

Carlton Super Sevens Kick Off Rugger Feast



Royal Storm: Central Kings (yellow) vs North Central Typhoons

The ‘all local’ warm up tournament has been played. The players have been auctioned and sold to the highest bidding franchise owners. The ground is ready and bristling with the rugged rugby spirit and the countdown has begun for the whistle to kick off the much awaited grand annual rugby event of the season: the Carlton Super Sevens International Rugby Tournament 2014.

Words Manu Gunasena **Photographs** Janaka Senaratne

The first leg of the tournament will be held on August 8th and 9th in Galle and then the spotlight will shift to Colombo. Then for two rugger packed days this month—on Friday the 15th and Saturday the 16th—the Race Course International Rugby Stadium in Colombo will come alive, bathed in the dazzling lights of the ground’s mega watt light towers; and awash with the frenzy of the sport’s ardent battalion of fans who will storm the venue in their thousands to witness the final battle for the much prized Carlton Cup: the Holy Grail of Sri Lanka’s sports quests.

Conceived six years ago in the year 2009 when the tournament was first held, the Carlton Super Sevens Tournament was the brainchild of the Carlton club’s founding member, Namal Rajapaksa the youthful Member of Parliament. After leaving St Thomas College, Mount Lavinia where he captained his Alma Mater’s rugby team, he came up with the idea of staging an international rugby tournament modelled on the Indian Premier League. Similarly his brothers Yoshitha Rajapaksa and Rohitha Rajapaksa have marked their beginnings leading the Thomian team and are captains of the Carlton Super Sevens’ Western Warriors and Central Kings repectively playing forwards positions.

Ten top teams, one from each of the nine provinces, with a bonus team allowed for the Northerners, will run the hundred metre gauntlet. Tackling it out with grit

and gusto in the true spirit and style of the sport to reach the final touchline of triumph.

Each game will be limited to an action packed 16 minutes, consisting of seven minutes play, two minutes interval followed by a further seven minutes of play. In the event of a tie or a zero score, the game will be declared a draw. Climbing up the rankings will be based on a point system. In the knockout stages of the tournament, if there is no winner at the end of the 16 minutes (22 minutes in the final) three minutes extra time will be granted. If there is still no result at the end of it, the teams will change sides and play a further three minutes and this scenario will be repeated until a team scores a try or goal at which point it will be declared the winner of the tournament.

The robust names of the teams that will explode into action on August 8th, 9th, 15th and 16th this year are indeed inspiring and give a not too subtle hint to the image they aspire, to the icons they wish to breathe life and fire; proving, in this instance, that a rose by any other nomenclature will not smell the same.

From the East of Sri Lanka fly the Eastern Eagles with eyes focused on hawking their prey whilst from the twilight zone of sunset march the Western Warriors, the most sought after and most expensive team auctioned in the tournament last month. Stepping into the rugby arena from Point Pedro are the Northern Gladiators along with the dash and daring of the Jaffna Challengers whilst deep below in Dondra Head prowl the dangerous Southern Sharks. From the Samanala Kanda descends the Sabaragamuwa Stallions galloping in pursuit of the vaunted trophy while the arid regions of the North Central Province finds a storm brewing in earnest with the tempestuous rise of the North Central Typhoons.

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Wayamba Paints their rainbowed hopes on the North Western Blacks striving to reach the elusive Carlton star while, from the grassy hinterland of Sri Lanka's second largest province, the Uva Vipers, shedding their skin of disappointment, get set to uncoil and swiftly deliver the sting of defeat to their smug rivals. And to complete the terrific ten scrumming in the Super Sevens Tournament, the royalist

bandwagon rolls down from the hills to lay claim to the kingdom's rugger monarchy with the Central Kings.

