

Time for Rugby

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USA Rugby/Travis Prior

The ninth men's Rugby World Cup will take place from 20 September to 2 November. For the first time, the tournament is in Asia, in Japan.

Today's rugby developed from a form of football that was played at Rugby School, one of the oldest and most exclusive schools in England. Legend says that in 1823, a boy called William Webb Ellis picked up a football in his hands and ran with it. The trophy for the World Cup is named in his honour. In 1845, boys at the school started writing formal rules for the game. For example, teams now always have 15 players. When the boys left school, they taught the game to other people. In 1871, the Rugby Union was formed, and the first international match was played.

And the Winner Is...

Today, rugby is played in many countries, but the best teams are from the Southern Hemisphere: South Africa, Australia, and especially New Zealand. South Africa and Australia have won two World Cup titles each. The All Blacks are the champions with three: 1987, 2011 and 2015. The only Northern Hemisphere champion is England (2003).

Many rugby nations are English-speaking. Like many other sports, the British home nations have separate teams:

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home nations (exp) the four countries that compose the United Kingdom: England, Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales

England, Wales, Scotland and Ireland. (The Irish team has players from Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland.) The people of Pacific nations seem to have a particular love of, and aptitude for, the game. The New Zealand All Blacks and the Australian Wallabies have always had a lot of talented Maori and Aboriginal players. The Pacific islands of Fiji, Samoa and Tonga have each qualified for eight World Cups, and Fiji and Samoa have each competed in two quarter finals. Yet the three countries together have a population of less than 1.3 million people.

Japan is ranked 11th in the world and has participated in every World Cup. But the team was always stopped in the first round. Can Japan's Cherry Blossoms find success playing at home? ■

A match between Tonga and Samoa (in blue).



Zoomfiji

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rank (v) considered to have a position in a hierarchy. Here, ten teams have better results than Japan. The top team is *ranked* Number 1.

6 Weeks, 20 Teams, 4 Pools

Twenty teams have qualified for the World Cup from 83 participants.

The teams are divided into four pools and the tournament starts with matches in each pool. Each team plays all the other teams in its pool. The top two teams in each pool qualify for the quarterfinals.

Pool A

Ireland
Scotland
Japan
Russia
Samoa

Pool B

New Zealand 🏆🏆🏆
South Africa 🏆🏆
Italy
Namibia
Canada

Pool C

England 🏆
France
Argentina
U.S.A.
Tonga

Pool D

Australia 🏆🏆
Wales
Georgia
Fiji
Uruguay

Get ready for the World Cup with our guide to rugby!

The Scrum

The eight "forwards" in each team contest the scrum, to decide possession when play is stopped. The forwards are players 1 to 8.



The Try

The player must carry the ball over the line and touch it down. Today, you get 5 points for a try, but originally you got no points, just the possibility to "try" to kick a goal. (Today that's the conversion and it's only 2 points.)



Kicking

When you have the ball in your hands, you can only pass it backwards, but you can kick forwards, or kick for a goal.

The Line-out

When the ball goes off the pitch (into "touch"), the forwards make two lines and the hooker (N°2 player) throws the ball. His or her team (and the other team of course) try to catch it.



Tackling

Rugby is a contact sport. Players must not tackle above the shoulders, or if their opponent is in the air. If a tackled player falls to the ground, he or she must release the ball.

