



**COOK ISLANDS RUGBY UNION**  
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## **CIRU - Vice President Report for 2021 Rugby Union Activity & Performance**

2021 was a year of difficulties and uncertainty. No international calendar to attract major sponsors. With no in-ward flights and tourist to stimulate the economy and over 1000 of young workforce leaving for meat-works and fruit plantations in New Zealand. It has impacted on the local community. Never-the-less CIRU have had to be innovative, bold, strategic, and with lots of community support we are most grateful for the continued support and encouragement to help another testing year.

### **Under 18 Women's Campaign & Rippar Rugby**

January to June 2021 Rugby Activity has been a challenging 6months calendar. U18 Womens Legacy Tour Sept Plan were hit with the unexpected mass resignations of the originally selected management team. A plan B was activated to appoint a new Coaching and Management. Due to covid-19, our borders were still closed: A plan was put in-place to ensure the delivery of Raro 7s Rugby for December 2021. Subcommittee were form to run this iconic event. With the new U18 committee formed, training for the girls kicks in Monday, Wednesday, Fridays and Saturday at 6am. The plan was improving fitness base while slowly feeding in ball work, physical contact skills. We had the Tereora College Year 13 Physical Education students (x31) were trained to coach Quick Rip 7s as part of their Level 3 NCEA accreditation.

Mixed Quick Rip 6s was played amongst the Level 9 to 13 with 150 boys & 150 girls (total 300) involved. The 5-week program have recruited new 5 RDOs (Terry Henry, Travel Makara, Teava Nanai, \*Apii Vavia & \*Sunielia Tom) including \*2x females and will use this as an opportunity to practice and upskill before the Term 2 Rising Stars Schools/College Rugby Championships program commences. This is a new project with Tereora College Year 9 (Quick Rip) Boys & Girls and Year 10 (Rugby 7s) for boys only. 225 students involved (150 boys + 75 girls). The 5x week program runs from 22 March to 23 April 2021. This is a good opportunity to upskill the 5x new Rugby Development Officers, develop college players and strengthen relationship with the Main College. The students are preparing for a Week 5 inter-class competition for this Term. The borders were reopened on 16/03/21. This has led to more locals leaving for NZ in search of work and money mainly to the meat works and fruit plantations. With the new Project from 26 – 30 April 2021 we ran the inaugural April Holiday Skills Workshop (14 – 17years old), with the total 40 (20 Boys & 20 Girls) attending this rugby activity. The values based, holistic-type program with guest speakers and Zoom hook-ups and various persons organized to showcase Rugby as a viable career pathway. Lots of positive feedback from this inaugural program.

### **CIRU Development for Players – NZ.**





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2021 CI rugby development players currently experiencing NZ Rugby. North Otago RFU: Olive Willie & Alistair Newbigging to Waitaki Boys HS. Matt Maui & Adyn Kapi to Waitaki RFC. Joined by Women – Charlize Tumu-Makara & Daimzel Rongokea to Waitaki “Wahine”. Juronia Raea & King David Paulo to Waimea RFC Tasman/NZ. Matamanea Matapakia at Geraldine RFC (South Canterbury). Maeva Robati & Jireh Vunibaka – Rangiora HS (North Canterbury).

### **Rising Starts Program**

2021 Rising Stars – Rugby Championship 21 May 2021. The Rising Stars Quick Rip & Rugby 7s Championships started and will run for 5 more weeks. U11s & U13 Primary QR (21x teams from all the Rarotonga schools) and Rugby 7s College (6x teams – Tereora, Nukutere and Papaaroa) = 324 boys. The RDOs have commenced training the primary school teams as per training schedule. With the Womens RWC tournament planned for September/October 2021 in NZ has now been postponed until 2022, actual new dates still to be confirmed. The U18 Womens 15s Legacy tour is also postponed – 2022 dates still to be confirmed. The U18 management and players were advised. The new U18 Committee plans were put on hold until the 2022 tournament dates and age-criteria have been confirmed asap.

### **CIRU AGM**

7 June 2021 date for the CIRU AGM with elections held, Ashleigh Willis (NEW President), Simiona Teiotu (VP), Anthony Turua (Treasurer), Rachel Metuangaro (NEW Asst Treasurer), William Taripo (Secretary), Tereapii Tumutoa (Asst Secretary). The new executive committee features two female members. This was a start of Womens getting involved with High Level within the CIRU Executive Board. At least working toward, the new World Rugby Strategic.

**Rugby World Cup Qualify** – World Cup Qualify in Auckland/NZ on the 24 July 21. Our Local players Josh Caffery, Tevita Niusoma, Eric Newbigging, Davey Mato, Toru Katuke & Franco Smith depart for NZ for the trial and hopefully make the final squad for the RWCQ match against Tonga.

**CIRU 2021 Domestic Season-** The Rarotonga Club 15s competition kicked off on the 3<sup>rd</sup> July and will finish with the Grand Finals on 11<sup>th</sup> September 2021. Grades: U9s x4 teams, U11 x4 teams all playing Quick Rip. U13s Rugby 10s only 2x teams, U16 Rugby 15s 2x teams, U19s with 2x teams, Senior A Grade with only 4x teams.

