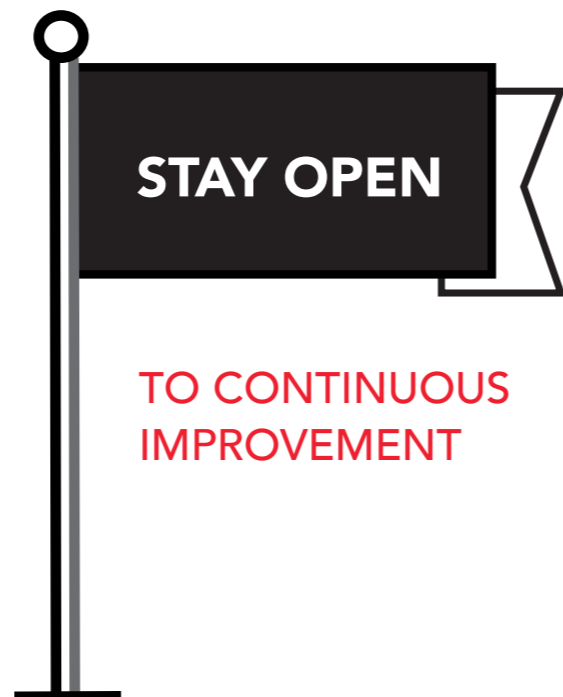
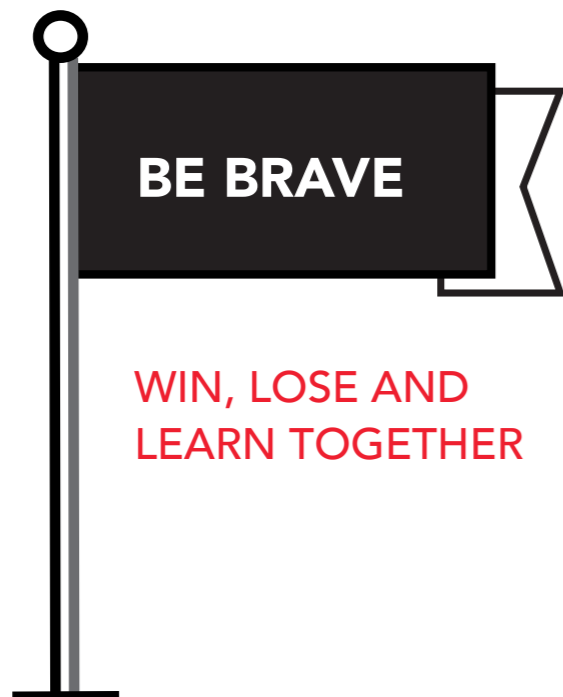


CANTERBURY WOMEN'S 2022 STRATEGIC PLAN

TO UNIFY AND SERVE OUR COMMUNITY

OUR VALUES



OUR VISION

- TO UNIFY AND SERVE OUR COMMUNITY

OUR PROMISE

- WE WILL REMEMBER OUR HERITAGE AND THINK TO OUR FUTURE
- WE ARE A LEGACY-DRIVEN ORGANIZATION



“The women’s game is rapidly growing and we are only scraping the surface. Having a strategic plan is going to help drive different areas of the game” – Kendra Cocksedge



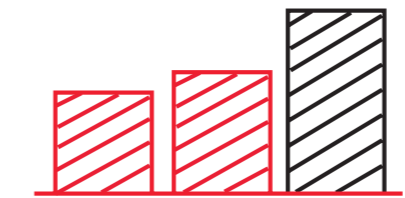


OUR FOCUS AREA

CRFU STRATEGIC PLAN 2022
Women's Rugby: To unify and serve our community



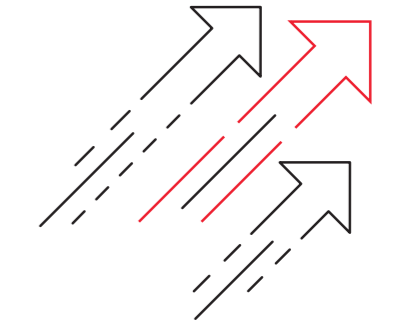
RELATIONSHIPS



COMMERCIAL



BRAND EVOLUTION



GROW THE GAME



RUGBY SUCCESS



CRFU STRATEGIC PLAN
Women's Rugby: To unify and serve our community



RELATIONSHIPS

WE POSITIVELY INFLUENCE

- 1. Positively influence an environment for women & girls to participate in rugby.**
- 2. Increase our exposure in schools and clubs and work collectively to ensure they are resourced to meet our growth objectives.**
- 3. Support our sub-unions and volunteer committees including alignment to CRFU and NZR strategic objectives.**
- 4. Embrace a new age of media communications and content interaction with all stakeholders.**
- 5. Collaborate with sports codes, industries, and institutions to extend our community reach in the womens game.**
- 6. Develop and enhance the experience for our community of sponsors.**

GROW THE GAME

WE PUT PARTICIPATION FIRST

1. Increase Participation

Increase participation of female players across all age groups by providing alternative formats to meet the needs of different player levels and age groups, creating new competitions to retain players as they transition from one age bracket to another.

