

Netball World Cup 2019: Silver Ferns crown Australia in final

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Ben Francis



The Silver Ferns celebrate after the final whistle. Credits: Photo - AAP; Video - Sky Sports

The Silver Ferns have won the 2019 Netball World Cup after beating Australia 52-51 in a tense final in Liverpool on Monday (NZ time).

The match came down to the final seconds, as Australia fought back from a seven-goal deficit late in the third quarter to only trail by one with seconds left on the clock, but the Ferns held firm to win the gold medal for the first time since 2003 and stun the 11-time champions.

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New Zealand headed into the match as outsiders, and ultimately won on the back of a strong finish to the second quarter and a stunning start to the third.

The result completes a massive turnaround from the Ferns under coach Noeline Taurua, who took over last August following last April's dismal performance at the 2018 Commonwealth Games under former coach Janine Southby.

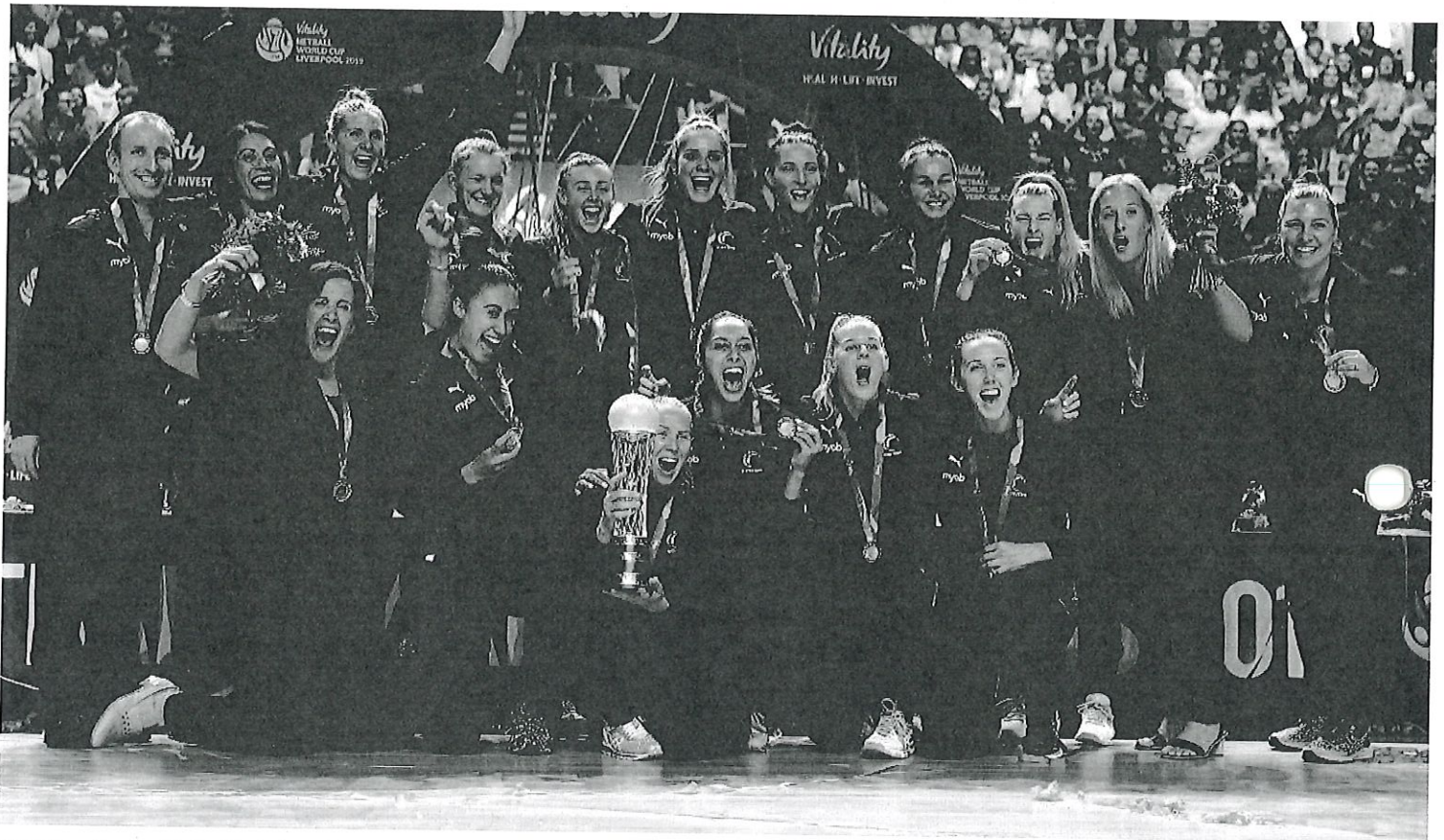
It was the Silver Ferns' fifth world title, having also tasted victory in 1967, '79, '87 and 2003.

"A weird feeling," a relaxed Taurua said afterwards.

"I was very calm coming into this and wasn't too sure what to expect, but I'm absolutely proud and actually quite speechless.

"Our fossils [older players] stood up and led from the front. Every day was always going to be a challenge for us, to come out here and do this in the final is massive for the Silver Ferns, for Netball New Zealand and just for the general community at home.

"It's amazing, and it was a great game, an epic encounter, and I'm absolutely ecstatic."



The Silver Ferns with the Netball World Cup trophy. Photo credit: AAP

Australia, who had won the last three titles, got off to a great start as they opened up an 8-4 lead midway through the first quarter.

New Zealand shooter Maria Folau (28 from 35) struggled to find her range early, missing three shots in the first 15 minutes, but Amelianne Ekenasio (24 from 26) was on target and kept the Ferns within striking distance.

But it was the Ferns' defence which stood up as Jane Watson, and Casey Kopua came up with some big plays which helped New Zealand claw their way back to 10-10 at the end of the first quarter.

Both teams went blow-for-blow in the second, but just before halftime a game-changing Katrina Rore intercept spurred New Zealand to a 28-25 lead at halftime.

Diamonds coach Lisa Alexander made changes to try to get back in the match, but they had little effect as uncharacteristic errors helped the Ferns to a seven-goal lead late in the third quarter. Folau began hitting her shots, and at the end of the quarter New Zealand led 41-37.

Australia came out firing to start the final period, as they closed the gap to just one goal. But New Zealand held their nerve to defy the odds and win the title.

The result completed a fairytale ending for Ferns defender Kopua, who was named player of the game in her 112th and final test for New Zealand.

"It feels so good," said Kopua. "It's not just for us, its for everybody in New Zealand.

'The futures' of Laura Langman and Maria Folau remain uncertain, while Taurua's contract with New Zealand Netball ended after the final whistle.

Earlier, England beat South Africa 58-42 to secure third place at the tournament.

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Silver Ferns 52 (Maria Folau: 28/35, Ameliaranne Ekenasio: 24/26) beat Australia 51 (Caitlin Bassett: 35/40, Steph Wood: 5/6, Gretel Tippett: 11/11)

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