

THE OT7

OT7_ISSUE #04

SEVENTH

THE TOUCHLINES

TOUCH ACROSS TRIBES, NATIONS AND OCEANS

PROFILES WITH PURPOSE - GARY HARDING ● INTERNATIONAL
GAY RUGBY TOUCH SERIES (UK) ● WHY DO REFS HAVE TO PAY?
● TOTAL TOUCH ACADEMY ● S&C FOR TOUCH PLAYERS ●
SIX EVENT REVIEWS AND RECAPS ● AND MORE...



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Another month, another Scoop, and once again, the stories rolling in remind me why this little magazine is more than just match reports and scorelines.

This issue has been shaped by voices across the world of Touch: from the grassroots players creating safe, inclusive spaces, to the refs who (madly or brilliantly, depending how you see it) pay to keep our games alive, to the coaches building pathways for the next generation.

Events have been coming thick and fast too, England's juniors battling it out, the USA crowning their champions, Singapore bringing serious heat, and the Channel Islands showing how fierce a local rivalry can be.

And of course, we've got the people stories, like Gary Harding, whose journey shows what it means to play with purpose.

So stick the kettle on, flick through, and take it all in.

This one's a reminder that Touch isn't just a sport; it's a movement, powered by the players, coaches, refs, and organisers who keep pushing it forward.

Keep in...
Gregg



INTERNATIONAL GAY RUGBY TOUCH SERIES (UK)



THE IGR TOUCH SERIES HAS
BECOME THE UK'S FASTEST-
GROWING INCLUSIVE COMPETITION

FROM A SINGLE CLUB TO A NATIONAL LEAGUE

While the Senior European Touch teams were battling it out in Stirling, the finals of the fourth year of the UK IGR Touch series were happening in Newcastle and London.

The series began back in 2022 with just 12 teams split between North and South. This year, 25 teams took part, showing just how fast the inclusive competition has grown.

It all started in 2017, when the Manchester Village Spartans launched their Touch rugby programme. By 2020, other IGR (International Gay Rugby) clubs followed their lead, and by 2021 it was clear a structured league was needed. With few options locally, and most city leagues dominated by experienced players rather than development teams, a new IGR league was formed.

The driving forces were Ben Dawson (Spartans' Director of Touch Rugby), Lawrence Howard (then IGR Europe Trustee), and other members of IGR.

With IGR already running inclusive union leagues, it made sense to model a Touch version that brought the LGBTQ+ community together.

How the league works

The league is split into North and South. Rather than weekly fixtures, teams come together once a month for a round-robin tournament.

Each series day is hosted by one of the participating clubs, rotating venues across the summer months. The season builds to a finals day, where winners are crowned.

EXPANSION AND EVOLUTION

20
22

The first IGR series day took on 19th March 2022, hosted by Liverpool Tritons, marking the official start of the ever-growing league.

Inaugural Winners:
Manchester Village Spartans

20
23

Two new teams joined. Nottingham Hurricanes (North) and Coventry Corsairs (South).

Multiple clubs began testing themselves in other competitions and leagues.

20
24

Northern league had grown exponentially. A new structure deployed, and additional divisions created.

The season was trimmed to five series days from April to August.

20
25

A further seven teams came into the fold.

Guest teams entered, including Scotland's first IGR Touch side, the Caledonian Thebans Midas

2022 - the first official season

The IGR Touch league launched with 12 pioneering teams, split between North and South.

The Northern line-up featured Manchester Village Spartans, Liverpool Tritons, Typhoons, Chester Centurions, Leeds Hunters, Hull Roundheads, and Newcastle Ravens.

In the South, Clapham Feelers, London Stags, Berkshire Unicorns, Reading Renegades, and Brighton & Hove Serpents joined the fray.

The first official series day was hosted by Liverpool Tritons at New Brighton Rugby Club on 19 March. Five of the seven northern teams took part, marking the start of what would quickly become a thriving competition.

Throughout the first year, it saw the teams, where most did not have access to local leagues, grow and develop their touch skills and bring up some heated competition.

The season closed with a nail-biting final.

Manchester Village Spartans claimed the title on try difference after finishing level with Chester Centurions.



2023 - more teams & higher standards

Year two saw the league expand to 14 teams, with Nottingham Hurricanes joining the North and Coventry Corsairs boosting the South.

The appetite for Touch was growing fast, with more IGR clubs realising the format was a perfect fit alongside their union sides.

The year wasn't just about bigger numbers, though, it was about ambition.

Teams that had cut their teeth in the first season now wanted tougher tests.

Several clubs began entering and testing themselves in other competitions and leagues, mixing with experienced opposition and raising their own standards.

The step up to higher-level play gave players confidence, sharpened skills, and fed back into the IGR competition, lifting the quality across the board.

2023 also highlighted how much demand there was for structured, inclusive competition.

Many of the participating clubs didn't have access to local leagues, and the IGR series was becoming their main outlet for regular, meaningful fixtures.





2024 - restructuring for growth

By the third season, expansion forced change.

Lincoln Lancers joined the North, pushing numbers to nine teams, too many for the single-division format.

To protect player and referee welfare, the North split into two divisions, with Coventry Corsairs shifting across from the South.

Meanwhile, the South welcomed another London outfit, East End Electric, becoming the third capital-based side.

With fixtures harder to schedule, the calendar was streamlined to five series days between April and August, each hosted by a different club.

The changes worked. The restructure meant games ran smoother, referees had manageable schedules, and players got more competitive balance. Off the field, 2024 proved to be a landmark year: IGR formally adopted Touch as part of its core programme.

Two new officer roles were created, Development Touch Officer and Touch League Officer, giving the format dedicated leadership for the first time.

With the Touch league officer, taken up by Ian Stodart (Manchester Village Spartans), now in place, there could be more focus on getting both the Northern and Southern leagues into a more stable and concise structure.

This shift marked the point where Touch within IGR moved from being a growing side project to an established, strategic part of the organisation.