But if the scorecard of the 'all local' tournament held in Kurunegala and Beliatte in the last week of June and first week of July respectively reveals the level of play and is anything to go by, the winds of victory must blow in the northern direction, in favour of the North Central Typhoons and the Northern Gladiators who emerged from the tournament scrum as the joint champions while the North Western Blacks came a close third. But with international players joining in for the August Super Sevens Tournament and infusing the unknown X factor, the question as to who will clinch the trophy remains wide open; and laurels won and defeats weathered at the local tournament will have little bearing on the final day. Even last year's results will not provide an inkling since the composition of the teams change each season.

For two rugger packed days this month—on Friday the 15th and Saturday the 16th — the Race Course International Rugby Stadium in Colombo will come alive

In the first two years the tournament was exclusively played by international teams from England, Germany Kenya, Samoa, Fiji, Japan and Korea. Then in 2011, after having laid the necessary groundwork, the provinces and the locals were ready to dig in for a turf of the action.

However, the Carlton Seven had differences, which distinguished it from the IPL model. Each team would consist of a squad of fifteen players out of which a maximum number of five foreign players would be allowed. The players would be announced the day before the event. Out of these seven would take the field. The maximum number of foreigners allowed would be three out of the seven. If any Sri Lankan player was recalled during play due to bleeding or physical injury or for any tactical reason, he would be replaced by another Sri Lankan player. The same held when a foreigner was injured.

But the rule that really set the tournament apart from all other international tournament was the insistence that every team must have at least one local player under the age of twenty three, not merely in the squad of fifteen but on the field in the team of seven. If the under 23 player was injured, he could only be replaced by another local under twenty three player, necessitating the need to have at

least two under-23 Sri Lankans in the squad of fifteen. The reason was simple, the objective was worthy: it was to promote rugby football at grass root level and to afford young talent the golden opportunity to mix and play with foreign players of international renown.

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This year, too, top notch players from foreign nations will be participating in the tournament. Amongst the famous faces in rugby's international hall of fame with whom the locals and the under 23 youngsters will be rubbing shoulders will be Setefano Cakaunivali, Joeli Lutumailagi, Jone Vota, Waisea Nacuqu, Apasai Naqalevu, Lote Raikabula, D.J.Forbes, Ben Lam, Thomasi Cama, Tim Nickkelson, Gallies Kaka, and Lote Rakabula.

With all the logistics sorted out and with everything in place all that awaits now is the referee's whistle to kick off the Carlton's rugby extravaganza 2014.

CARLTON FRANCHISE 7's 2014

Eastern Eagles

1. Captain: Shenal Dias (Capt.)

2. Thusitha Samarathilake

3. Samantha Lakshan

4. Eranda Hasitha Weerakkodi

5. Mohamed Absal

6. Lakith Jayasanka Perera

7. Rehan Thiyagarajah

8. Suranga Pushpakumara
9. Chamara Dabare
10. Buwaneka Udangamuwa
11. Arshad Jamaldeen
12. Nuwan Perera
13. Dilanka Perera (Standby)
14. Kaushal Manupriya (Standby)
15. Dinuka Perera (Standby)

Southern Sharks

1. Dinusha Chathuranga (Capt.)

2. Dilip Selvam
3. Srinath Suriyabandara
4. Oshan Perera
5. Chanaka Chandimal
6. Charith Seneviratne
7. Rajitha Abeykoon
8. Mohamed Sashan
9. Ajitha Wijesinghe
10. Anuradha Herath
11. Kanchana Ramanayake
12. Krishantha Pushpakumara
13. Mohamed Rizvi (Standby)

14. Sooriya Krishan (Standby)
15. Chilanka Samaraweera (Standby)

N W Blacks

- 1. Danushka Perera (Capt.)**
2. Lavanga Perera
3. Nuwan Hettiarachchi
4. Lee Keegal
5. Mohamed Sheriff
6. Niroshan Fernando
7. Pium Prabath Jayasinghe
8. Gayan Weeraratne
9. Gayan Udara Liyanage
10. Dhanush Dayan
11. Rahul de Silva
12. Heshan Kalhara
13. Pubudu Kodagoda (Standby)
14. Chamara Kumara (Standby)
15. Lahiru Mudalige (Standby)