Identify and create player pathways to an excellent stand that supports the development of players to the highest level.

2. Develop Opportunities

Create opportunities beyond playing the game for women to contribute through volunteering, refereeing, coaching, administering etc.

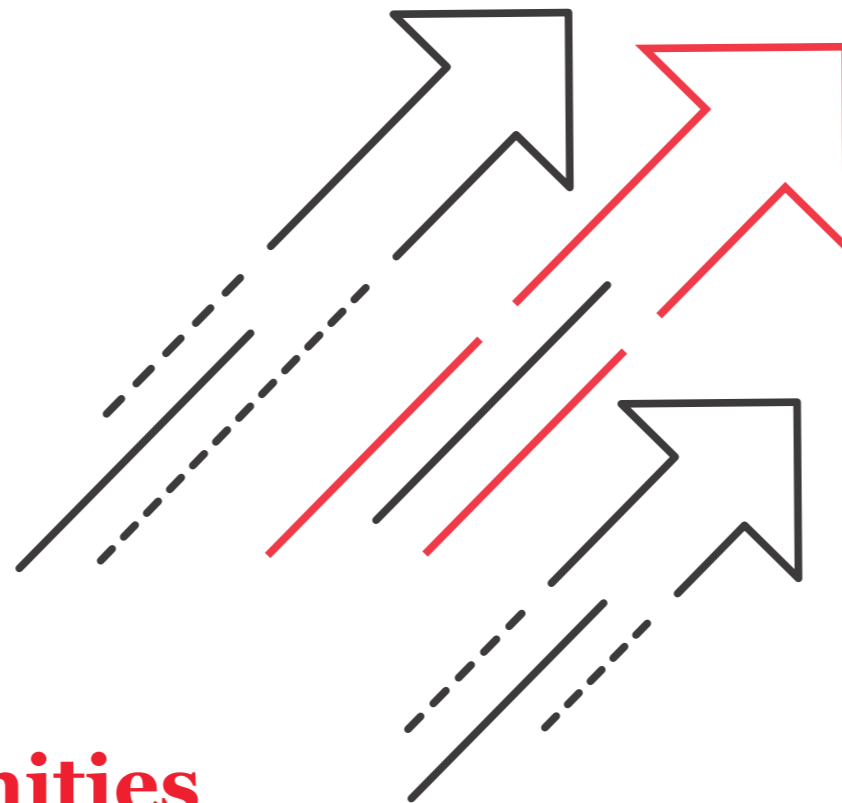
Create the right environment for women to flourish which is inclusive, diverse and recognises the different perspectives that women can bring to deliver to our ambitious goals.

3. Engage the Community

Connect schools and Clubs to provide playing opportunities; ensure all communications are clear, consistent and promote all aspects of the women's game; drive initiatives, marketing campaigns to increase awareness, participation and community support.

4. Strong Leadership

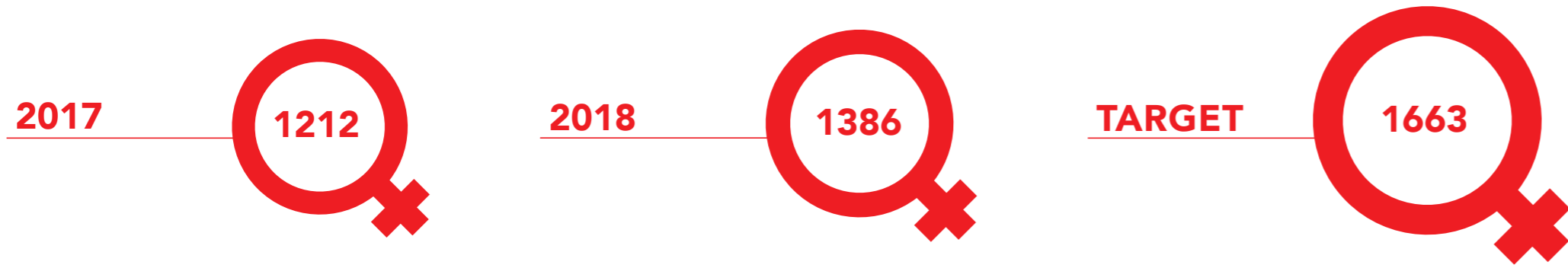
Increase the number of women in governance and leadership roles at all levels to reflect the community we engage with. It is recognised that women need to take the lead in order to accelerate growth in the women's game.