2025 - stability and development

Seven new clubs joined, including Sheffield Vulcans, Birmingham Longhorns, West London Warriors, Iceni, Colchester Thunder, Northampton Outlaws, and East End Electric Amps, splitting both regions into two divisions.

Guest appearances came from Plymouth Dolphins and Scotland's first IGR Touch team, Caledonian Thebans Midas.

A centralised structure managed scheduling, finances, and referee appointments.

Referee development took off, with over 40 players trained and nine earning their Level one badge.

Season winners:

- Chester Centurions (Northern D1)
- Newcastle Ravens (Northern D2)
- Clapham Feelers (Southern D1)
- West London Warriors (Southern D2).



2026 - looking ahead

If the first four years were about building, 2026 is about consolidating and deepening the impact of IGR Touch.

The calendar already shows a full programme, with another two-division structure in both the North and South keeping fixtures competitive and manageable.

But the real story lies in the direction of travel. Several clubs are now fielding second teams, a clear marker that Touch is no longer just a social add-on, but a strand of IGR in its own right.

This growth is feeding participation opportunities at every level, from first-time players discovering the sport in inclusive spaces, to experienced athletes pushing themselves in higher-level competitions.

Referee development is also being taken seriously. Building on the 40+ players trained in 2025, the aim this season is to deepen pathways and retain referees by giving them both education and opportunities.

A major milestone will be the Hadrian Cup

The Annual Inclusive tournament will see referees run games under the supervision of an experienced referee coach.

For many, this will be their first taste of structured feedback and mentoring, which is vital if IGR Touch is to sustain its rapid growth.

The “Festival of Touch” in Leeds also brings fresh ambition

More than just a competition, this event is designed to showcase the sport's social, cultural, and community aspects, bringing together Touch teams from across the globe in a celebration of what makes IGR special.

It highlights the shift from a league that existed mainly to fill gaps for isolated clubs, to one that now has its own flagship fixtures, identity, and presence in the wider Touch landscape.

IGR Touch in 2026 isn't just surviving, it's thriving. The structures are in place, the leadership roles embedded, and the appetite is clear.

More than just a league, **it's a movement**





TRAIN TOUCH

Promoting Strength and Conditioning for Touch players



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for 10% off



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TT Programmes



Strength and conditioning is one of the most overlooked parts of Touch, yet it's often the difference between lasting a full tournament or breaking down halfway through.

Train Touch, set up by Isaac Hopkins, Finley Maple, and Sam Baldock, are looking to change that.

This UK-based team of coaches is putting physical prep at the heart of our sport. Their mission? To help players run faster, cut sharper, and recover better so they can stay on the field for longer.

From gym sessions to field-based conditioning, their content is designed specifically with Touch players in mind. But what really makes them stand out is their focus on education, not just what to do, but why it matters. Whether it's speed mechanics, agility drills, or recovery habits,

Train Touch are giving athletes the knowledge and tools to train smarter, not just harder.

We caught up with the team to learn more about their journey, their approach, and their top advice for players looking to take their game to the next level.

How did Train Touch start, and what inspired you to focus specifically on Touch?

Train Touch began with a simple observation: while Touch is a fast-growing sports worldwide, it has often been overlooked when it comes to specialist physical preparation.

As a Strength & Conditioning (S&C) coach working across different sports, I noticed that Touch athletes were relying on general rugby or fitness programmes that didn't always meet the unique demands of the game. Touch is explosive, fast, and relentless – with repeated accelerations, constant changes of direction, and a need for high-level endurance..

That means the physical profile of a successful Touch player is different from a 15s rugby player or even a sevens athlete.

The idea for Train Touch came from wanting to bridge that gap. I (Isaac) had worked with Touch at an international level and saw first-hand how athletes who embraced S&C made huge strides in their game.

They weren't just getting fitter – they were moving better, recovering faster, and sustaining performance over the course of tournaments. That inspired me to create a platform dedicated to helping Touch players at all levels: from those who just want to keep playing pain-free for longer, to those chasing international honours.

Ultimately, Train Touch is about giving players the tools to back up their skills with the physical qualities that make a difference – speed, power, endurance, and resilience. When athletes take their S&C seriously, they don't just survive the demands of Touch; they thrive in them.

What's your own background in sport, fitness, or Touch?

Between the three of us at Train Touch, we've built a team that blends high-level coaching expertise, hands-on playing experience, and the ability to connect with the wider Touch community.

- Isaac - A PhD researcher in youth sport and Head of Strength & Conditioning for England Touch, bringing performance insights from international campaigns.
- Fin - A Personal Trainer and MSc student in Sport & Exercise Medicine, combining rehab and injury prevention with his own Touch playing background.
- Sam - Plays at the top level for England Men's Open and has coaching experience too, making sure our content is practical and relatable.



What does a “day in the life” look like for you as coaches running Train Touch?

There’s no typical day, we’re juggling Train Touch around PhDs, coaching, and playing.

Most of our time goes into creating content, planning programmes, and building links in the Touch community, often in the early mornings or late evenings.

It’s a balancing act, but we do it because we believe Touch athletes deserve tailored support.

What’s been the biggest challenge in starting out, and the best moment so far?

The hardest part has been starting from scratch while managing full-time commitments, there never seem to be enough hours.

But the highlights make it worth it: seeing players engage with our content, and having performance conversations with coaches like Thailand Touch.

Those moments show Train Touch is already making an impact.

Strength and conditioning in Touch is only going to get smarter, more visible, and better understood at every level.



What's the most common mistake you see Touch players making in their physical prep?

The biggest mistake we see is inconsistency. Players dipping in and out of training without following a clear plan.

A lot of Touch athletes rely on just playing the game or doing bits of fitness here and there, but without a regular physical preparation programme, progress is limited.

You might feel fit in the short term, but over time the body struggles with the repeated demands of Touch, leading to slower improvements, more fatigue, and even higher injury risk.

