

CIRU President Report 2020

Kia orana,

2020 Rugby has been a Challenge for all of us in our paradise country. We never even have a thought that one day our borders will be closed because of Covid 19 pandemics. Luckily we still have one International Flight a week and with International Shipping becoming more control by our government. As of today we are still facing uncertainty and more challenges ahead of us. We must be thankful to the almighty who continues to care for us. In his guidance and one way or another we will overcome these challenges in anticipation for riches and the enjoyment that Rugby brings to our people both locally and abroad.

Admin and Development

February 8 – 19 our Oceania Rugby Educator Talemo Waga and Tihrani visited us to conduct a training workshop for Coaches, Referees, Medics, Strength & Conditioning Trainers and Management for locals and the wider Sport Community Clubs on the Island. Unfortunately, because of the Rugby League Season, the attendance from the Five Rugby Union Clubs across the Island were low. However, five participants from rugby clubs attended the Management Training, two for Coaching Training, five for Referees Training, two Medical Training and two for Strength and Conditioning Training.

Covid 19 Epidemic

Towards the end of March all Sport activity across the Country were suspended until further notice because of COVID 19 Pandemic. Our Border was closed, with one International Flight a week throughout these hard times, bringing in essential needed supply for our people and business

Sometime in April an emergency meeting for the CIRU Executives was called to review what course of action that we will take because of Covid 19. I emailed and officials letter to the Secretary of Health for the way forward for Rugby Union. I was advised later two days by the Secretary of the Ministry of Health (MOH) and the Covid 19 Taskforce that they will review our states by the end of the month.

Quick Rip Rugby 7s

On the 1st May I received an approval letter from MOH that Quick Rip 7s is approved to start these game as it falls more into non-contact Sport. Ben Koteka our CIRU Rugby Admin & Development Manager quickly gathered together an action plan, assisted by two of our Rugby Development Officer (RDOs) to implement the Quick Rip Rugby. This also included three of our Local Rugby Club Senior Players. The plan was to set up and run a Rising Stars – Rarotonga Primary Schools Quick Rip 7s. All schools across the Island were advised and school participation were confirmed and training sessions were organized so the RDOs could commence training.

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The Tournament were held at the Arorangi Rugby Field on Wednesday 8th July 2020 both for the Boys and Girls. It was great to see the Parents, Grand-Parents, Unties there to support their Kids. This really brings back the old days of community support. The kids just wanted to play rugby throughout the whole day. Also noted was the supports of our small sponsors on the day. We had the Senior Student from our College Tereora to officiate these games including some of our Senior Referees who took leave from work to assist the events. A great day for Rugby in general. There were 36 teams participated, 17 Girls teams an 19 Boys team and over 400 active participants in the Tournament.

Domestic Rugby Union

On the 1st July we received an official approval from MOH for full active contact Sport. A meeting was called for all Rugby Clubs on the Islands to come together to plan of 2020 Rugby Union tournament. On the 11 July 2020, the first game was played at the Arorangi Field. The first game was in a Town vs. Country format. Consisting of Juniors Under 11 to Under 13 Quick Rip, under 16 – 15-a-side rugby, under 19, Womens Open 7's Quick Rip, and the Seniors A Open 15 a side. The Clubs 15s season started from the 24 July until the 19 September 2020 for the finals. The winners were, under 10 Arorangi- Cowboys, Under 12 Avatiu/Nikao Eels, Under 14 Town, Under 16 Country, Under 19 Country, Women Country, Senior A Tupapa Panthers on extra time. One thing that came to benefit to all that all Rugby games were played at one venue. So it was good to see the support of the four Rugby Union Clubs coming together. This will continue for 2021 season as all clubs were excited with the format. This is great as each host club can implement fundraising activity during the day.

Cook Islands Games

From the 3 – 17 October an Inaugural Cook Islands Games took place consisting of all multi-sports event of 23 codes & introduction of traditional games. The participation teams were made from the eleven Islands both from the North and the South of the Cook Islands. Over 4,000 athletes & officials played over a period of 2 weeks of competition. Rugby 7s Tournament is played from the 15th to 17th October. With total of 19x participating teams from their respective (11) Islands. The following are in category of: MENS (10x teams): Gold – Pukapuka, Silver – Aitutaki and Bronze – Atiu. WOMENS (4x teams): Gold Atiu, Silver Aitutaki and Bronze Mauke. The Under 17s Men (5x teams): Gold Atiu, Silver Mauke and Bronze Pukapuka. The Overall winner of the Cook Islands Games Competition Trophy goes to Mauke. Most events including rugby was broadcast livestreamed on social media such as Facebook and YouTube. There was significant support from all four corner of our Society, the Government, Traditional Leader, Religion, Community and our many of our Sponsors. Also the many Volunteers who made things easier on a day by day basis. This game created an awesome 2020 atmosphere and announcement was made by government and sporting bodies that the next Cls Games will be set to be held in October 2022.

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A New Birth - Tri Series Rugby Union 15-a-side

Between Cook Islands, Samoa and Fijians players residing here in the Cook Islands.