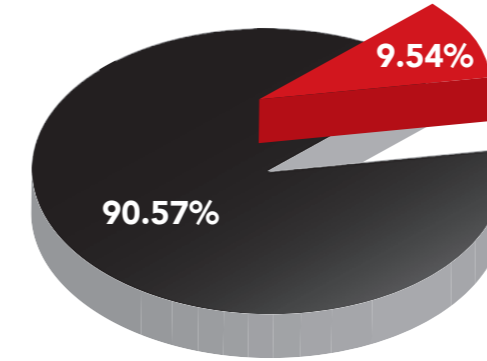
Females Playing Rugby

We currently hold 1386 female rugby players playing rugby here in the Canterbury region. With Women's rugby being one of the fastest growing codes we look to increase those numbers to 20% over the next four years. With already a strong interest we look at increasing numbers, opportunities and exposure to the great game we all love.

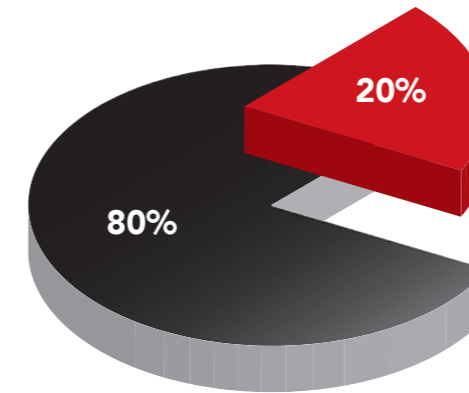
GROW THE GAME



Percentage of Females Playing Rugby 2018



Percentage of Females Playing Rugby Target



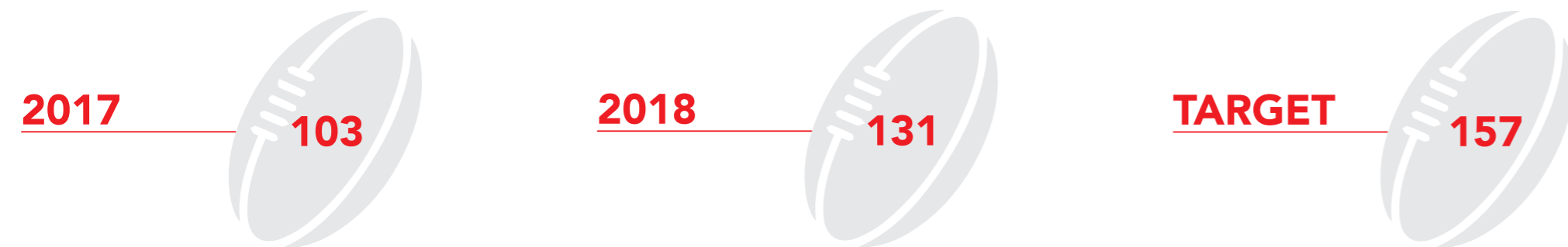
■ Males ■ Females



Female Coaches

It's important to give the young, new and current generation of female rugby players role models to look up to. We currently hold 131 females coaching the beloved game of rugby. These coaches are either past players, current, or purely rugby fanatics working towards one common goal to grow the game, while passing on their knowledge, skills and sharing the passion they too have. We look to increase those numbers in the next four years to 20% as we see the value it has on providing role models.

GROW
THE
GAME



Female Referees

As the game grows so does the endless amount of opportunity. Its not just player and coaching numbers we are looking to grow but we are striving to grow in all areas of the game including our numbers in referees.

It has become a career path and has there are growing numbers we need women to help assist and lead the flow of the game. Be apart of the action just as much as the players are. We currently sit at 7 female referees and are looking at increasing that to 20% by 2022. We recognise the way rugby's growing and how its creating endless amount of opportunities, we strive to offer those same opportunities and provide career pathways along the way.

GROW
THE
GAME

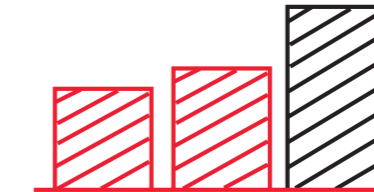




RUGBY SUCCESS

WE WIN CHAMPIONSHIPS

- 1. Grow a quality club competition.**
- 2. Canterbury women's senior team plays in the Championship Final every season.**
- 3. Relentlessly search for competitive advantage from our high performance programs.**
- 4. Deliver a holistic representative experience to more junior players.**
- 5. Add value to the player development program to both 15 and 7 aside womens teams through meaningful competition.**



COMMERCIAL

WE ARE SUSTAINABLE

- 1. Develop new sponsorship opportunities at all levels of the woman's game.**
- 2. Explore non-traditional projects including new rights opportunities.**
- 3. Leverage off existing CRFU resources to maximize opportunity.**
- 4. Provide a strong voice in formulating the annual budget and apply diligent cost control measures to assist cashflow.**



“ Being the first woman to referee a test match on Twickenham was pretty amazing – breaking a hundred year old tradition and now seeing many others achieve that honour is definitely super special.”