A structured programme gives you a foundation, builds layer by layer, and makes sure everything fits together.

That's why we developed our FITTER / FASTER / STRONGER programmes at Train Touch.

It's designed specifically for Touch players who want consistent, progressive training that matches the demands of the game. Whether your goal is to stay on the pitch longer, feel sharper in tournaments, or push for the next level, having that structure in place is what makes the difference.

If someone only has 20 minutes in the gym, what's the single most effective thing they can do?

First off, remember that something is always better than nothing. Even a short session can make a real difference if you use the time wisely.

The key is to focus on the "big movers", training that develops strength and power in the lower body (for sprinting, stepping, and repeated accelerations) while also building resilience in the upper body (for handling contact, reaching, and defending).

In just 20 minutes, prioritising these bigger, more impactful areas gives you the best return for your time.

Time efficiency is everything, and consistency with these shorter, focused sessions will take you further than the occasional long workout.

How do you see strength & conditioning evolving in Touch over the next few years?

Strength & Conditioning in Touch is becoming more structured and understood.

Players and coaches are moving beyond simply "getting fit" to tailored training that enhances performance, prevents injury, and supports skill execution under fatigue.

Over the next few years, greater education and resources will help all levels of the sport train smarter and recover better.

The exciting part is that this evolution will make Touch not only more competitive but also more enjoyable, because players who are stronger, fitter, and more resilient can fully express their skills and stay in the game longer.

Quote "OT7" for 10% off their programmes.



Nutrition & hydration – Fuel up with balanced meals and water to sustain energy.



Sleep – Quality sleep repairs, adapts, and restores your body.



Workload balance – Train smart, not just more. Listen to your body.



Strength training – Consistent strength work builds speed, power, and resilience.



Fitness/conditioning – Build fitness to repeat high efforts all game long.

WHY DO TOUCH REFS HAVE TO PAY TO ATTEND INTERNATIONAL EVENTS?

Essential to the game, yet out of pocket.
Is the current model unsustainable?



**"REFS DON'T
JUST BLOW
THE WHISTLE -
THEY BLOW
THEIR SAVINGS
TOO."**

STATS

Cost of attending:

(without travel)

WC £1,000

Euros £800

AYTC £600

**Domestic ref paid
expenses:**

£40-£60/day (UK/Eur)

**Support from
FIT/NTOs:**

Almost none



At every international Touch tournament, the game can't happen without referees.

But while players get highlight reels, refs get something else: **A BILL.**

The reality for refs

To attend a World Cup, and other 'international events', a referee pays for pretty much everything themselves:

- Flights/Travel
- Accommodation
- Meals
- Tournament entry fees
- Mandatory uniform

There's no expenses covered, it's basically a *working holiday*, emphasis on the "working," not the "holiday."

Sure, players pay to play. But referees aren't "participants" in the same way, they *facilitate* the sport. No refs = no games, right? Yet, while players' costs are at least tied to playing/winning opportunities, refs are essentially subsidising the event itself.

Even with event sponsors, TWC2024 had an official kit sponsor, yet refs still had to *buy* their own uniform. What do they do? Turn up, and hope their hamstrings and overdraft survive the week.

Little to no support

The international body doesn't fund referees. National Organisations? Very few do. For most refs, there's no monetary assistance.

The result? Plenty of good referees never make it to international tournaments. Some even try crowdfunding, a brave move when your pitch is basically:

"Please sponsor me to get sunburnt, shouted at, and sprint repeatedly while being ignored."

**SELECTIONS SHOULD BE ON
ABILITY, NOT BANK BALANCES**

WHY IT MATTERS

It's not just about money, it's about value.

At domestic events in the UK, referees usually get paid around **£40 - £60 a day** in expenses.

Internationally, they pay to work.

That sends a pretty clear message: refs aren't valued.

The knock-on effects are real too:

- **Talent drain**
Not always the best refs at events, just the ones who can afford it.
- **Grassroots impact**
No elite experience coming back into local leagues.
- **Event quality**
Appointments are about bank balances, not ability.

ORGANISERS' DEFENCE

The organisers love to point at high costs: venues, logistics, livestreams. All true, events are pricey. But anyone who's peeked at the accounts knows: there's always a profit margin.

Case in point: The 2019 Touch World Cup [reported](#) a record profit of \$235,860 AUD (£115,500 GBP // 132,467 EUR)

Fast forward to 2024: team numbers jumped from 116 to 187, a **60% increase**. Yet somehow, we're still told there's no budget for refs. Curious.

The bigger issue? Transparency. These are membership organisations, but the accounts aren't always visible. Which is odd, considering you can livestream a pool game between Philippines and France, but not the balance sheet.

WHAT NEEDS TO CHANGE

Refs aren't demanding wages. The ask is insultingly simple: a **break-even model**. Once refs are on site, cover the basics: accommodation, food, and kit. That's it.

Private companies and small clubs manage this with 20-odd teams in Europe. Yet at the "pinnacle" of the sport, refs are worse off. That's not just unsustainable, it's embarrassing.

The bottom line

Touch is built on inclusivity and community. But expecting refs to pay for the privilege of keeping the sport alive undermines that ethos.

If nothing changes, international events will keep selecting officials based on who can pay, not who is best.

Until this shifts, refs aren't just blowing the whistle, they're blowing their savings too.



Welcome to Artifice, where sarcasm is free (unlike refereeing). If you're offended, you're probably the one sending refs an invoice.



BUILT TOUGH



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TOTAL TOUCH ACADEMY



THEIR MISSION: To promote and teach Touch, develop players & coaches to their highest potential in a positive environment.

They strive to ensure that everyone involved will be able to have fun, make new friends, experience the unique culture of Touch, and learn about participating positively in a team sport.

We caught up with founder and head coach, Eddie Sanjuan.

Can you tell us how Total Touch Academy started and what inspired you to launch in 2020?

