. These were team handball players, several of them members of the Chinese national team, and they had only five days of practice prior to the tournament.

Athleticism and team play showed their value, however, as China won three games and took third place in the Asian Championship. China's last-minute try to defeat the Arabian Gulf was voted "try of the tournament."

#### Kazakhstan

Perhaps the most amazing feat was Kazakhstan's, which as participant in both championships played nine games, winning the Asian Championship and finishing as runner-up to Australia in the Plate Division of the main competition. Kazakhstan's speedy wing Aigul Jartybaiyeva was the tournament's leading try scorer with 16.

#### Mutual Support

The US women and men got to see each other regularly at training sessions, and the men watched the women play on Thursday and then stayed around to watch the women's final against New Zealand on Friday evening. Following their final, the women became spectators, and were the loudest supporters of the US men throughout the weekend, suffering, then celebrating with them as they came from behind Sunday to win every game on the last play of the match - fantastic!



Erina Queen on the attack versus Australia at the Hong Kong 7s. (Photo- S Signes)

#### 7:00 AM Practice

We stayed in Hong Kong until Wednesday, and after a hard Monday practice to brush off the cobwebs, scheduled a double session for Tuesday. The players, however, wanted to see the Arizona vs. Duke NCAA basketball final, to be shown live at 9 am Hong Kong time, so we practiced at 7 am while morning Tai Chi exercises were still in full force. When the basketball game ended, we went out for practice number two.

#### Wednesday:

#### On to Yokohama

When the US moved on to Yokohama, we were reduced to a hard-core of ten players, plus Doc Sue Bercuk and myself. We trained the next two days at the beautiful grounds of the Yokohama Country and Athletic Club (YCAC), the tournament sponsor. The YCAC, whose membership comprises people from 34 different countries, is no newcomer to sevens: this first international women's sevens on Saturday was followed on Sunday by the 43rd YCAC men's invitational.

## YOKOHAMA SEVENS

Yokohama, Japan  
April 7, 2001

The US Women continued what they started in Hong Kong: shutting out all teams other than New Zealand. When it came to the Kiwis, however, a 24-7 loss sent them back to the reality that they had still not found the key to beating the World Champions.

The weather was sunny, with temperatures hovering around 70 degrees and cherry blossoms in view as far as the eye could see. It was an especially nice day for Kerry McCabe, who had played in Japan more than 10 ago, and had several ex-teammates come by to visit.

The Yokohama Sevens included three national teams - Japan, New Zealand and the US, plus a number of club sides. The national teams played a round robin series, and then New Zealand and the US faced the champions of the two club pools.

#### USA 37, JAPAN 0

In its first match, the US methodically dispatched Japan 37-0, led by four tries from Atlanta's Pat Neder. Tyshawn Henry, Pam Irby and Yancy Graf each added a try and Chris Miskec a conversion.

- 1) Miskec (McCabe)
- 2) Irby
- 3) Henry
- 4) Whalen
- 5) Pease
- 6) Graf (Juocys)
- 7) Neder (McFarren)

#### USA 53, NSSU 0

In its second match the US defeated NSSU (Nippon Sports Science University) 53-0. Ty Henry and Emilia Juocys each had two tries; Miskec, Irby, Krista McFarren, Meredith Whalen, and Kerry McCabe each had one. Miskec and Juocys had two conversions apiece.

- 1) McCabe
- 2) McFarren (Neder)
- 3) Henry (Miskec)
- 4) Whalen
- 5) Juocys

- 6) Graf (Pease)
- 7) Irby

New Zealand won its first two games over Japan (42-0) and Liberty Fields (83-0).

## New Zealand 24, USA 7

In the final match New Zealand started with a try by Suzie Shortland after pinning the US back in its own 10-meter area following a brilliant

kickoff by Anna Richards. Exia Shelford added the second and the US trailed 12-0 at halftime.

Hong Kong MVP Tamaku Paul and Vanessa Cootes added a try apiece in the second half, and we let all the new players have a run. With veterans Anita Pease, Krista McFarren, and Kerry McCabe on the bench, the youngsters held their own, managing a penalty try in the last minute when New Zealand stopped the US from taking a penalty kick on their 5-m line. The US reached the NZ line following a 50-m break by Emilia Juocys. Chris Miskec made the conversion bringing the final score to 24-7.

- 1) McCabe (Miskec)
- 2) Irby
- 3) Henry
- 4) McFarren (Whalen)
- 5) Pease (Graf)
- 6) Juocys
- 7) Neder

The rematch wasn't quite to the standard of the Hong Kong final, but it was high quality rugby nonetheless. Chasing New Zealand has made the US a far better sevens team than a year ago, and I have to believe that the specter of our chase is improving them as well.

Won 7 Lost 2; Points For 183, Points Against 46; Tries For 33, Tries Against 8.

The US women's national sevens' team record since 1997 now stands at 35-9-2, with all nine losses coming to New Zealand national teams. The victories include 2 against New Zealand "B" and there was also a tie with New Zealand in Whangarei.



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## US SCORING SUMMARY

NAME	TRIES		CONVERSIONS		POINTS		Total
	HK	Japan	HK	Japan	HK	Japan	
Cabrera	5		3		31		31
Juocys	2	2		2	10	14	24
Neder		4				20	20
Schnapp	2		5		20		20
Henry		3				15	15
Rowe	3				15		15
Miskec		1		4		13	13
Graf	1	1			5	5	10
Irby		2				10	10
McFarren	1	1			5	5	10
Queen	2				10		10
McCabe		1			5		5
Whalen		1			5		5
Penalty Try		1			5		5
<b>Total</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>96</b>	<b>97</b>	<b>193</b>
<b>Opponents</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>22</b>	<b>24</b>	<b>46</b>