– Nicky Ewins

Memory Lane - Derek Todd

First Coach of University Womens Team

There are more than 1000 women in the Canterbury region ranging from all ages sharing an interest in rugby, due to the success the Black Ferns 15's and Sevens have had and the strong competitive skill FPC competition has on offer. Club rugby is the initial first taste of the game and what ignites the passion and frequent desire to play and develop as a person. Without club rugby and the grass roots, rugby wouldn't have a foundation to lean on.

Derek Todd is a hero as one might say (not all heroes wear capes), as one of the first ever Club Coaches that helped drive towards developing a club competition here in Christchurch. In fact, the trophy that was established and played for in 1982 is still the same trophy that the gruelling hearty club rugby fights for today.

Clubs that were amongst the first to play for the trophy were the likes of University, Linwood, Lincoln, Albion, Christchurch, Kaiapoi and Merivale. Although some clubs have fallen short we can't help but remember where the history of women's rugby in Canterbury began its roots.

CRFU initially asked clubs who would be interested in a women's competition as there were already inter varsity competitions and friendly games organised. It was only fitting to add structure to make it an official competition.

The drive was then sparked where coaches and managers took it into their own hands to schedule and construct a competition format. Influential and key drivers that can't go unmentioned were Coach Cyril Le Lievre from Linwood, Chris Love from Albion, Trish Townsend from Merivale and Manu Gray from Christchurch. Without these passionate people working hard the competition would have been just a mere thought for another year.

Very much like today teams were made up of cross-coders ranging from netball to hockey. The Crusadettes from Varsity hailed players from premier netball teams and senior hockey teams and because of the large interest and the conflict with other sport, rugby was played on the day of rest - Sunday. It was organised as a round-robin run tournament with all teams playing at the same grounds, which brought everyone together. Canterbury is known for breeding success and athletes not only in rugby but in various codes. Prominent players I recall from other sports were Debbie Hockley and Debbie Ford from Canterbury Cricket, Jenny Redman from Canterbury Netball, Robyn Jenkins from Canterbury Hockey, Kieran Smith, who has gone on to be Chair of NZ Olympic committee, while prominent future NZ rugby players were Chris Ross and Mary Davie. Canterbury was a breeding ground for strong female athletes.

For its round robin structure, it meant supporters could come down and watch various teams - we were well supported with crowds of several hundred turning up as the competition went on. Like all good rugby events of the time, especially for varsity students, the highlight of the tournament style of competition was the combined after-matches featuring all teams and mass boat races bringing people together. These days were also financial bonuses to the hosting clubs. There was no final but luckily the last round of the round robin pitted the two unbeaten teams, University and Linwood against each other for the trophy. It was an epic final with the game ranging all over the field (very little kicking in those days) but defence dominating for an end result a nil all draw. Both teams shared the trophy and a few cold ones to celebrate a successful season and the hope for many more to come.



First University Womens Team



Female Rugby History 1879 - 2018

1879

Establishment of CRFU

1975

Lyndon Mckendry became the first women's Referee (Started in the West Coast).

1986

Canterbury Women played its first game vs Rio Grande Surfers (San Diego) in a curtain raiser for the men's game.

1988

Canterbury Women's team tours the United States and Europe. A ground breaking move for women's rugby.

Most Black Ferns from Varsity, 39 games in 41 days.

1989

NZ vs Californian Grizzlies play at Lancaster Park. The first team officially selected by NZRU.

1990

The JJ Stewart Trophy for Women's Rugby was commissioned.

Metro Community was established to organize the rugby.

First world rugby international festival. Two-week competition held in Christchurch. Undoubtedly erupted the 6 Nations years after.

1991

First Women's World Cup in Wales. (Funded by Women, they mortgaged their homes).

They weren't officially sanctioned by World Rugby. The next world cup they were treated like the NZ Cavaliers- Black listed.

1995

Capping under the IRB

1999

The Inaugural Women's National Provincial Championship was contested.

2002

First Women's 6 Nations, 4 teams took part.

2007

Nicki Ewins became the first women to be appointed for senior rugby

2017

The Black Ferns become the first women's team to win World Rugby Team of the Year. Canterbury Women's win the Farah Palmer Cup.

First Women's Vice President - Julie Patterson.

2018

NZRU award 30 Professional contracts to the Black Ferns.

Canterbury Womens Win Farah Palmer Cup back to back.

First women board member - Natasha Wong.

First provincial Union in NZ to be awarded the rainbow tick.

Kendra Cocksege first female to ever win the Kel Tremain.



The University team the Crusadettes

Most of the players came from a friendly game against the Women Rockettes (Female side of social mens team the Rockets).

