

Louisiana PASS



New Zealand's Football

If you're a fan of football, or sports in general, then you may have heard of rugby. Though its rules are similar to football, rugby isn't all that popular in the United States, but it's a huge hit in England, Ireland, Canada, Australia, and many other countries. The place where rugby enjoys its greatest popularity is just across the Tasman Sea from Australia, the island country of New Zealand.

Rugby originated in England in the 1700's (or 1800's, depending who you ask!) and was brought to New Zealand in 1870 by Charles John Monro, a New Zealander who went to school in England and learned the sport there. The first official rugby game in New Zealand was played on May 14, 1870 and matched Nelson College against the Nelson football club. Just over 20 years later, the New Zealand Rugby Football Union was formed to govern the sport on a national level.

Nowadays, New Zealand is home the most dominant rugby team in the world, the All Blacks. Named for the color of their uniforms, the All Blacks are known throughout the world both for their near-perfect rugby play and for their famed haka ritual before each match. Once a war chant among New Zealand's native Maori population, the haka has been revived by the All Blacks to intimidate opponents, excite fans and teammates, and honor the culture and history of New Zealand's earliest settlers.

Perhaps the next time you're hanging out with your friends, you'll try to play rugby instead of football. Just be careful if you do. One important difference between the two sports is that rugby players don't wear pads!

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Player photo courtesy of the University of Western Ontario. Team photo courtesy of Diantha Raadgers.

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