I'd been coaching at a high level for a long time, and around that time I was also seriously considering becoming a teacher, which I've since gone on to do as a maths teacher.

For me, both coaching and teaching are about helping young people grow, build confidence, and enjoy learning new skills. In the summer of 2020, I saw a real gap in opportunities for kids in Scotland to play Touch rugby, so I decided to take the plunge and launch Total Touch Academy.

The idea was simple: create a space where children could be active, develop their skills, and most importantly leave every session with a smile - enjoyment was, and still is, paramount.

What makes Total Touch Academy unique compared to other rugby or sports programmes in Scotland?

Quite simply, we are still the only dedicated youth Touch rugby programme in the whole of Scotland.

While lots of kids might get some exposure through rugby clubs or schools, we've built something that's entirely focused on Touch and designed for children. That means a safe, fast, fun, and inclusive sport where every child, no matter their ability, can get involved.

One of the biggest issues in rugby is the huge drop-off that happens when contact is introduced – often around the age of 8. Many children love the ball skills, running, and teamwork of rugby, but the physical hits and collisions aren't for everyone. Touch rugby provides an alternative pathway where kids can keep enjoying the oval ball game, developing their skills and staying in the sport, without the pressure or risk of contact. For those who enjoy the contact we provide a space to work on core skills and develop space identification, so everyone benefits.

Your mantra is “every child leaves with a smile.” What does that look like in practice at your sessions?

It's central to everything we do. For us, it's not about whether a child masters a sidestep or nails a tricky pass that day – it's about them leaving the pitch buzzing and wanting to come back.

If kids are smiling, laughing, and enjoying themselves, then we know they'll stick with sport, and the skills and development will follow naturally.



The background of the entire page is a photograph of a group of children playing Touch rugby on a grassy field. Some children are in the foreground, wearing orange and blue jerseys, while others are in the background, some with their hands raised in the air. The image is slightly faded to allow the text to be readable.

How important are the coaches in creating the environment you want for young players?

They're everything. We've been lucky to have fantastic coaches who not only know Touch rugby but also care deeply about the kids.

Our job is to build strong, positive relationships with player, if children feel safe, respected, and encouraged, then they thrive. That's where the smiles and the progress come from.

Beyond Touch skills, what do children gain from being part of Total Touch Academy?

So much more than sport. They're learning teamwork, communication, resilience, and respect, values they can take into all areas of life.

They're also staying active at an age when it's easy to fall into screens and phones. Touch gives them a chance to be outside, moving, and part of a team.

Can you share some success stories of players who have come through the Academy?

One of our earliest players was Michael Sheriff. He booked onto our very first camp, and just last year he played for Scotland Men's Open at the Touch World Cup – at only 15 years old!

That shows what's possible when kids are given opportunities.

We've also had several players move through the Scottish Touch Association youth pathways into national squads. It's something we're very proud of.

How do you see your role in Scotland's Touch rugby pathway, and what challenges have you faced in getting recognition or support?

We see ourselves as a key pipeline for Touch in Scotland. If kids aren't getting it through school, then academies like ours are essential for growing the game. We've had great success with our players, but it would have been nice to see more support from the Scottish Touch Association.

Our work feeds directly into their youth pathways, and I think the sport could grow much faster if there was a stronger partnership.

Why do you think initiatives like Total Touch Academy are so crucial for the growth of the sport in Scotland?

Unlike in England, where schools now have a structured competition system, we don't have that in Scotland yet. That means grassroots programmes like ours are vital. Without them, kids simply wouldn't get the chance to try Touch or develop in it. If we want a strong future for Scottish Touch at senior level, we need to start with the kids now.

Looking ahead, what are your goals for Total Touch Academy and youth Touch in Scotland?

We want to keep expanding opportunities for young people to play. That means growing our after-school clubs, holiday camps and ultimately the goal is a schools competition here in Scotland.

Most of all, we want to keep inspiring kids to play, stay active, and enjoy sport.



DID YOU KNOW...

- **Scotland's only youth Touch academy.** Total Touch Academy is still the only dedicated youth Touch programme in the country.
- **Every child leaves smiling.** Enjoyment is the number one goal. Skills follow naturally when kids have fun.
- **Pathway to the top.** One of the very first Academy players, Michael Sheriff, represented Scotland at the Touch World Cup at just 15 years old.
- **World-class expertise.** Head Coach Eddie Sanjuan has played and coached for Scotland, and won European Championship golds in both roles.
- **Launched in 2020.** During lockdown, spotting a gap for kids in Scotland.
- **Life skills too.** Players develop teamwork, communication, resilience, and respect – not just sport.
- **Not just drills.** Sessions are designed to keep kids smiling, laughing, and keen to come back.



Finally, what would you say to parents or young players who are considering giving Touch a try?

Come and give it a go! Touch is safe, inclusive, and brilliant fun – and it develops the skills kids need to be better rugby players too.

Most importantly, it's about enjoying yourself. Our promise is that every child leaves with a smile, and we'd love to see more kids experiencing that.





**he loves it - learned new skills,
made new friends and most
importantly had lots of fun**



**Total Touch
Academy**



[@totaltouchacademy](https://www.facebook.com/totaltouchacademy)



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JUNIOR NATIONALS

BUILDING THE FUTURE OF THE GAME

This year's England Touch Junior Nationals once again showcased the depth, energy, and promise in the junior game.

With competitions now running from under-12s through to under-17s, the pathway is clearer than ever. Young players are getting opportunities to learn the sport earlier, develop faster, and step confidently into higher age groups and, ultimately, international Touch.

NW coach John Leota, reflecting on his own journey in touch from New Zealand to coaching in England, summed it up perfectly:

"Junior Nationals aren't just about results, they're about connection, friendship, and growth. Our job as coaches is to give players the foundation and skills, so when they move on from our teams they're in a good position to become better players. They learn at U12s, they become competitive at U15s, and by U20s they're already pushing the standard."