Crusadatte took out the win and established themselves well before club season kicked off the following year in 1982.



Tony Smail

CEO of Canterbury Rugby.



The growth of Women's rugby, especially in the Canterbury region is a representation of the fans, players, community and men and women in pinnacle roles pushing towards change and growth. Without strong leadership in these roles you might as well be standing still, we welcome change, we encourage equality and we inspire growth. CEO of Canterbury Rugby Tony Smail is an active participator in this vision and is using his role to strive towards meeting those goals.

“My role as CEO of Canterbury Rugby means I'm responsible for the 15-20,000 rugby players, referees, coaches and volunteers in our province. My task is to ensure that every person in Canterbury has the opportunity to play the great game of rugby and when they choose to play, that rugby gives them an experience that makes them have a strong long-lasting engagement to stay with us forever”.

Smail comes from a sporting background where his mother was the one playing a high level of sport and his father held a skill for sports administration, which we all know isn't the easiest walk in the park. Smail has been involved in coaching and managing his daughter's sports teams. So its safe to say he's aware of the difference and lack of opportunities female athletes have compared to the men's- which drives him towards change.

“Women's sport has always been shared equally in my personal life so when leading a sporting organization like Canterbury Rugby I find it natural to be looking for opportunities to promote the women's game to achieve its aims. Rugby is an inclusive sport and we must continue to demonstrate that, our sporting role models are men and women equally in a society we want to live in.”

Canterbury rugby has always been the first to break through the ceiling and pave the way for other provinces, in 1879 Canterbury along with Wellington became the first provinces to establish provincial teams- fast forward to today and Canterbury continue to evolve. “Canterbury is extremely proud of its women's team including its success as back to back Farah Palmer Cup champions. Canterbury aims to be a leader in everything it does and strives for success in all its teams.

Having broken through for its first ever win in 2017, the women were the standout team in the competition for 2018 and thoroughly deserved their grand final win over Counties Manukau. What stood out was the confidence gained from 2017 and determination for continual improvement flowing into 2018, it is what Canterbury Rugby stands for. The fitness levels and game plan that resulted from that were unable to be matched by our competitors. It demonstrated leadership and achievement at the highest level in team sport, it is what Canterbury is about and shows it can be delivered in all teams representing Canterbury.”

What might be asked is how the union expect to continue being the leader of change and success. “Sport is challenged to deliver within its resources and rugby is no different. That said, in 2018 the union employed its first specific women's development officer role. In the last two years the union has allocated additional resources to its new or continued representative teams - FPC women's, sevens, U18 girls and an U15 girls sevens team. There have been specific focused “Let her play” and “we all bleed red” campaigns, females coaching female's programs and structured women's only competitions. The promotion of the women's game and resource allocation is at its highest ever as we look to grow the women's game.”

“The strategic plan for women's rugby in Canterbury being completed early in 2019 will provide the framework for continuation of the rapid growth in our women's game, it is hugely exciting to be a part of.

The establishment of a high performance women's program will see our selected players benefit from committed resources to take their game to new levels.

The established programs that Canterbury rugby academies provide are rated the best in provincial New Zealand rugby and it is rewarding to expand these into the women's game. In the community game there is a focus at all levels, club competition, under16, under 13 and under 8/9 grades, all specific female club competitions, female coaching qualifications and coach development. Women's rugby is growing strongly and 2019 will continue to deliver to that.”

Its no wonder Canterbury are at the forefront with a vision to expand and do better. It's a province that lives and breathes rugby and a place where a successful rugby career is not just a thought it is an achievable dream. Women's rugby is not just a growing trend it's the future.

“ Canterbury aims to be a leader in everything it does and strives for success in all its teams.”

“ I thrived off the physicality as well as the friendships and values I learnt along the way. ” – Julie Patterson

Julie Patterson

Ex Canterbury Women’s player, CRFU President.

Canterbury rugby is renowned for its history so its no surprise the Canterbury Women’s rugby team has some history of their own. Not many people know about the tales of the past but that’s about to change with the pace that Women’s rugby is growing and being recognised - its bringing the history of the women in the red and black back to light.

My involvement with rugby started out similar to the classic narrative. I dabbled in a lot of other sport but rugby was never an option for girls growing up in Southbridge. When I moved to Christchurch I met some women that played for the Varsity team who then extended an invitation to come and play. It wasn’t long until the coach turned up on my door ready to take me to my first game, I left dressed head to toe in a bunch of borrowed gear which soon matched my eager but wary mindset. After I got my first taste of what the oval ball had to offer I was hooked, I loved it and it was incredibly different from other sports. You were meant to be in contact rather than avoid it and I thrived off the physicality as well as the friendships and values I learnt along the way.

