

Fiji Takes Hong Kong 7s Crown

American Eagles Win 2, Lose 2

by Tony Levitan

Hong Kong
March 31 - April 1, 1984

The 1984 edition of the Hong Kong Invitational Sevens opened with a larger field of teams, greater representation from Europe and a new format. Gone was the horrendous weather that had turned the pitch into a quagmire the previous year as only a few raindrops fell on the 22,000 that viewed this 9th annual event.

5 New Teams

Five teams made their Hong Kong 7s debut this year. The Public School Wanderers, Crawshay's Welsh and the Irish Wolfhounds came from the United Kingdom, joined by 1983 Melrose Sevens champions, the French Barbarians. The other new entrant was Kwang Hua-Taipei from Taiwan, the first all-Chinese team to play in the tournament. Kwang Hua's appearance expanded further the Asian-Pacific emphasis of the tournament, while the European sides were invited to increase the reach and prestige of the Sevens.

Wolves in Sheep's Clothing

Ignoring the world scope of the Sevens and the fact that, in essence, if not in name, it is the World Sevens Championship,



Captain Denis Shanagher switches with Dave Jenkinson. Steve Gray supports while Gary Lambert and David Bateman look on. (Photo-Levitan)

the Home Countries decided not to send national teams, although all three U.K. sides were loaded with international players. Hong Kong Rugby Union Chairman Glen Docherty said, "The Home Unions were against what they thought was our motive of stag-

ing a World Championship. They look at 7s as a fun game played at the beginning or end of a season, but they don't recognize it at an international level."

As a result, even though fellow IRB members Australia and New Zealand had national sides here, the Home Unions refused to send teams wearing their national colors.

Ignoring the world scope of the Sevens and the fact that in essence, if not in name, it is the World Sevens Championship, the Home Countries decided not to send national teams.

New Format

The additional teams required a change in the tournament format. Eight pools of three teams were arranged, with Saturday's games being against the other teams within one's pool. The team with the best pool record went into the knockout Cup competition, the next best team joined the chase for the Plate, while the third team went after the newly instituted Bowl.

Hong Kong Hilton

The Hong Kong Hilton played host to the teams and, once again, did a wonderful job. When attending the 7s, there is no place quite like the Hilton to obtain the full impact and international flavor of the tournament. Lavish breakfast and dinner buffets are favored meeting places for players from countries as varied as Solomon Islands and Japan, Canada and Western Samoa.

The hotel's complexion changes dramatically from Tuesday to Friday as the international businessmen and tourists are replaced by international rugby players and officials.

Many of the 730 rooms are being renovated and all have

fully-stocked mini-bars (very important when on tour!). The heated swimming pool and fitness center are excellent areas for relaxation or rubbing elbows. With 60 shops and eight restaurants, any need or culinary craving the tourist might have can be answered sufficiently.

Best of all, the Hilton is only a short walk to the Star Ferry or the Mass Transit Railway (subway-MTR), the best transportation to the shops and nightspots of Kowloon. Located in the Central district, all of Hong Kong, including the red-light district of Wanchai, is easily accessible.

The U.S. Eagles

Three of the originally selected American side were unable to compete in Hong Kong: Bo Meyersieck broke his foot, Mike Purcell pulled a hamstring, and Roy Helu was suspended for disciplinary reasons. As a result, veteran Steve Gray was called in to replace Meyersieck and reserve back David Jenkinson was informed he would be going. A bizarre chain of events led to Bethlehem (PA) Hooligan Dave Priestas being flown to San Francisco on Saturday evening (March 24th) for a Sunday trial. Selected to go, Priestas spent Monday morning getting a passport and then the 23-year-old ERU fullback was off to Hong Kong.

Five of the nine U.S. players were Hong Kong veterans. Captain Denis Shanagher and John Fowler were making their fourth trips to the 7s; scrumhalf Dave Bateman and Steve Gray, who captained the side in '81 and '82, were there for the third time, while Gary Lambert was making his second appearance.

The other squad members were Eagle loose forwards Mark Deaton and Blane Warhurst. Both members of the Australia Tour party, Deaton and Warhurst were well known to the other internationals on the squad, although their talents at this level of 7s were untested. So,

while there were some unknown quantities on the squad, the prospects for a successful tournament looked good.