This Tri Series was initiated by one person with the support of his Club namely, Mr. Pare Rongokea Jnr, who was a former Senior Rugby Union Player and being part of the Arorangi Cowboys Rugby Union Executives for a number of years. He also represented the Cook Islands for Rugby Union and Rugby League in regional and international competitions. The game was held at the Arorangi Sport Rugby Field. The support from the three ethnic communities across the Islands were hugely noticeable throughout the three day games. The attendance and support by the communities were extremely successful and in full capacity. The standard shown during the matches showed real passion and country pride.

First game - Cook Islands (15) vs Fiji (10) on an extra time.

Second game – Fiji (21) vs Samoa (22)

Third and final game – Cook Islands (20) vs. Samoa (28)

Final Placing – 1. Samoa 2. Cook Islands 3. Fiji

This is a new format of Cook Islands Rugby Union. It will form part of the Annual Rugby Union Calendar for years to come. Already we can see the standard of these games has lifted the standard of Rugby Union here in the Country. CIRU will continue to support these any new initiatives to lift the standard of rugby in the Cook Islands with the intention that rugby will be the true the winner. This will also set a new format for us as a Country moving forward in particular our selection process for our national side to represent the Cook Islands.

Raro 7s Rugby

Due to closing of borders to our traditional International Raro 7s 2020, overseas team and players were restricted to attend and participate therefore the tournament was changed into a more Community oriented 7s Rugby. The events started with the Under 13 Rarotonga Primary School boys and girls 7s Rippa Rugby, played on the 1st December on the Country side of the Island of Ngatangia Sport Field, with 14 teams from the Schools across the Island. The winner being Under 13 Boys Nukutere Collage, 2nd Arorangi. Under 13 Girl's division Winner Papaaroa SDA College, 2nd Nikao Maori School.

The Raro Open Men's and Women's 7s consist of 21 team altogether that participated during the two days 7's competition. Twelves (12) Men's team, five (5) Women's and four (4) Under 17 Boys team. The standard of the games was of high as witness during the Cook Islands Games period. This was a continuation effort following on from the Cook Islands Games

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The winner in the: Men's division are 1. Tupapa Panthers, Runner up Pukapuka.

Women's division – Winner Avatiu, runner up Atiu

Under 17 Winners - Arorangi Cowboys, runner up Tupapa Panthers

Social Media Presence

Because of Covid 19, we did not have much of a Social Media Promotion. All International events competitions were deferred to 2021 and hopefully the landscape will improve for us come 2021. We have a dedicated person on our CIRU board responsible to update our social media page on a monthly basis by our female executive namely Ashley Willis

World Rugby funding

The funding from World Rugby remain the same as from previous year of \$30,000.00 GBP. This funding is being utilize to fulfil our goals set out in our Strategic Plan administered by our Admin and Rugby Development officer and also assisting schools and development project for Outer-Islands. With downturn in the economic landscape our traditional sponsors were unable to contribute funding resources to support rugby however they were still supporting rugby in good number of in-kind sponsorship particularly for Raro 7's and Rippa Rugby program.

Coming in 2021–

2020 domestic Rugby Union season has been in discussion a lot, with some surprising and excitement events. For that purpose, we will see some changes in our rugby calendar in the coming 2021. We have just appointment our Cook Islands World Rugby Under 18 Womens. Coach Mr Frank Karati and his Management and a CIRU Executive Rep as the Coordinator Mr William Taripo. They will be working with our NZ CIRU counterpart in ensuring we have the best team assemble for this WORLD EVENTS.

After a vigorous consultation with our clubs and community stakeholders we have finally adopted our new CIRU Constitutions at the 2020 AGM. This document is in line with the current Oceania and the World Rugby Principles and Guidelines. In my view there is still area for improvement to suit our working Environment as a Country. We pray this Covid 19 will not deter our commitment to Rugby Union as a whole.

Conclusion

On behalf of the CIRU, I would like to thank you all of our sponsors and community stakeholders for their on-going support during the year. We were unable to participate in any international events this year due to Covid 19.

Special acknowledgement to our traditional sponsors, Vodafone, CITC liquor store, Cook Islands Tourism, CI General Transport, ANZ bank, Raroexpo Ltd, MADD design, TAU, CI red Cross, Ministry of Health, CIIC, Islands Car & Rental Hire, CISNOC for the Accreditation, CITV & Herald, CI News, Pacific TV, CI Rugby Union Referees, CIBS & Arama Associates, Bench

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Officials, Blue Pacific, Vaima Water, Ministry of Cultural Development, Cook Islands Government.

To our Regional Oceania Rugby and International World Rugby partnership, thank you for your support to Cook Islands rugby during 2020

A special acknowledgement to General Mr George George our dedicated MC during the domestic Raro7's and our National Raro Rugby 7's Events

We look forward to next year with re-opening of our borders and welcoming other international players who were unfortunate this year to miss out on their usual pilgrimage to Rarotonga for our iconic and exciting rugby events.

Special Meitaki Maata and thank you to our many Players, Coaches, Managers and your families who have been part of our CIRU activity for 2020.

Also special meitaki maata to our Clubs Rugby Executives and administrators, first aid providers and supporters.

Lastly to my executive that have given up their time, passion and love of rugby through their voluntary time, Meitaki Kore Reka.

Meitaki maata

Simiona Teiotu



President CIRU.

24-December-2020