The next year I became involved in the club committee fairly quickly after showing interest in the administration side of things and it wasn’t long before I was the club secretary. You may think that’s oddly quick for such a young player new to the club but that’s



just how the university club worked. They didn’t treat women any differently, they just needed things done and women proved to be incredibly good at it.

While I was juggling study, work, rugby and committee work I soon had to add the role of a Canterbury player too. I was always one of those fringe players but it was being useful and versatile rather than being brilliant that still saw me get selected. I was surrounded by some extraordinary players such as Anna Richards, Jacqui Apiata, Natasha Wong and many of the other early legends of the game. Canterbury offered another level of rugby and a unique strong group within it. It was an incredibly special moment receiving my first red and black jersey and I was immensely proud to represent Canterbury and the opportunity to become the best I could be. Although we didn’t have an official provincial competition we still played games against the likes of Otago, Wellington and Auckland.

Rugby teaches you a lot of things, it goes further than just the game. The people you meet and the friendships you make along the way last a lifetime. I've met people that come from nothing and the amount of generosity they give is amazing. You take away important life lessons, some which are good and some which are bad but you construct values that can be implemented in everyday life. It brings a lot of people together and makes them better people.

Like all good things they continue to develop and it all begins with the community and the people behind the scenes. When the metro committee was first established and I was elected to join using the experience gained from club committee roles. This led me into the competitions and disciplinary side of the game. Which is the path that I ended up staying on, where I sat on the disciplinary panel for 20 years and got involved in match day citing and liaison roles. With this high involvement is where I could contribute back to the game and the community and make a difference. I was recognised as the Canterbury Rugby Volunteer of the Year in 2016 and then had the very humbling experience to be the first woman appointed as an official of the union in 137 years as Vice President in 2017.

My volunteer work allows me to stay connected with the grass roots and rugby community which I think is hugely important when building positive change. The recognition women's rugby is getting is phenomenal

and I'd like to continue to build on that success, there is a lot of work that needs to be done but it's exciting to see what the future holds. We need to encourage and provide different pathways to keep growing and attracting different people within the game. It has changed my life so I'd like to think someone else can have the same experience but in their own way. Being a positive role model is what inspires people and it's something I strive for, I want to encourage people to get involved in whatever way they can, whether that's cutting oranges, putting out the flags, refereeing, playing or coaching. Just in whatever way you can to build and grow this great game we love.

“The recognition women's rugby is getting is phenomenal and I'd like to continue to build on that.”



Lesley Murdoch

**Former NZ Cricket and Hockey Player,
Sports Presenter.**

When a flame is lit and begins to spread, it leaves embers burning in its wake. If nurtured with encouragement, carefulness and support, that ember can be left burning for thousands of years where it creates its own history. That flame has ignited within the growth of Women's rugby affecting all avenues from an increase in interest, coaching facilities, career opportunities and media coverage. Women's rugby has erupted over the past eighteen months and one of the impacts that can't go unmentioned is the amount of coverage they now receive. The Black Ferns success is what ignited the flame that everyone had been waiting for and with that rugby profiling has led the way in terms of Women's sport coverage in New Zealand.

With TV there is a bigger involvement of women entering roles such as commentators, expert opinion or sideline comments. These women are either former rugby players themselves that have a wide range of knowledge of the game or women that have media training and experience. There is a growing acceptance that female athletes have a great balanced opinion and can read the game and express themselves well, which is creating opportunities. Although coverage is not yet matched by radio or print media - I'm sure an ember will ignite it soon.



The coverage of women's rugby on TV has given the public a far greater appreciation for the game as well as the amazing personal back stories that each player has, and I can bet there are some unique strong stories to be told. The athleticism, competitiveness, skills and a game where there is slightly less emphasis on the physical aspect, is an exciting game to watch. Once the public begin to identify players more the appreciation will only grow.

NZR have also contributed through their partnership with SKY and good people like Cate Sexton are driving that involvement. To continue this growth, we need women to stay involved in the running of the women's game, as women know their own sport better. It is different in a whole raft of areas than the game the men administrate, its new territory that can be led by women and supporters of the community.

The Canterbury Women's team inherit the typical Canterbury sporting trait, which is excellent 'Team' work. Unselfish players that are playing for each other and striving for the same unified goal. They've got some X Factor players combined with talented young players that are eager to learn from the best. The structure of the team goes deeper than that though with outstanding leadership from Steph Fox, Melissa Ruscoe and Natasha Wong, who are all inspiring experienced women.

Canterbury had an excellent game plan which played to their strengths of pace and skill. From Canterbury's point of view, a possible benefit could be the fact a lot of the players come from two major clubs, Varsity and Christchurch, so they know each other as well as each other's play. Having said that they integrate anyone that comes through incredibly well which could be put down to their team culture. Canterbury's gain has been at Auckland's expense, so player talent is spreading out.

