



KEY OFFENSIVE
Ashley Steacy (Lethbridge RFC) will be a key part of the Canadian offense in Russia.

PURSUIT IN RUSSIA

For once, Canadian men's and women's teams are in pursuit of a championship in Russia and no skates and sticks are involved! The World Cup of Sevens is in Moscow and Canada is in the thick of it!

BY **BRYAN RAY**
PHOTOS BY **JOSÉ LAGMAN**

The last weekend of June of this year will be a special one for the men and women of Canada's national sevens programs, but not just because it marks the end of a four year cycle, it also heralds the dawn of a new era in the abbreviated code - the Olympic era. Luzhniki Stadium in Moscow will play host to what will be the final edition of the World Cup Sevens, the sixth for the men and second for the women, as the tournament will effectively be replaced by the more glamorous multi-sport spectacle.



LEVITATE
Sean Duke (U of Vic Vikes) led all Canadians in try scoring on the circuit this season with 35 - Third on the IRB List

squad with a couple of Super Rugby players. The task will be tough, Canada have never beaten them in twenty attempts.

Next up are the United States, arch-rivals and also improving though they have probably under-performed this year given the talent they possess. Quicksilver winger Carlin Isles has been the talk of the town, but it is players like Luke Hume, Shalom Suniula, and captain Matt Hawkins that keep them ticking, Canada lead 3-1 in the head-to-head battles this season, so this one will be tight.



STARTER
Taylor Paris (Markham Irish) has matured into a starter on the Sevens circuit.

The remaining pool match is against Georgia, a side relatively inexperienced in sevens. They have yet to feature on the circuit this season and generally select a mixture of fifteens caps with a couple of their younger talents. Players like Tamaz Mchedlidze, Giorgi Pruidze, and Merab Sharikadze should be there, but whoever they pick, they will be big and physical, if ultimately naive in their tactical approach.

With six pools, the top two second place finishers will also move on to the cup finals, so all is not lost if New Zealand proves too much. Famous victories over South Africa and Fiji have already been earned this season, and more such performances do not look beyond them in the near future. A top 10 finish at the World Cup would be Canada's highest since 2001, and a fine reward for a positive season.

This year's results have been mixed for Geraint John's men, with good tournaments in Dubai, Las Vegas and Hong Kong surrounded by less convincing performances in the other four tournaments. Overall, their play has improved and with the final series event in London complete, Canada qualified as a core member for 2013/14 and finished in 12th place. This can largely be attributed to their high tempo offensive game, now among the very best on the tournament.

A TOP 10 FINISH AT THE WORLD CUP WOULD BE CANADA'S HIGHEST SINCE 2001 AND A FINE REWARD FOR A POSITIVE SEASON.

Diminutive halfback Phil Mack and fellow playmaker Nathan Hirayama - the leading scorer on the circuit - are central to their chances, based largely on getting the ball to flyer Sean Duke who has been in fine form this season. Nanyak Dala is the captain but has had trouble holding down a starting spot with the likes of Chauncey O'Toole and in particular

John Moonlight playing major support roles.

Their first match in Moscow will come against tournament favourites New Zealand. Legendary coach Gordon Tietjens will have long-time stalwarts Tomasi Cama, Tim Mikkelson, Lote Raikabula, and impeccable captain D.J. Forbes at his disposal and may yet bolster his

IRB RUGBY WORLD CUP SEVENS 2013

See you in Moscow

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HISTORY

CANADA'S ALL TIME IRB SEVENS SERIES RECORD

Tournaments: 103rd	Debut: WS I - Dubai		
Played: 555	Won: 242	Lost: 307	Drawn: 6
Points Scored: 9340	Conceded: 10501		

Form over last 10 games

Won: 4	Drawn: 0	Lost: 6	Won last 2
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Best streak
6 wins From Feb 7, 2003 to March 29, 2003

Worst run
8 losses From May 27, 2007 to Nov 30, 2007

Highest Score
78 - 7 vs MEXICO WS VII - Los Angeles - Pool D

Widest Margin
73 - 0 vs PARAGUAY WS III - Santiago - Pool A

Heaviest Defeat
0-6 vs FIJI WS VIII - Wellington - Cup Quarter Final

SCHEDULE

CANADA'S MEN'S POOL D

CANADA
GEORGIA
NEW ZEALAND
USA

(All Times Local)