**Regional Rugby - Islands Under 19 Development** - The U19 Rarotonga v Aitutaki matches were played on Tuesday 20<sup>th</sup> (Rarotonga won 46 – nil) at Avatiu Field and on Friday 23<sup>rd</sup> July at Arorangi Field (Rarotonga won 14 – 9). Aitutaki loss both matches however they showed





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in the second Match #2 with the right mind set “all things are possible” as they put in a spirited performance.

### **Rarotonga College Rugby Competition**

Friday 23/07/21: Tereora College inter-house Rugby 7s Competition with Levels 9,10,11,12 & 13 playing half-field 7s that was refereed/ admin tent by our group of RDOs. Total of 20x teams participated with squads of 12 players each, Total = 240x players (Boys only).

### **Cook Islands National Side Trial – New Zealand**

CI 15s trials played Saturday 10<sup>th</sup> July (v Tasman Development) and 17<sup>th</sup> July (U20 NZ) before the final team is selected to play on the 24 July 2021 RWCQ Test match v Tonga.

24 July 21: RWCQ Match Tonga 54 v 10 Cook Islands. Tonga proving too strong on the day after heading into the break leading by 26 – 10, Tonga ran away with the victory. The only CI try was scored by hooker Ben Tou with a conversion and penalty kicked by halfback Toka Sopoaga.

CI Management Staff: Head Coach: Nathan Robinson & Asst Coaches: Ash Parker, Anam Mana, Lima Sopoaga, Trainer: Adam Vardey, Physio: Jana Whitta.

CI Squad (**local players**): Benjamin Tou, James Pakoti, Ezekiel Sopoaga, Toka Sopoaga, Tupou Sopoaga, Alex Matapo, Antonio Ripata, **Toru Katuke, James Kora, Robert Heather, Joshua Caffery, Francis Smith, Tevita Niusama, Matamanea Matapakia, Mataroa Maui, ONeal Rongo**, Tuakana Paitai, Tahquinn Hansen, Jardine Pumati Chung-Ching, Alan Toki, Te Puihi Rudolph, Leon Ellia-Niukore, Junior Taia, Gideon Kautai, Materua Tupou.

### **Women’s Rugby Club 7’s**

Friday 27 August 21 - the Womens 7s Finals was won by the Avatiu Lady Eels 12 – 5 against the Arorangi Bears. The more experienced Bears struggling to get any clean breaks against a young Eels side under the guidance of player/coach Sunielia Tom. The Eels tries were scored by their young fleet-footed utility backs, Mahana Sijp and Nicole Tiaore. Mahana also converted her own first half try.

The Bears lone try was scored by their utility back Rima Browne. The Eels led at halftime by 7

In the earlier Semi-Final Womens 7s match the Bears won this 17 – 14 against the Takuvaine Reds. A brace of tries was scored by their impressive midfielder Stephanie Nooroa (2) and the other try from pivot Rima Browne. Both TKV Reds tries were scored by their speedster Patty Taea.





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In a testing inaugural Club year congratulations to all three Senior Womens 7s teams that were strong and courageous to participate in the 2021 Club season. With the growth of Womens Rugby all around the world it is important that CIRU encourage more Womens

### **Rarotonga Clubs 15 Finals**

Rarotonga Club 15s Finals were played on the 11 September 21. Senior A Tupapa 32 – 13 Arorangi. U19 Avatiu 29 – 17 Arorangi. \*Avatiu Eels winning the Womens Club 7s Finals 12 – 5 against the Lady Bears.

### **EELS WIN the U19 TITLE:**

### **U19 AVATIU EELS 29 - 17 ARORANGI BEARS**

This was an exciting match at one stage, mid-second half, the score line was drawn 17 all.

14/09/21: RARO 7s / U17 Youth 7s Tournament 9 – 11 December a meeting was held with Jessie to review the current situation. With the uncertainty re. borders opening it was decided to move the U17s to January 2022. We will review the RARO 7s situation in mid-October.

29 September – 2 October: BK to visit Aitutaki look at the schools Quick Rip program including the School Tournament 30/09/21 with Drollet Joseph. Review 2021 and plan for 2022.

### **Tri Nations Between – Cook Islands, Samoa and Fiji**

We were able to secure Vodafone sponsorship (Team playing kit & polo's + VIK prizes) for the Tri Nations 15s from the 6<sup>th</sup>, 13<sup>th</sup> & 20<sup>th</sup> November 2021

Vodafone – Tri Nations 15s Competition was held on the following day match Match#1 on 6<sup>th</sup> November 2021 at Avatiu Field (Samoa hosts), Match #2 on 13<sup>th</sup> at Tupapa Field (Fiji hosts) and Match #3 on 20<sup>th</sup> at Arorangi Field (CI hosts). Played Under 9s & 11s Quick Rip Rugby.