I was lucky enough to be a part of the Canterbury Women's jersey presentation during their road to the final. Which was a fantastic honour and a wonderful opportunity to see the team in pre match mode. I think it's quite clever to get high profile people involved in that presentation because they go back and spread the word. Sophie Pascoe, for example, has a massive following and putting a photo on Facebook will only draw more attraction.

We are in a position to promote the game through the media but I also like to think I'm a women's sport activist - Sporting Suffragette.

Women's rugby has been ignited and it will continue to burn brighter if women stay involved in pinnacle roles, where a difference can be made. Whether that's administrating, playing, coaching, managing or Presidency. We all have a role to play. Honor the players, Honour the Heritage and Treasure the Volunteers.

“Honor the players, Honor the Heritage and Treasure the Volunteer's.”

“The jersey comes with a lot of history, you are then to add your own history and their will be others after you to continue that on.” – Melissa Ruscoe

Melissa Ruscoe

Ex Canterbury player, Ex Black Fern Captain, Current Canterbury FPC Coach.



Canterbury rugby is the pinnacle of a champion team, its no secret when looking at their success rate. The Canterbury Women's FPC team have been influenced by this ideology and inspired by past players and driven by strong leaders of the game. Melissa Ruscoe is one of the all time greats and an early legend of the game, she possesses all the attributes that Canterbury rugby stand for. She is a large influencer on today's game, passing on her experience and knowledge. She has written her own history in the red and black as well as leading the Black Ferns to a successful World Cup and is now paying it forward with the Canterbury Women's FPC.

When you earn the right to wear the red and black it's incredibly humbling. The jersey is yours to borrow and to put more into it for the time that you wear it. Borrowing the jersey means you're receiving it from those that wore it before you so it comes with a lot of history, you are then to add your own history and their will be others after you to continue that on.

The jersey is more than just a jersey it holds strong values, while wearing it you're playing for each other and supporting your mate next to you while being the best you can be. You're representing more than just Canterbury, it's for your family and loved ones.

Everyone has a story to tell and my journey with rugby began by initially joining some mates for some extra fitness training for football. I was then asked to fill in and got chucked on the wing for Christchurch and that's usually how it starts. That one game led me to barely be able to walk for a week but that didn't stop me from going back again. My weekends consisted of playing rugby on the Saturday and football on the Sunday while aspiring to better myself as a person and player. Once I gained the opportunity to represent Canterbury I was still playing New Zealand Football, juggling both the round and oval ball. I eventually retired from football and my love for rugby grew and I made the Canterbury Women's rugby team in 2002.

I never made it a goal of mine to make the Black Ferns, I just committed to being the best player I could be and if accolades of making teams came from it then that was a bonus.

I never once thought about being Black Ferns Captain as I always looked up to players such as Farah Palmer, Rochelle Martin and Victoria Heighway. To have that privilege is extremely humbling. Going into coaching is about still having a love for the game and wanting to give back to something that I am extremely grateful to have been a part of.

My vision for the game is to see the FPC competition become Semi-professional and a Super Rugby competition for women. In order to do this there needs to be structure around coaches for this and also an improved club coach level. We are aiming to move alongside club coaches to provide them with the skills and knowledge to increase the level of rugby within their teams. It's a move towards positive change.

It's important to remember the players and coaches that have played before us but not only in Canterbury but New Zealand and the rest of the world, as they are the early believers of the game. To show appreciation and remembrance it would be great to have plaques of names of players who have played each position, so new players who come into the red and black jersey can feel the weight and privilege of wearing the jersey.

“My vision for the game is to see FPC competition become semi-professional and Super Rugby competition for women.”



Kendra Cocksedge

**Current Canterbury and Black Fern player.
Canterbury Rugby's Womens Development Manager.**



The Canterbury Women's team have created their own standard, where no matter what rank you are or who you've represented, you're sitting on an equal playing field. From players to management, they're all unified as one. Striving to perform against the status quo and introduce a new game to the women's competition. The Canterbury women's team is the leading team in the FPC competition, not only for their success on the board but they lead in the way they construct and execute a game plan. The work they do on and off the field and behind the scenes contributes to that.

It's no folk tale to understand that good things come to those who wait but also good things come to those who show resilience and determination. Kendra Cocksedge is a name that doesn't go unrecognized, due to her accolades of success and being one of the greatest halfback's. Not only is she a weapon on the field but she's driven and inspired young athletes to achieve their goals and contributed massively to the growth of women's rugby.

Canterbury offers a platform where athletes can blossom and grow as players and that's exactly what Cocksedge has made from her experience in the red and black.

"It means a lot to wear the red and black jersey as you're representing the history it holds and the people that have worn it and contributed to its success. It's understood that you're only ever a caretaker of the jersey so when you've been given the chance to wear it, it is important to create your own legacy that will be passed down to player's in the future".