The Eagles had an interesting pool, first playing Papua New Guinea and then Crawshay's Welsh. The opportunity to get into the Cup competition certainly existed, though Crawshay's were such an enigma, no one knew for sure.

Game 1:

United States 18

Papua New Guinea 4

Papua New Guinea had already played their opening fixture against Crawshay's Welsh and looked exceedingly dangerous while losing 22-10. The islanders were hard runners, frantic on defense. They certainly put a scare into Crawshay's, providing the only competitive game of the first eight matches. The Eagles had their hands full.

When selections were announced an hour before the game, it was Dave Priestas who would be the first of the two new Eagles tested. But Priestas was in good company with Lambert and Fowler in the scrum and Bateman, Gray and Shanagher inside. Warhurst was picked to hook in his first game at the 7s, but as the owner of two Eagle caps, he was not new to international rugby. Priestas, on the other hand, was like a spanking new car — the buyer waiting to see how well it performs.

The Eagles took the field to a tremendous ovation but as in all the earlier matches, the underdog, PNG in this case, got the support of the crowd.

The game opened with the Eagles receiving the kick-off playing a true 7s style of rugby, unlike so many of the other teams which played 15s — with eight less players. After some intrapassing and retreating, Lambert made a break up the right touchline, running 50 meters to the halfway before being tackled. With no U.S. support, PNG controlled the loose ball and with two quick passes, center Paiwa Bogela shot through the Eagles' line, avoided a lunge by Shanagher, and streaked 48 meters to score. The conversion was charged down and the Eagles were behind by 4.

They quickly came back. Following some pressure by the Eagles, Fowler stole a PNG lineout, drove forward and left the ball for Lambert who fed Warhurst on the burst. The Eagle flanker bulled 10 meters through the smaller PNG defenders to score 25 meters to the right of posts. Gray's conversion was poorly struck so the score remained knotted at 4-4 as the teams changed ends.

Second Half

Gray opened the half with a lovely kickoff that Shanagher scooped up at the 10 meter line. He broke with Bateman, sold a quick dummy and fed Priestas, who ran 30 meters before surrendering the ball to PNG. PNG

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stole the Eagles' hook and flyhalf Jack Takavis cleared into the U. S. half. The Eagles won their lineout, moved the ball quickly to Shanagher who fed Priestas coming inside on the burst. The young Bethlehem back dummied around two PNG defenders before spinning to play back to his support. Realizing he was uncovered, he scampered the remaining 20 meters to score in his first game while representing his country. Gray missed the conversion but the Eagles led 8-4.

Moments later, with the U.S. in possession, the Eagles played 7s— moving the ball across the paddock and back again, looking for an opening. They found a gap when Gray fired a football pass to Bateman who fed Fowler. The 28 year old physician juked inside and turned the corner on two PNG defenders who were dwarfed by Fowler's physical presence. The 224 lb. Fowler turned on the after burners leaving both defenders and support in the dust as he rocketed 80 meters for an unconverted try (12-4).

The final score came on a beautiful 7s break. With Gray as the point on some superb ball movement, the former captain sent Warhurst up the middle on a burst. Warhurst passed to Lambert who came back to Warhurst, back to Lambert who, with a Papau New Guinean around his massive shoulders, fed Shanagher for a try between the posts. The 70 meter movement was topped off by the Eagles' first successful conversion, by Shanagher (18-4), as the match ended.

As the game wore on the Eagles showed that, besides the tremendous physical presence of Fowler and Lambert, they were capable of playing sevens the way the best teams do. Unfortunately, the U.S. did not appear to have a burner who could match strides with Australia's David Campese (who scored 18 points in Australia's opening game versus Kwang Hua) or France's Patrick Esteve.

Or so we thought.

Eagles	Papua New Guinea
Fowler	1 Bingeding
Warhurst	2 Bashu
Lambert	3 Peters
Bateman	4 Tobo
Gray	5 Takavis
Shanagher	6 Bogela
Priestas	7 Taumu

Referee: Anderson (Scotland)

Game II:
Crawshay's Welsh 14
United States 10

The Eagles made one change in the lineup from the Papua New Guinea game, with David Jenkinson going in on the wing for Priestas.