2021 Tri Nations 15s Results between Tabusoro – Fiji, Tokouso – Samoa/Tonga & Cook Islands Residents:

- Match #1 on 6/11/21: Tabusoro – Fiji 31 – 8 CI Residents.
- Match #2 on 13/12/21: Tokouso 22 – 8 CI Residents
- Match #3 on 20/12/21: Tabusoro - Fiji 24 – 20 Tokouso.

2021 Final Standings: 1<sup>st</sup>: Tabusoro, 2<sup>nd</sup>: Tokouso and 3<sup>rd</sup>: CI.





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### **Cook Islands Rugby Referee Union new Sponsored gear**

The CIRU Referees Associations received their new gear on the 9 December 2021. Very much appreciated to Cook Islands Building Supply.

### **Raro 7's – 10 – 11th December 2021**

#### **2021 RARO 7s MENS Finals: Panthers 21 - 5 Yalovata.**

The Men's Finals a fitter Panthers outfit a ground-out victory by winning this match by 21 - 5 against Yalovata. Tactically Yalovata were able to shut down the Panthers speedster Peniasi Dakuwaqa however this opened-up gaps elsewhere and resulted tries to their playmakers - Junior Buresova, Gabby Komaisavou and a penalty try - due to blatant obstruction by a Yalovata player. The lone Yalovata try was a barn-storming 30 meter effort from ex-National CI 7s representative Sailosi Nagi just before the halftime break - which seemed to give his team confidence. The Panthers led at halftime by 14 - 5.

#### **2021 RARO 7s WOMENS Finals: Panthers 10 - 5 Bears.**

This was a hotly contested 3-way competition between the current Club champions, the Eels, runner-up Club the Bears and now the newbies - the Panthers.

In the Womens Finals played between the Panthers and the Bears, the Panthers were able to withstand a spirited challenge from the young Bears team, the Panthers holding on to win by 10 - 5. Both the Panthers tries were scored by the fleet-footed Patty Taea. The lone Bears try was scored by youngster and utility back Tara Williams. The halftime score was 5-all and this remained until the deadlock was broken by Taea's second try mid-second half.

It was great to see the large amount of teenagers running around for all the teams - including our Outer Islands sisters from Aitutaki!

#### **2021 RARO 7 Under 17 Men's**

An exciting 2-match series played between U17 Mangaia and Bears.

The Bears won on Day 1 by 24 - 10. The Bears tries were scored by; Nia Remuera (2), Henry Mataio and Nuku Mokoroa, with Nuku kicking two conversions. The Mangaia tries were scored by William Trego and Abu Kamana. On Day 2 Mangaia won by 17 - 7. Mangaia tries were scored by; William Trego (2) and Abu Kamana with Abu kicking one conversion. The Bears converted try was scored by Nuku Mokoroa. The overall winner, decided on points







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count-back, was the Bears. It was great to involve the age-grades in the RARO 7s competition and this will be something to improve for the future as we look to encourage and develop pathways from home.

### **Social Media Presence**

This is an area that CIRU need to improve taking into control as of what we went throughout in 2021. Although Social Media (Facebook) has improve a lot compared to 2019. Both our domestic and international events have been promoted through social media. With Women's getting involved with our Executive's level, this is an area one of the member board will work on for 2022.

### **Sponsorship**

With limited Sponsorship this year because of Covid 19 Epidemic. I hope we will have sponsor coming on board when our Aviation Border improve and more tourism visiting our Country.

### **Hard working Volunteers**

To our many Volunteers doing the work behind the scene. Special mention of our local Technical Officials-Referees, Assistance Referee. For the continua's work these people are conducting of officiating our Rugby 15, 7's rugby throughout the year. To all our Rugby Development Officers and Ben Koteka for running the School Program. Lastly to the clubs, administrators, coaches & managements, players, supporters.

### **Coming in 2022 –**

The aim is to improve our Domestic Rugby Union Season, Regional and International 15-a-side and 7's rugby on both Men's and Women's (Under 18) Competition. Also more impotently getting more sponsors to come on Board. Also improving our NZ CIRU and Australia CIRU connectivity. So we all can achieve the same goal to do better in any Rugby Union COMPETITION.

### **Conclusion**

During this time of uncertainty thank you all for your continuous support and for being strong and courageous to adapt and ensure that rugby was played and enjoyed at all levels of the rugby pyramid this year.

And more importantly we would like to thank the Lord for blessing us with all you wonderful and beautiful people "each and everyone just as important as the other" to ensure a successful and enjoyable season.





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Finally, I would like to thank you all Players, Coaches, Managers and your families who have been part of our CIRU activity for 2221. To our Clubs administrators, first aid providers, supporters, and volunteers. Our core CIRU Executives Board, Ben Koteka and Maureen Hilyard. Hoping that we will follow and work through our new Constitution and the 4year Strategic Plan 2022. Calling for more Womens to get involve with CIRU and looking forward for new Members to come on board to assist the planning and the running of CIRU.

Meitaki maata

Simiona Teiotu

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Simiona Teiotu".

27 December 2021