Everyone's curious to know what the Canterbury women's culture is like, as it's infectious to see the tight-knit bond and it's an environment everyone wants to be apart of. "I love the culture of our Canterbury team, the girls are all motivated to do what is best for them individually which contributes to the team. They understand the history of the red and black and they too strive to put in their best efforts to leave a legacy of their own.

We always have a great theme that connects the team and the goals we put in place. The leadership group do a great job at driving this".

The platform Canterbury has created has been created by those beforehand and those willing to work hard, break through the barrier and see change. This platform has the potential to create a pathway for athletes to one day represent their country and a pure example would be Cocksedge and her experience within the rugby academy.

"Playing for Canterbury has given me the chance to represent the Black ferns. I was lucky enough to be part of the Canterbury Rugby academy in 2008 for 4 years which helped me become a better player. Gave me the understanding of High Performance rugby and I learnt a lot about the game in the technical, tactical, physical, nutrition, mental skills and leadership areas. Canterbury has a great legacy and history in the women's game and I'm very proud to be a part of that.

"The women's game is rapidly growing and we are only scrapping the surface. Having a women's strategic plan is going to aid that growth and help drive in different areas of the game. In terms of the future I would like to see sponsors jump on board, a pathway where females can enter the game at any age and stage and in long term I would love to see the game go professional"

The game has the potential to succeed very much like the men's game and Canterbury can be at the forefront for that. Once again making history and helping athletes achieve their goals very much like Cocksedge.

“Canterbury has a great legacy and history in the women's game and I'm very proud to be a part of that.”

“For young women joining us today as Referees the opportunities are only limited by what they want to achieve.” – Lyndon Mckendry

Lyndon McKendry

First Women's Referee.

Rugby is one of the biggest codes in New Zealand, it practically runs through our blood and as the growth of women's rugby continues to grow, so are the opportunities that come along with it. Strong influences of the game are getting a bite of the opportunist pie and are generating opportunities of their own, that being a career in refereeing.

As servants of the game they play a big role and can have an ever lasting impression, after all they are the ones that guide and reinforce the spiritual values of the game we all love.

Lyndon McKendry is one that took a mile-stone opportunity eagerly with both hands, becoming one of the first women referees of rugby in the sweet side of the West Coast.

As little opportunity there was in 1975, she never fell short of reasons to accept such an influential role. “I loved rugby but there was very little opportunity to play regular women's rugby back in 1979 in Greymouth. So I looked upon refereeing after my dad encouraged me to give it ago, he was a top level referee himself. I fell in love with it and enjoyed the camaraderie of being apart of a referee group. Our job was to ensure players could play the game and enjoy it.” While refereeing may seem like it holds a lot of pressure and responsibly it in



fact sparks confidence while being in an authoritative role. “Rugby is a huge part of New Zealand and to be involved in it is a great privilege. Refereeing provides a number of life skills that are important such as being able to develop communication skills; learning to interact with people from lots of different backgrounds and decision making, to name a few”. As for achieving a mile stone herself, she never knew the influence it would have.

“Looking back it really was an important thing to be part of the first group of women's referees in the West Coast (four of us started together). It showed that regardless of your gender, people were able to take an active part in the great game of Rugby. I was able to learn my refereeing skills from a group of very established and knowledgeable men who accepted

me for who I was and never made me feel different or unworthy. It was the start of women being accepted as referees – it's been a long journey but I am proud to say I was there at the start.”

McKendrys drive sparks passion but like most referees that get scrutinized she has faced some challenges of her own.

“The normal statement of “that ref is a woman, what would she know?” and the answer to that is to simply show that I do know what I am talking about by making the right decisions in games both in law and in rugby sense. I have never asked or expected to have things different for me because I am a woman.”

As McKendry was one of the first female referees of the game she doesn't want the growth and the breaking of status quo to stop there.

“I would like to see the continued growth of women in refereeing at National and International level providing they meet requirements to be there – fitness, game knowledge and decision making, on field ability. We need to have more coaches accepting that women are capable of refereeing at this elite level. There are so many opportunities for female referees around the world and we need to be part of these opportunities, sometimes being on the opposite side of the world doesn't work in our favour but we need to keep promoting & pushing our female referees so they do

get given these opportunities. I am sure very soon we will see female referees involved as Assistant Referees at Super level in New Zealand just as has happened in Australia and how good would it be to have Canterbury women in that group, and then to get to referee Mitre 10 Cup and Super Rugby. For young women joining us today as Referees the opportunities are only limited by what they want to achieve.”

“I would like to see the continued growth of women in refereeing at National and International level”



WITH THANKS TO

HONOR THE PLAYERS, HONOR THE HERITAGE AND TREASURE THE VOLUNTEER'S.

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NOW LETS GROW THE GAME!