Jenkinson, a 24 year old teacher from Norman, Oklahoma, plays for the Western Rugby Union and was also representing the U.S. for the first time. To say he did himself proud is an understatement.

Crawshay's had looked shaky in disposing of PNG. Most of their offense came from Welsh and British Lion winger, Clive Rees, who played for the Barbarians in the 1982 Sevens. In addition to Rees, the side which faced the Eagles included Wales 'B'



The 1984 U.S. Eagles Sevens Team: Standing: (l to r) Betzler (coach), Fowler, Deaton, Priestas, Gray, Watkins (manager); Kneeling: Jenkinson, Bateman, Shanagher (captain), Lambert, Warhurst. (Photo-Levitan)

and Barbarian player Jeff Herdman, Welsh squad member Terry Charles, English international Tony Swift, English U23 back Ged Glynn, and Barbarian Ian George. Quite an impressive lineup for a "club" side indeed!

First Half

The game began with some sloppy play, the Eagles probing the Crawshay's defense with three short movements. But then Charles picked up a loose ball and fed scrumhalf George who burst through the Eagles' defense to score a 75 meter try. George missed the conversion but Crawshay's had broken out on top, 4-0.

With the first half quickly coming to a close, the Eagles had a scrum near mid-field. A Welsh player slapped the ball out of the scrum toward Jenkinson. The U.S. winger grabbed the rolling ball and streaked 50 meters downfield, outpacing speedster Rees who could only rip Jenkinson's collar from his shirt. So, like Priestas, Jenkinson scored in his first game in U.S. colors, and the Eagles had discovered the burner that they so desperately needed. Gray's initial conversion attempt was off the mark, but referee Ian Scott detected movement by Crawshay's and Gray was true with his second kick, giving the Eagles a 6-4 half-time lead.

Second Half

With Crawshay's in possession during the opening minutes of the second spell, the Eagles displayed excellent defense. But the U.S. finally cracked when Charles pulled down at lineout ball for George. Flyhalf Swift took the ball nicely and sent Rees into the Eagle defense. The little winger barely made it over the line, fighting through tackles by Jenkinson and Warhurst. George successfully converted and the Welsh reclaimed the lead, 10-6.

The Eagles then kicked off. With the forwards charging under the ball, Fowler clocked, Gelding but the ball bounced away from the 6'3" Lambert. On a good bounce, it's a try for America, but this time it was a try for Crawshay's as George grabbed the ball and streaked 70 meters to the Eagle line. Forced by Jenkinson, he had to touch down wide of the posts and Glynn's conversion was no good. But it was the insurance try that the Welsh needed, 14-6.

The Eagles attacked relentlessly, but lack of support or ill-timed passes killed their opportunities. Much to the dismay of the crowd, Crawshay's kicked away their possession, forcing the Eagles back into their own end. Nice breaks by Fowler, Gray and Jenkinson went for naught as the Eagle 7 just could not click.

In the final minute, Swift made a nice break only to be swallowed by the Eagle's cover defense. Glynn regained possession for Crawshay's and kicked deep to the left corner. Jenkinson and Rees raced for the ball with Jenkinson winning. The Oklahoma University center than ducked away from Rees' tackle and jetted up the right touchline, cutting inside two more Welshmen. Jenkinson transferred to Gray and, with perfect NFL form, Gray threw a 35 meter football pass across the field to the 240 lb. Lambert who gathered the ball in like a tight end and ran 40 meters for the final score. The conversion was not even attempted as time ran out.

As the teams clapped each other off, Crawshay's were visibly relieved to have gained a win while the Eagles knew that they had let victory slip through their hands. Crawshay's moved on to the Cup round while the Eagles faced Tonga in the Plate competition on Sunday.

Eagles	Crawshay's
Fowler	1 Golding
Warhurst	2 Herdman
Lambert	3 Charles
Bateman	4 George
Gray	5 Glynn
Shanagher	6 Swift
Jenkinson	7 Rees

Referee: Scott (Hong Kong)

Game III:
United States 18,
Tonga 0

In the quarter-final of the Plate Competition, the Eagles faced a tough Pacific Island team from Tonga. Tonga had opened the tournament against Singapore, coming away with an easy 22-0 victory. In their second fixture, they were comprehensively beaten by Andy Ripley's Public

was no good, holding the Eagles' lead at 4 points.