The weekend saw some brilliant contests, from nail-biting finals to spirited playoff matches, with every region contributing to the story.

The West Wildcats topped the overall rankings, with strong performances across multiple age groups.

It wasn't only about the medal count. For many teams, it was about building bonds, testing themselves against the best, and creating memories.

Whether it was an U12 side blasting "Eye of the Tiger" before matches, or U17s bouncing back from a tough loss by reconnecting and enjoying the game, the weekend highlighted why this tournament matters.

Above all, the Nationals underlined one thing: England's future in Touch is bright. From the youngest debutants to the seasoned campaigners, this year's players are the foundation of the next World Cup cycle, and beyond.





UNDER 12s DIVISION

U12B | TIGERS ROAR TO THE TITLE

After reaching last year's final, the Tigers went one further this time, carrying out an unbeaten run through the competition.

With nine players returning from last year's side, plus a host of fresh faces making their Nationals debut, the Tigers struck the right balance of experience and new energy.

The whole squad played with a trademark noise and spirit, backed by their Eye of the Tiger anthem blasting from the sidelines.

The Wildcats pushed them all the way in the final, showing why they had been the closest challengers all weekend. Their defense kept the game tight, but the Tigers found just enough in attack to seal the win.

In the bronze medal match, North West Touch edged the South East Taipans 5-4 in another nail-biter, while the South East Sharks grabbed fifth place with a 4-2 win over the Midland Panthers.

 Tigers 3-2 Wildcats



U12G | SAXONS STRIKE GOLD IN HISTORIC FIRST

The U12 Girls division made its debut at this year's Junior Nationals, a landmark moment for the sport and one that showed just how much talent is already coming through at junior level.

The South West Saxons arrived with record numbers in their junior programme after a year of school camps, holiday sessions and fixture Wales. Seven-year-old Sienna Holland, daughter of England legend, Steve Holland, became the youngest ever Saxons representative, proving the region's future looks bright.

Wildcats proved the most consistent side through the pool stage, going unbeaten and showing great balance between attack and defence.

SE Sharks battled their way into the bronze playoff and edged past North West, who despite finishing fourth had plenty of promising moments throughout the weekend.

That left the gold medal showdown to decide the first champions in U12 Girls history. After a tense and closely fought match, it was the South West Saxons who edged the Wildcats by a single score to be crowned the inaugural winners.

 Saxons 1-0 Wildcats

UNDER 14s DIVISION

U14B | NW BULLS CHARGE TO THE TOP

The U14 Boys division was stacked with talent and produced some of the fiercest contests of the whole Nationals.

The Midland Tigers looked untouchable in the pool stage. They went seven from seven, combining a rock-solid defence with slick attack, conceding just 15 tries in the pools. The North West Bulls weren't far behind, dropping only one pool match and racking up an impressive +38 points differential, the highest in the division.

Behind them, the NE Raiders and SE Taipans were evenly matched, both securing four wins and entertaining crowds with end-to-end play.

The playoffs brought the drama.

The Wildcats saw off the Saxons for fifth, while the Broncos edged the Panthers in a tight 7th-place clash. The bronze medal match was another high-scorer, with the Taipans outlasting the Raiders to claim third.

A mouth-watering final between the unbeaten Tigers and the high-flying Bulls.

Many expected it to go down to the wire, but the North West side had other ideas. With MVP Rocco Leulau leading the charge, the NW Bulls powered home, handing the Tigers their first defeat of the weekend to take gold in style.

🏆 North West 6-1 Tigers



U14G | SAXONS DEFEND THEIR CROWN IN STYLE

The U14 Girls division brought plenty of storylines. Saxons coming in as reigning champions, had lost half of last year's winning side to the next age category. Still, they arrived with experience in their ranks, including Atlantic Cup reps, plus exciting new talent ready to make their mark. Add in the flair of Daisy Taylor, tipped as "one to watch," and the Saxons looked more than capable of a repeat run.

The West Wildcats quickly established themselves as the Saxons' main rivals, sweeping aside opposition with sharp attack and a strong defensive unit

SE Sharks locked in third with a strong playoff performance, leaving the showdown between the two heavyweights.

Finals time. Ultimately, the difference came from the Saxons' composure in the closing stages, and fittingly, MVP Imogen Webber played a pivotal role. The final whistle confirmed it: the South West Saxons edged out the Wildcats to retain their title and remain the team to beat in this age group.

🏆 Saxons 5-4 Wildcats



UNDER 17s

DIVISION

U17B | WARRIORS HOLD THEIR NERVE

Strong division, as no team able to cruise through unchallenged.

The North West set the pace, going unbeaten in the pool stage with six wins and a draw. Led by MVP Liam Lawton, who topped the try-scoring charts with 14, their mix of power and speed made them the standout side.

Hot on their heels, the Wildcats racked up six wins, boasting the meanest defence in the age group. The Midland Tigers weren't far behind either, showing their trademark attacking flair to claim third spot, Saxons pushed hard into the top four.

The playoffs produced their share of drama. The Saxons edged the Tigers in a high-scoring bronze medal clash, while the Wildcats Black took 5th with a narrow win over the Taipans. At the bottom end, the Wolves outlasted the Raiders in a lively 7th-place showdown.

Finals footy: The two best sides went head-to-head in a gripping contest, trading tries until the very last play. The decisive moment came in drop off, where Lawton scooped through, finding himself in acres of space, and what seemed like eons of time, finally found Wilkinson, who dotted down and sealed the deal, edging the Wildcats in a one-try thriller to cap an unbeaten campaign.

 NW 6-5 Wildcats





EQUIPPED TO
DO MORE.



U17G | WILDCATS COMPLETE THE THREE-PEAT

All the ingredients: international pedigree, stacked squads, and the added spice of a reigning champion looking to defend its crown. Tigers topped the pool, their depth and firepower were matched by defensive steel, making them the team to beat. Right behind them, Wildcats chalked up five wins of their own, consistency and organisation keeping them in striking distance all weekend. Taipans and North West both pushed into the top four thanks to strong performances from Charlotte Elton and Faye Wilkinson, who tied for the leading try scorers.

