

HER STORY OF
WOMEN'S
RUGBY.

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INVESTIGATE

What would this look like compared to how we play today?

What other events were happening in New Zealand in 1888?

The first women's rugby game played in New Zealand was in **1888** between a Wellington Girls' High School team and a Salvation Army team under hybrid rules without tackling or scrums.



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What are the pros and cons of professional sport?

The men's game became professional in 1997. Why has it taken so long for the female game to catch up?

In 1891, Nita Webbe was trying to establish the world's first women's professional rugby team. Promising to pay players, they were recruited from all over New Zealand to learn the game, with the intention to then travel the country playing games in front of paying audiences, in New Zealand, Australia, and potentially other countries of the British Empire. However, the games never took place.

Super Rugby Aupiki is a professional women's rugby union national club competition in New Zealand. Its inaugural season commenced in March 2022.

Aupiki translates as *'the ascent to the upper most realm'*.



INVESTIGATE

What would you like to know about the women's game of rugby in your province?

In 1915 the world's first recorded game between women's teams was played in New Zealand and determined efforts to set up women's club games were attempted in the early 1920's.

The first provincial game was in 1980 between Manawatū and Hawke's Bay.



INVESTIGATE

What has been the growth of women's rugby been in the last 20 years?

Despite this enthusiasm, for over 130 years the women's game in New Zealand was little recognised and faced successive waves of objections based on moral, religious, social, and physiological grounds.

Yet women and girls persisted with attempts to play and now dominate the growth of rugby. There are now over 30,000 females who play the game in New Zealand. (Over 21,000 of those are under the age of thirteen).



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If something has not been officially sanctioned, what does that mean?

On July 22, 1989, at Christchurch the first national selection, not officially sanctioned, defeated the touring Californian Grizzlies 13 – 7.

The match was a curtain raiser to Canterbury's match against Argentina and the New Zealand side came away with a 13-7 victory.

The team was coached by Laurie O'Reilly, whose name is on the trophy the Black Ferns and Wallaroos currently play for every year. O'Reilly was effectively called the "godfather" of women's rugby in New Zealand.

O'Reilly was quoted afterwards by saying "we could have waited 20 years for this fixture. But there's no turning back now."



INVESTIGATE

Did you know the Black Ferns are more successful in Rugby World Cups than the All Blacks?

In 1991, New Zealand Women's Team play their first official matches, at the first World Cup (unsanctioned by World Rugby). Losing to eventual winners USA in the semi-final.

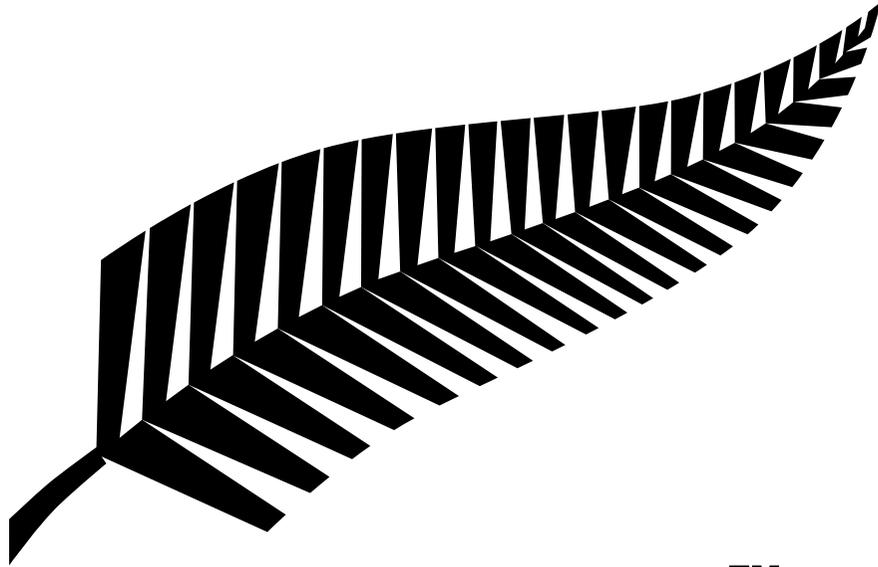


Taranaki Women's Rugby pioneers Vicky Dombroski, Cherie Blyde and Geri Paul

INVESTIGATE

What are the benefits of women coaches coaching women's sides?

In 1994, New Zealand Rugby support a New Zealand Women's team tour to Australia. The coach is Vicky Dombroski, the only woman to have coached the Women's side.



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New Zealand **BLACK FERN**S

INVESTIGATE

How do teams come up with names?

The 1998 tournament became the first women's world cup officially sanctioned by the International Rugby Board. (World Rugby). New Zealand won the World Cup for the first-time defeating USA 44-12 in the final.

The name Black Ferns was suggested by Tracy Waters and became the official name for the New Zealand Women's team.



Other important events

- 2000 New Zealand Women's Sevens win Hong Kong Sevens
- 2002 Rugby World Cup – Black Ferns win back-to-back
- 2006 Rugby World Cup – Black Ferns win three in a row
- 2010 Rugby World Cup – Black Ferns win four in a row
- 2012 New Zealand Women's Sevens win inaugural World Series
- 2012 National Secondary Schools top four started and girls added to Condor Sevens
- 2013 New Zealand Women's Sevens win Sevens World Cup in Russia
- 2013 Selica Winiata's match winning try against England is voted fans try of the year against several men's tries.
- 2014 Black Ferns Sevens players sign contracts to become first professional women rugby players
- 2016 Farah Palmer becomes first woman on NZR board
- 2017 Rugby World Cup - Black Ferns win fifth world cup defeating semi-professional England
- 2018 Black Ferns Sevens win Commonwealth Games gold medal
- 2018 Professionals – Black Ferns become semi-professional
- 2018 Kendra Cocksedge wins Kelvin Tremain player of the year award against men



HER STORY OF WOMENS RUGBY

With the rise and rise of women's rugby and women playing leading roles in rugby generally the NZ Rugby Museum realised that the story of women's rugby needed to be expanded and modernised. The RWC 2021 presents a special moment for the story to be exhibited to a broad audience that is interested and receiving women's sports stories regularly.

For more information on HER STORY please go to the NZ Rugby Museum website.

This booklet is hopefully a catalyst for further learnings around this wonderful story of Women in Rugby.