The Eagles seemed to be putting their seven-a-side game together. Fowler made a beautiful pass and Jenkinson a weaving run before Warhurst put a devastating hit on Sweet Leilani Mafai when the latter reached for a high pass. With the loose ball, the Eagles attacked furiously, swinging the ball away from Fowler and Lambert and then transferring it quickly back to them, successfully creating space in which these two superb athletes could operate.

But towards the end of the half it was Jenkinson, not one of the forwards, who notched his second try of the tournament off some nice passing by Bateman, Gray and Shanagher. Gray's conversion was off target again and the half ended at 8-0.

Second Half

Early in the second half, Gray fielded a Tongan kick and moved the ball across the pitch to Fowler. The Cincinnati Wolfhound returned the pass to Gray, to Warhurst who launched Jenkinson on a 70 meter run and try number three. Shanagher converted Jenkinson's try and the Eagles had a commanding 14-0 lead.

The final score came toward the end of the half when the Eagles again played nice 7s, switching direction and looping until Bateman received a pass on the right wing and put a chip kick over fellow scrumhalf Talai Fifita's head. The ball bounced into Bateman's arms and he scampered the remaining 30 meters

School Wanderers, 38-4. Nevertheless, the two time plate winners looked fast, physical and explosive.

The Eagles stayed with the same side that faced Crawshay's Welsh, as the race for a trophy began.

First Half

Tonga kicked off and the Eagles played retreating 7s until Shanagher broke through the Tongan defense, set up a three on one, drew Pifeleti toward him and sent Lambert on a 90 meter jaunt down the right touchline for the try. Gray's conversion



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for an unconverted try, 18-0. Everything fell in place for the Eagles against Tonga. They were playing good rugby and looked ready to take on the Japanese.

Eagles	Tonga
Fowler	Pifeleti
Warhurst	Makisi
Lambert	Halafih
Bateman	Fifita
Gray	Mafi
Shanagher	Moala
Jenkinson	Tivi

Referee: McGory (Hong Kong RFU)

Game IV:

Japan 10, United States 8

In their two Saturday matches Japan beat Sri Lanka 22-6 before being turned back by Fiji 26-6. Their plate quarterfinal saw them easily outplay Bahrain, 18-0. Using quick ball movement, superior fitness and constant support, this perennial Asian power promised to be a difficult opponent for the Americans.

Eagle #8 Mark Deaton finally got a game, replacing Warhurst in the forwards, while the remainder of the side stayed the same.

First Half

In the early stage of the match, Shanagher flyhacked a loose ball from halfway to within 20 meters of the Japanese line and Seiji Hirao tapped the ball into touch. The ever hustling Shanagher picked up the ball for a quick lineout and threw a football pass to Lambert streaking down the middle of the field. Lambert hauled in another reception and blasted over the line with two Japanese around his neck. Gray missed the conversion (4-0) but the Eagles had the critical first score.

Then the Eagles increased their lead with one of the most

exciting movements of the tournament. Japan kicked deep to Fowler who played it across the field to Lambert, who sent Deaton away. Deaton drew a man and fed Jenkinson. Although he slipped while cutting, Jenkinson got up and passed to a supporting Lambert who spun the ball to Shanagher on his left. Shanagher scooped up the bouncing pass, transferred quickly to Gray, to Bateman who dummied before sending Fowler away down the left sideline to score an unconverted try for an 8-0 halftime lead.

Second Half

The Eagles picked up where they left off with a nice run by Jenkinson. After bringing Jenkinson down the Japanese were able to flyhack the ball down to the U.S. 22. Like a hot potato, the Eagles were unable to handle the ball and Japanese prop Michihito Chida gathered it in to score between Shanagher and the right post. Kazuhiko Honjo slotted the conversion and Japan was within 2 points, 8-6.

Midway through the half, Japan broke into Eagle territory and again flyhacked the ball downfield. The Eagles tackled well but Japan's support and constant pressure finally resulted in Masahiko Koshiyama going over for the winning points. Honjo's conversion was no good but Japan had surged into the lead, 10-8.