Friday, June 28, 2013
15:44 New Zealand vs Canada

Saturday, June 29, 2013
10:06 USA vs Canada
13:46 Georgia vs Canada

Sunday, June 30, 2013
Knock-out Stages - TBD

CANADA'S WOMEN'S POOL A

CANADA
NEW ZEALAND
NETHERLANDS
TUNISIA

(All Times Local)

Saturday, June 29, 2013
09:22 Canada vs Netherlands
11:56 Canada vs Tunisia
18:32 Canada vs New Zealand

Sunday, June 30, 2013
Knock-out Stages - TBD



WORLD-CLASS
Mandy Marchak (Capilano RFC) is threat from anywhere on the field - and can also make blistering tackles.

HEAD COACH JOHN TAIT, a name very familiar to Canadian rugby fans, has his women's side playing with a similar all-action approach. After three tournaments they rank 5th on the table, one spot higher than their 6th place finish at the 2009 World Cup in Dubai. A strong finish in the final leg, to be held in Amsterdam, could see them jump as high as 3rd, with Australia only four points ahead and very much in striking distance.

Captaining the team this season is all-action forward Jen Kish, and she is ably deputised by veteran Ashley Steacy, one of the leading scorers on the circuit and a recognized star amongst her peers. Ghislaine Landry offers creativity from halfback as well as an eye for the tryline.

The women have had an unfavourable draw for Moscow, which sees them in Pool A, which contains three of the six core teams on the circuit. Circuit leaders and tournament favourites New Zealand loom as the biggest threat and feature powerhouse runners Portia Woodman and Kayla McAlister alongside playmaker Tricia Brown and the superb stepping of Kelly Brazier. Canada has done well head-to-head against them this season, however, with a draw and a narrow two point

defeat, suggesting that victory is well within reach.

Rounding out the pool are lowly 17th ranked Tunisia, and the Netherlands. The Dutch have benefitted greatly from their inclusion as a core team this year and are now ranked 6th in the world, a considerable jump from their 13th place finish in Dubai four years ago. They play a wide game and look to electric Kelly van Harskamp and Annemarije van Rossum to provide most of their scoring. Having beaten Canada once already this season, they are far from a pushover side.

Should they place in the top half of their pool, the likes of England, Australia, and the United States will beckon at the knockout stages. All have fallen at least once to Canada this season and all should prove difficult but winnable encounters.

The beauty of sevens is that any team can win on any given day. Nobody would have picked Wales to win their pool four years ago and yet here they are entering as the defending World Cup champions, despite never having won a tournament since. A victory by either the men or women at the World Cup might seem unlikely, but sport has no memory of past defeats and all it takes is three days of inspiration to achieve greatness.

Regardless of the results of either side, the real benefits of elite competition in this tournament will be seen in London in three years time. Increased financial support from programs like Own The Podium will provide the best athletes with training opportunities that would have been previously unaffordable and with nearly every player that will appear in Moscow young enough to move on to the Olympics, the future has never looked brighter for Canada's sevens sides.

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PHYSICAL
Kelly Russell (Toronto Nomads) brings a physical brand of rugby to Sevens.

REFEREES
WORLD CUP



MENS

With IRB High Performance Sevens Referee Manager Paddy O'Brien driving forward elite Sevens match official standards, the men's panel features the cream of those performing on the Series.

THEY ARE:

James McPhail (New Zealand); **Anthony Moyes**; **Matthew O'Brien** (both Australia); **Marius van der Westhuizen**; **Rasta Rasivhenge** (both South Africa); **Federico Anselmi** (Argentina); **Rhys Thomas** (Wales); **Kevin White** (Scotland) and **Alexandre Ruiz** (France). **James Bolabiu** (Fiji) is the only male panel member to have officiated in Dubai four years ago. The panel will be supported by 16 specialist assistant and in-goal referees.

WOMENS

Reaffirming the continued advances in standards of officiating in the Women's Game, seven of the world's top female referees have been selected in the panel - three more than for Dubai 2009.

THEY ARE:

Marlize Jordaan (South Africa); **Sherry Trumbull** (Canada); **Amy Perrett** (Australia); **Chelsea Gurr**; **Jess Beard** (both New Zealand); **Leah Berard** (USA) and **Gabriel Lee** (Hong Kong), who took charge of a captivating women's final in 2009. They will be supported by seven specialist assistant and in-goal referees, completing a record panel of 14 female match officials selected for the event.

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