The stage was set for the gold medal match everyone had anticipated: What followed was a contest worthy of the occasion, high tempo, big defensive stands, and moments of individual brilliance. Drop off! Hillebrand's shoreside scoop saw her with no support, until her fancy footwork and patient pass to O'Kennedy finished it.

When the final whistle sounded, it confirmed a third straight U17 Girls crown for the West Wildcats, sealing their status as the team to beat. MVP honours rightly went to Eloise Hillebrand, whose composure and leadership shone throughout.

 Wildcats 5–4 Tigers

CHAMPION



up a ball and play! | www.EnglandTouch.org.uk/play

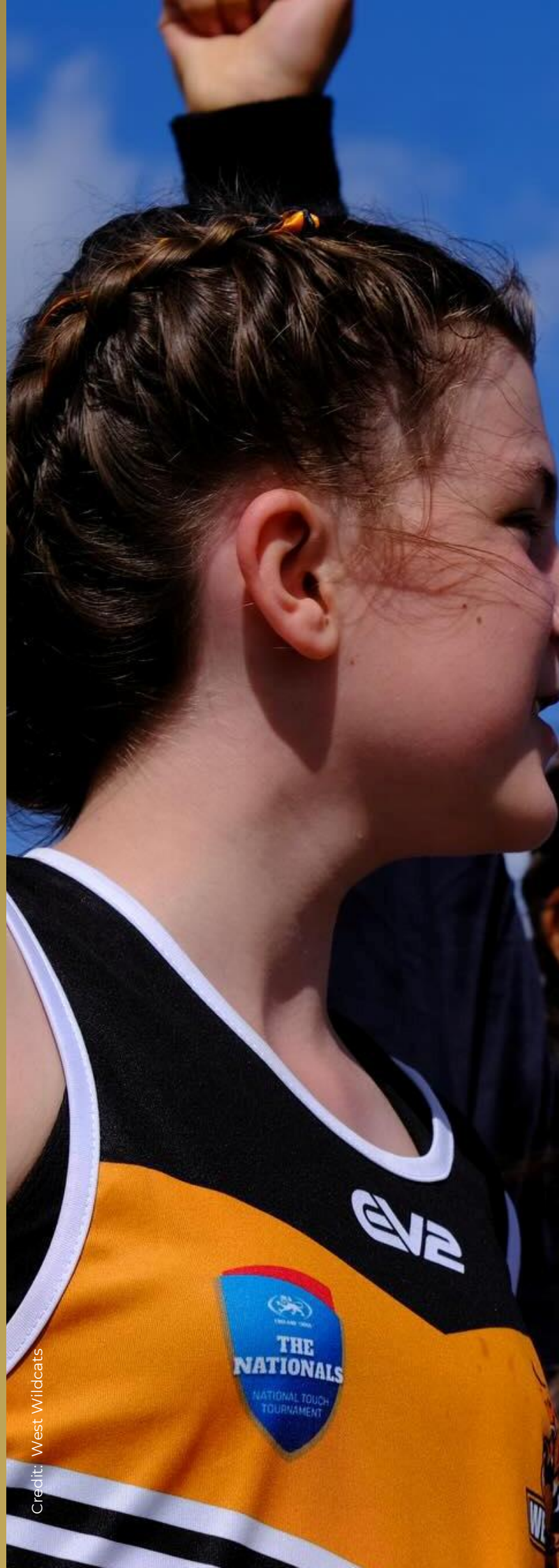


OVERALL WINNERS

ENGLAND JUNIOR NATIONALS



U12B	Silver
U12G	Silver
U14B	Fifth
U14G	Silver
U17B	Silver
U17G	Gold



Credit: West Wildcats



RANKINGS TABLE

	U12B	U12G	U14B	U14G	U17B	U17G	Rank
WEST WILDCATS (A)	2	2	5	2	2	1	1
NORTH WEST (A)	3	4	1		1	4	2
SOUTH WEST SAXONS		1	6	1	3	6	3
MIDLAND TIGERS (A)	1		2	4	4	2	4
SOUTH EAST TAIPANS	4		3		6	3	5
SOUTH EAST SHARKS	5	3		3		5	6
NORTH EAST RAIDERS			4		8		7
NORTH WEST (B)			7		7		8
WEST WILDCATS (B)					5		9
MIDLAND TIGERS (B)	6		8				10

MEDAL TABLE

	GOLD	SILVER	BRONZE	TOTAL
WEST WILDCATS (A)	1	4		5
NORTH WEST (A)	2		1	3
SOUTH WEST SAXONS	2		1	3
MIDLAND TIGERS (A)	1	2		3
SOUTH EAST TAIPANS			2	2
SOUTH EAST SHARKS			2	2





SEATTLE CELEBRATES AS NEW **USA** TOUCH NATIONAL CHAMPIONS ARE CROWNED

The USA Touch National Championships landed in Lacey, Washington, with three days of competition, community, and celebration.

Hosted by Seattle Touch Rugby, the event drew 25 teams from across the U.S., plus visitors from Canada and the Cayman Islands, with nearly 100 matches played.

The competition was played across four divisions: Men's Open, Women's Open, Mixed Open, and Masters (Over-35). From veterans chasing one more medal to debutants making their first mark, the weekend had it all.

From the moment the first whistle blew, the atmosphere felt different. Families lined the sidelines, music and commentary rolled across the fields, and every club brought its own flavour, from New Orleans' bayou grit to Portland's "one club" culture.

"The level of play in our finals was as good as it's ever been. It was a great weekend in Lacey," USA Touch President OJ Hawea



USA TOUCH NATIONALS

MEN'S OPEN: PEAKS GO BACK-TO-BACK

The Men's Open once again delivered the most intense battles of the weekend. With eight teams in the draw, there was no hiding place, every game felt like a playoff.