For the remaining three minutes, Japan played away from the Eagles, sending long kicks downfield away from the American cover defense and into whatever open space they could find. The clock ran out as Lambert made one last break but three Japanese rode him to the ground and there were no supporting Eagles to play the loose ball.

Once again, the Eagles walked off the pitch knowing they had let one get away and that they, not Japan, should be going on to meet the Aussies in the plate final.

Captain Shanagher spoke for all the Eagles when he said, "There are no excuses. We should have been in the final. I'm very disappointed."

Eagles	Japan
Fowler	1 Chida
Deaton	2 Kawachi
Lambert	3 Koshiyama
Bateman	4 Matsuo
Gray	5 Honjo
Shanagher	6 Kanaya
Jenkinson	7 Hirao

Referee: Daykin (Hong Kong RFU)

Bowl Final:

Sri Lanka 14, Thailand 10

To reach the Bowl final, Sri Lanka beat Brunei 26-0 and Papua New Guinea 10-4 in Sunday's competition. Thailand, meanwhile, squeezed by Kwang Hua 16-10 in the quarterfinal, and Indonesia 14-6 in the semifinal.

Sri Lanka overcame a 10-6 halftime deficit to win behind two tries by P.C.M. Perera, and a try and a conversion by L. de Silva. Tanin Patamasingh scored both of Thailand's tries. Chanwit Thongplub added one conversion for the Thais who controlled the game until the waning moment when Sri Lanka's determined final surge yielded the game winning points.

Sri Lanka	Thailand
Abdeen	1 Kumfung
Dharmadasa	2 Ruddit
N. de Silva	3 Phekan
Abeygunawardena	4 Lamsam
L. de Silva	5 Thongplub
Peiris	6 Patamasingh
Perera	7 Nakpuang

Plate Final:

Australia 26, Japan 20

Australia plowed through its Sunday schedule with a labored 18-9 win over the Solomon Islands and a 16-0 victory over the Plate holders, Korea.

First Half

Mark Ella converted tries by Chris Roche and Gary Pearce to give Aussie an early 12-0 lead against Japan. Ella then added a try himself as Australia finally seemed to find its form.

Just before the half Yoshimitsu Konishi scored on a dazzling individual effort and Kazuhiko Itonjo's conversion closed the gap to 16-6.

Second Half

But Australia shifted into high gear and Brendan Moon finished two long movements. Ella needed one conversion for the Aussie's winning total, 26-6.

However, once Australia sat back on its laurels, Japan capitalized with three quick tries, two more from Konishi and one from Koshiyama. Honjo added one final conversion, 26-20 but time ran out on the Japanese. To their relief, Australia salvaged something from a disappointing weekend while Japan, for the second year in a row, lost in the Plate final.

Australia	Japan
Pearce	1 Chida
Maxwell	2 Kawachi
Lucas	3 Koshiyama
G. Ella	4 Konishi
M. Ella	5 Matsuo
Roche	6 Itonjo
Moon	7 Hirao

Cup Final:

Fiji 26, New Zealand 0

In what must be regarded as one of the all-time finest displays of sevens, Fiji showed the rugby world their mastery of this mini-version of the game. They totally overwhelmed the international studded All Blacks in the final, dominating every phase of the game.

Fiji's Preliminary Games

Fiji was bracketed with Sri Lanka and Japan in the prelims, beating them both by identical 26-6 scores. In the Cup quarterfinal, they handled Western Samoa 20-6 before knocking out the Public School Wanderers, 12-4. Winger Etuate Gusuivalu was particularly impressive with scintillating runs, superb cover defense and impressive assists which led to a number of tries by teammates.

Fiji proved to be too fast for the Wanderers in the semis. Even with Scottish wing Roger Baird, the Wanderers were outpaced and only committed defense prevented the Fijians from racking up more tries. Andy Ripley's team played with a great deal of heart but Fiji had 7s talent to go along with their heart.

All Black Prelims

New Zealand's pool wins were over Indonesia 32-4 and the host Hong Kong team 38-0.

New Zealand coach Bryce Rope felt that this was the best New Zealand 7s side ever to come to Hong Kong and the boys in black proved their coach right with a surprisingly easy 22-0 win over the French Barbarians in the quarter finals.