N C Typhoons

- 1. Anurudda Wilwara (Capt.)**
2. Shanaka Kumara
3. Roshan Weerathne

4. Sandun Herath
5. Suhiru Anthony
6. Dinusha Ariyapala
7. Suranga Aruna Shantha
8. Waqavulagi Emori
9. Hirantha Perera
10. Dushantha Lewke
11. Praveen Samarasooriya
12. Ashan Maduranga
13. Gayan Heenkenda (Standby)
14. Gayan Rathnage (Standby)
15. Gayan Rathnayake (Standby)

Northern Gladiators

1. Fazil Marija (Capt.)

2. Mithun Hapugoda
3. Damion Ratwatte
4. Visvamithra Jayasinghe
5. Dharshana Ethipola
6. Sudharshana Muthuthanthri
7. Mohamed Rizmeer Jabbar
8. Lahiru Weerasinghe
9. Pradeep Liyanage

10. Danuska Ranjan
11. Amjad Bucksh
12. Janith Chanaka
13. Radeesha Seneviratne (Standby)
14. Dilshan Kelaniyagoda (Standby)
15. Pabasara Hewage (Standby)

Western Warriors

1.Yoshitha Rajapaksa (Capt.)

2. Dilan Soyza
3. Bilal Hassan
4. Jeewan Amaradasa
5. Thilina Weerasinghe
6. Gayantha Iddamalgoda
7. Chandimal de Silva (MRCS)
8. Niranjan Wickramaratne
9. Samith Dananjaya
10. Randika Alwis
11. Rajitha Warnapura
12. Kosala Tissera
13. Hamsa Hassan (Standby)
14. Rizwan Meedin (Standby)
15. Ramish Ramadas (Standby)

Central Kings

1. Rohitha Rajapaksa (Capt.)

2. Nigel Ratwatte
3. Saliya Handapangoda
4. Sasanka Ariyaratne
5. Lasintha de Costa
6. Kavindu Perera
7. Mekalanka Pramodha
8. Navinda Pullukuttiarachchi
9. Richard Drarmapala
10. Sasika Jayawardana
11. Chandrasekara
12. Banuka Peiris
13. Chinthaka Lahiru (Standby)
14. Dinesh Lakshan (Standby)
15. Niwanka Prasad (Standby)

Jaffna Challengers

1. Saliya Kumara (Capt.)

2. Sajith Saranga
3. Dulip Methruvan
4. Asitha B Rathnayake
5. Shashika Udaya Kumara

6. Lahiru Shanaka Gurusinghe
7. Rehan Weerakoon
8. Thilina Wijesinghe
9. Nalin Kumara
10. Heshan Gunaratne
11. Prasad Chathuranga
12. Imanka Ariyapala
13. Dinesh Kumara (Standby)
14. Malith de Silva (Standby)
15. Miuru Hewawasam (Standby)

Uva Vipers

1. Shehan Pathirana (Capt.)

2. Tharindu Chanaka
3. Rohan Fernando
4. Mushin Faleel
5. Kavindu Anjana De Costa
6. Riza Mubarak
7. Ashen de Costa
8. Sharo Fernando
9. Dulaj Perera
10. Eranda Ranaweera
11. Kanil Seneviratne

12. Jero Dananjaya
13. Krishan Premageeth (Standby)
14. Ijaz Bohoran (Standby)
15. Jerard Canute (Standby)

Sabaragamuwa Stallions

1.Chula Susantha (Capt.)

2. Banuka Nanayakkara
3. Richi Dharmapala
4. Prasad Devinda
5. Pradeep Kurukulasuriya
6. Andrew Bradley Benson
7. Thishan Wickramasinghe
8. Kasun Gamage
9. Joseph Dunn Naeqe
10. Isuru Shantha
11. Pushpakumara Perera
12. Chanaka Bandara
13. Ruwan Kumara (Standby)
14. Nawalage Asitha Perera (Standby)
15. Claude Chanaka (Standby)