Peaks Academy showed they're the benchmark, topping their pool, mixing structure with flair and proving they have both the depth and the big-game temperament. In the final, they faced rivals Portland Hunters, a clash that's quickly becoming a Nationals classic.

The game itself lived up to the billing: fast Touch, relentless defence, and both sides refusing to give an inch. Peaks edged the Hunters in a contest that swung back and forth, sealing their second straight title and confirming their status as the team to beat heading into Provo 2026.

Behind them, Los Angeles Royals showcased speed and skill on their way to third, defeating a gritty San Francisco side in the bronze medal playoff. San Diego and New York had moments of brilliance but lacked consistency to push deeper into finals contention, while Austin fought hard in every match but found themselves up against some of the strongest opposition they've faced at Nationals. Canada rounded out the division, giving valuable minutes to new combinations as they continue to develop their U.S. links.

What stood out most wasn't just the quality of the final but the lift across the entire grade. From long balls tries to desperate try-saving touches, the Men's Open showed that the U.S. has a growing pool of talent capable of competing at a higher international level.





MEN'S OPEN

GOLD



PEAKS
ACADEMY

10 - 7



PORTLAND
HUNTERS

BRONZE



LOS
ANGELES

8 - 7



SAN
DIEGO



USA TOUCH NATIONALS

PORTLAND RECLAIM THE CROWN

The Women's Open showcased speed, skill, and a growing player pool that signals a bright future.

After a year off the top, Portland Hunters stormed back to reclaim gold, defeating Peaks Academy in the final.

The Hunters looked organised and clinical throughout, with their One Club philosophy shining through as their women's side set the tone for the whole organisation.

Seattle delighted their home crowd by claiming bronze after a tight battle with San Francisco, capping a strong campaign that highlighted their progress in recent seasons.

New York and Los Angeles Royals both brought energy but couldn't quite crack the top three, while Canada continued their development journey.

The real surprise package was the Cayman Islands, who returned to the competition with one of the youngest squads of the weekend.

Their fearless style earned them plenty of support from the sidelines, and while results didn't always go their way, they left a clear impression that they'll be a force in the years ahead.

Overall, the division had the feel of a competition on the rise, deeper, faster, and increasingly competitive.





WOMEN'S OPEN

GOLD



PORTLAND
HUNTERS

7 - 1



PEAKS
ACADEMY

BRONZE



SEATTLE

5 - 2



SAN
FRANCISCO

USA TOUCH NATIONALS



NEW ORLEANS MAKE THEIR MARK

The Mixed Open might have been the smallest draw of the weekend, but it delivered some of the loudest moments.

New Orleans brought their trademark flair and energy, sweeping through the round-robin and saving their best for the final. Against the Cayman Islands, they turned on the style to secure an 11–7 win and a historic first Nationals gold for the club.

The mix of speed, creativity, and team spirit had the sidelines buzzing, and the victory marked a breakthrough moment for NOLA Touch.

Chicago fought hard for bronze, proving themselves as reliable contenders in the division, while Fort Lauderdale rounded out the pool with determination and plenty of highlights of their own.

The Mixed grade continues to provide a different flavour, fast, unpredictable, and full of momentum swings.

This year, it was New Orleans' time to shine.





MIXED OPEN

GOLD



NEW
ORLEANS

11 - 7



CAYMAN
ISLANDS

BRONZE



CHICAGO

4 - 2



FT.
LAUDERDALE





USA

TOUCH

NATIONALS

SEATTLE STRIKE GOLD AT HOME

The Masters division once again proved that experience counts for plenty at Nationals.

Hosts Seattle came in determined to perform on home turf, and they didn't disappoint.

Backed by a loud crowd, they went unbeaten across the weekend and sealed gold with a commanding win over New York in the final.

Portland claimed bronze, adding to their club's overall medal haul, while Peaks Academy and Fort Lauderdale showed the grit and camaraderie that makes Masters one of the most competitive and spirited brackets.

From bronze in 2023, to silver in 2024 and finally taking Gold in 2025.

For Seattle, this was more than just a medal. It was a statement of identity, culture, and connection, proof that their club is flourishing both on and off the field.





MEN'S MASTERS

GOLD



SEATTLE

6 - 1



NEW YORK

BRONZE



PORTLAND

11 - 4



PEAK
ACADEMY



OVERALL WINNERS

USA TOUCH NATIONALS



MO	Silver
WO	Gold
XO	-
M35	Bronze



Credit: K.Breen



RANKINGS TABLE

	MO	WO	XO	M35	Rank
PORTLAND	2	1		3	1
PEAKS ACADEMY	1	2		4	2
SEATTLE		3		1	3
NEW ORLEANS			1		4
NEW YORK	5	7		2	5
CAYMAN ISLANDS		8	2		6
LOS ANGELES	3	5			7
CHICAGO			3		8
SAN FRANCISCO	7	4			9
CANADA	6	6			10
SAN DIEGO	4				11
FT. LAUDERDALE			4	5	12
AUSTIN	8				13





MEDAL TABLE

	GOLD	SILVER	BRONZE	TOTAL
PORTLAND	1	1	1	3
PEAKS ACADEMY	1	1		2
SEATTLE	1		1	2
NEW ORLEANS	1			1
NEW YORK		1		1
CAYMAN ISLANDS		1		1
LOS ANGELES			1	1
CHICAGO			1	1



EDINBURGH OPEN 2025

FESTIVAL SPIRIT MEETS TOP-CLASS TOUCH

Since its launch in 2008, the Edinburgh Open has steadily grown into one of Europe's most exciting and respected mixed open Touch tournaments.

With the exception of 2020, when Covid halted play, and 2024, this event has been a fixture of the calendar, building year on year in both quality and reputation. The 2025 edition, held on Saturday 13th September, showed exactly why the Open is so beloved: world-class Touch, an unbeatable festival atmosphere, and the kind of social energy that makes the sport truly unique.