The semi-final against the Irish Wolfhounds was a closer contest. In a very physical game two Wolfhounds went off due to injury and were replaced, curiously, by two French Barbarians who were standing as reserves for the Wolfhounds. While the Wolfhounds put forth a gallant effort, New Zealand got an insurance try by John Kirwan to eke out a tough 12-10 win. New Zealand is to be congratu-

lated for making it through what was thought to be the tougher side of the Cup draw.

Cup Final

The final match up proved to be a classic example of the difference between a world class rugby sevens team (Fiji) and world class players playing sevens (New Zealand). Even Fijian manager Ian Duncan was overawed by his team's performance: "I have never seen a Fijian team play rugby like that. They were fluid, they were fast, they won so much possession and were so quick to win it back when they lost it."

First Half

It took only two minutes for Fiji to jump into the lead. Reacting to increasing Fijian pressure, Wayne Smith sliced a clearing kick right into Gusuivalu's hands and the lightning fast winger touched down between the posts before the All Blacks could react. Paulo Nawalu converted the easy kick for a 6-0 lead.

Moments later flyhalf Acrua Niugila took a feed from Gusuivalu and weaved into in-goal to score Fiji's second try. Nawalu converted again, 12-0.

Fiji's sensational world class sprinter Senivalati Laulau outmaneuvered New Zealand fly-half Richard Fry on a 55 meter run that left spectators smiling in wonderment. Nawalu's conversion of Laulau's try brought the tally to 18-0.

Fiji played what has to be considered the perfect 7s match. On offense, they won most of the ball, transferred it to the left and right, set up loops and switches, all with a great deal of patience until an opening was found. Once the gap opened it was immediately exploited with a shocking display of quickness, speed and efficiency. Rarely did the Fijians botch a scoring opportunity.

On defense, they were relentless, constantly pressuring the Kiwis into mistakes. Eventually they forced the All Blacks out of the 7s mode that had gotten them to the final, and into a 15s style of play which proved useless against the Fijians.

Captain/prop Aliposo Wagaliti set up Fiji's next score. After a halting dummy, Wagaliti switched with Dominiko Manaseitava the 6', 210 pound prop. Manaseitava dipped and swerved on a diagonal run for the right corner, running several All Blacks ragged before touching down in the corner for an unconverted try (22-0).

Laulau picked up his second try of the game when he and Gusuivalu, the Tournament's Most Valuable Player, broke through the Kiwi defense. Laulau passed to Gusuivalu who drew an All Black defender to send Laulau away on an easy jaunt. Laulau touched down between the posts on the same spot where so many other Fijian tries had been placed during their five tournament matches.

The whistle went and thousands of admirers swarmed the Fijians, the world's finest sevens side.

Fiji	New Zealand
Wagaliti	1 Rich
Gutuguwai	2 Mills
Manaseitava	3 Clamp
Nawalu	4 Kirk
Niugila	5 Fry
Laulau	6 Smith
Gusuivalu	7 Kirwan

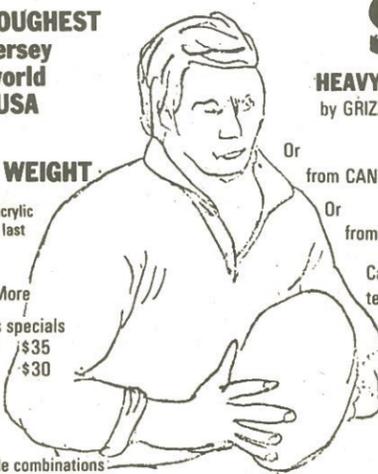
Referee: Anderson (Scotland)

1984 Eagle Sevens Team

Name	Age	Ht	Wt	Club
Steve Gray	35	5'8"	155	U. of Miami
Blane Warhurst	32	5'10"	195	Old Blues (CA)
Denis Shanagher	27	5'10"	185	BATS
John Fowler	28	6'3 1/2"	224	Cincinnati Wolfhounds
David Priestas	23	6'1"	175	Bethlehem Hooligans
David Bateman	30	5'10"	160	Old Blues (CA)
Gary Lambert	25	6'3"	240	Life Chiropractic
Dave Jenkinson	24	5'11"	180	Oklahoma University
Mark Deaton	25	6'4"	225	Old Blues (CA)

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