



RUGBY WORLD CUP 2011

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1987: The birth of the World Cup

(Rugby News Service) Tuesday 17 July 2007

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The desire for a competition to determine the pecking in world rugby was realised following the International Rugby Football Board's (IRFB) approval for an inaugural Rugby World Cup to be held in New Zealand and Australia in 1987.

Seven of the 16 places were automatically filled by the IRFB members – New Zealand, Australia, England, Scotland, Ireland, Wales and France – with South Africa unable to compete because of the international sports boycott due to apartheid.

There would be no qualification process to fill the remaining nine spots with invitations instead sent out to Argentina, Fiji, Italy, Canada, Romania, Tonga, Japan, Zimbabwe and the United States.

The inaugural match took place on 22 May between New Zealand and Italy at Eden Park in Auckland, a match the hosts won convincingly 70-6 with Michael Jones, Grant Fox and Oscar Collodo scoring the first ever try, conversion and penalty.

A moment of Kirwan magic

New Zealand was a country divided by the Cavaliers' rebel tour to South Africa 13 months earlier, but this match and a moment of inspiration from winger John Kirwan would reunite the rugby-loving nation.

Kirwan, who ironically would become Italy coach more than a decade later, received the ball near his own line and took on virtually the entire Italian team in a 70-metre run for his second try of the game.

This pattern of one-sided matches was a regular occurrence with the seven IRFB members proving too strong for the others – half of the 24 matches across the four pools saw one team score 40 or more points with no record score lasting very long.

It is therefore no surprise that five of the seven matches in the most points scored by a team category were witnessed during the inaugural tournament, a statistic which is echoed in the most points by an individual and most tries by a team categories.

Blanco late show for France

(Rugby News Service, 2007)

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Serge Blanco's late try against Australia secured France a place in the first RWC final

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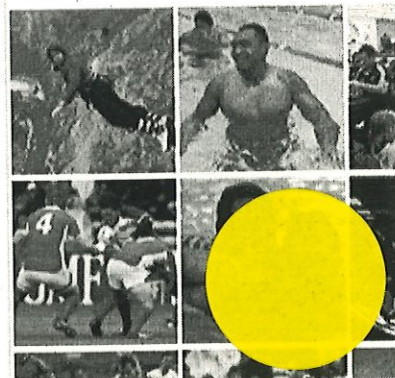
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The quarter finals were, as expected, filled by the seven IRFB members with Fiji, whose place in the tournament had been in doubt because of a military coup, completing the line up.

In the first quarter-final New Zealand proved too strong for Scotland and won 30-3 in Christchurch, while the next day France, who had drawn with Scotland in their first game, ended the hopes of the entertainers from Fiji with a 31-16 victory at Eden Park.

The other quarter finals took place in Australia with the home side, despite the loss of captain Nick Farr-Jones after just three minutes, running out 33-15 winners over Ireland. The final match saw Wales overcome England 16-13 in an uninspiring encounter.

Australia and France met in Sydney in a match regarded by many as one of the greatest ever, one Australia led three times but was clinched by a late moment of magic from winger Serge Blanco with a try in the corner to clinch a shock 30-24 win.

One-sided affair

If the first semi final had been a classic, the second was a one-sided affair with New Zealand simply unstoppable against Wales, scoring eight tries in a 49-6 win in a game that saw Huw Richards become the first player to be sent off at a World Cup.

The final though proved a match too far for France with New Zealand, who were unquestionably the best team in the tournament, emerging the 29-9 winners to allow captain David Kirk to lift the William Webb Ellis trophy.

New Zealand had scored 298 points in six matches, 126 of them by fly half Fox to set a tournament record that still stands today, with 43 tries scored and only four conceded emphasizing their dominance.

Wales beat Australia 22-21 with a late try by Adrian Hadley to finish third.

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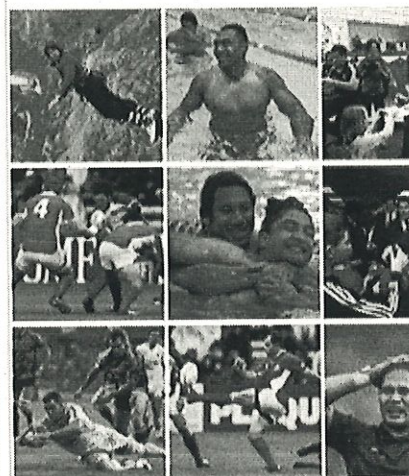
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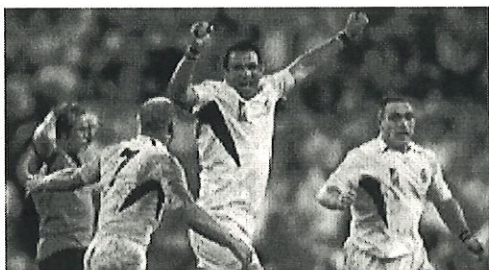
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