This year's tournament took place at the University of Edinburgh playing fields, a superb venue that offered pristine pitches and the perfect stage for the skills on display. The standard of Touch has never been higher, with spectacular tries, slick handling, and full-stretch finishes thrilling players and spectators alike.

To captain this group of players in Edinburgh was special, the quality in the squad and the spirit we played with made it an unforgettable day (and night)

At the sharp end, it was BBR who lifted the trophy. Known Europe-wide for their prowess, the invitational club has enjoyed success across the continent for more than 15 years, and in Edinburgh they reaffirmed their reputation.

With players from Ireland, Scotland, Wales, and France, and captained by Scotland Women's Open legend Hannah Crisp, BBR were ruthless in their pool and knock out matches before overcoming Big Bang in a superb final.

Big Bang, ably led by the little general that is Christophe Lafourcade and featuring a strong German core, pushed BBR all the way in a high-quality contest, but the champions' consistency and cohesion proved decisive.



Yet the beauty of the Edinburgh Open is that it's about much more than just the trophy. The tournament reflected the growth of the club game in Scotland, with four Glasgow sides (Glasgow Lions, Glasgow Chickens, Centurions Nero & Centurions Nerva) competing strongly and showing just how far the sport has come in the west.

Edinburgh University also impressed, building on a strong year in BUCS competition to hold their own against established senior teams.

It was also fantastic to see Galaxy Scotland, stalwarts of the Edinburgh Open, competing with two teams this year, a testament to their enduring strength and influence on the game.

There were plenty of new stories too. For the first time, the Open welcomed Revolution Touch from Birmingham, a bit of a dark horse, they arrived as an unknown quantity but left as Plate champions, playing with skill and confidence well beyond their years thanks to a youthful, exciting squad.

Meanwhile, the Scottish Stags, a team of players drawn from the Scottish Touch Academy rather than an established club, came away with the Bowl title, proving the depth of talent developing north of the border and highlighting a bright future for Scottish Touch.

Among the favourites heading into the tournament were the Goblins, a side packed with Scotland Men's Open stars including Finlay Lockhart, James Tweedie, and Rory Grant. Injuries to their female cohort dealt them a tough hand on the day, but even so they pushed Big Bang hard in a dramatic semi-final, falling just short in a 6-4 thriller that had the crowd on edge right until the final whistle.

"We were disappointed not to make the final, but the semi was a brilliant game of Touch. Big Bang were clinical when it mattered."

- Finlay Lockhart, Goblins



EDINBURGH OPEN 2025

Of course, no Edinburgh Open would be complete without its trademark festival feel. From the sidelines buzzing with colour and support to the legendary after-party, the event once again struck the perfect balance of serious competition and social celebration.

This year's post-tournament party was a riot of colour, creativity, and laughter, with many teams adopting fancy dress themes for the night. Costumes ranging from fairytale characters to retro throwbacks lit up the dancefloor, with players showing just as much flair off the pitch as they had on it. We're not sure anyone has ever seen Gandalf pull some of those moves off before. The camaraderie after the fierce competition on the field was plain to see, with players from across Europe sharing stories, songs, and dances late into the wee hours.

It's this blend of competitive fire and off-field connection that makes the Edinburgh Open such a standout event.

A huge part of the tournament's success was down to organiser Eddie Sanjuan, who has been contributing to the development of Touch in Scotland since 2004.

With his experienced hand, the Edinburgh Open ran smoothly from first tap-off to final whistle, striking that perfect balance between slick organisation and relaxed festival charm.

Equally, the contribution of the referees cannot be overstated. A wonderful contingent travelled from across the country, including from as far away as Inverness, to ensure games flowed with fairness and spirit. Their commitment underpinned the high standards on display throughout the day.

"It's the combination of high-quality rugby and genuine community spirit that makes this tournament so special."

- Tom Chrisp, Referee

The Edinburgh Open 2025 was, in every sense, a success: elite play, new stories, colourful celebration, and a community spirit that makes it one of the crown jewels of the European Touch calendar.

Congratulations to BBR, worthy champions, and to every team, referee, and volunteer who made the day so special.

Roll on 2026.



"IT'S AMAZING TO SEE HOW THE STANDARD HAS GROWN SINCE 2008, EVERY YEAR IT FEELS LIKE THE LEVEL JUST GOES UP ANOTHER NOTCH."

Eddie Sanjuan, event organiser

TOUCH CHAMPS

A NEW ERA BEGINS

With Singapore's Turf City no longer available due to redevelopment, the event embraced a new venue for 2025.

And while smaller in scale than the legendary SITK, this year's STC event showed that the appetite for top-class Touch is alive and well.

Over two days, 19 team, including four from Hong Kong, and one from the UAE, went head-to-head over 75 games, supported by 29 referees who kept the action flowing.

MEN'S DIVISION | GHOSTS SHINE BRIGHTEST

The division delivered non-stop drama across two days, with local teams mixing it up against some of the region's toughest travellers.

HK Ghosts set the early pace, sweeping through the pool stage with a string of dominant wins. With a mix of composure and firepower, they looked every inch the side to beat.

Legiste put together an impressive pool campaign too that included double-digit victories over Bucks Desperados and FFP.

Todaks 6 Pack ground out results in style. MBFC Amen and the Honey Badgers also showed their bite, each notching key wins to stay in the mix.

Ghosts were clinical, dispatching MBFC Amen 5-1 in their semi final, whilst Legiste found their rhythm, powering past Honey Badgers 6-2 to book their shot at the title.

FINALS TIME

Both sides trading momentum in a fast-paced, physical contest.

But the Ghosts ruthless finishing and watertight defence, pulled clear to seal a win and lift the Cup.

 HK Ghosts 4-1 Legiste



Credit: @Thatparticularshot



WOMEN'S DIVISION | Todaks Amber take the spoils

Split into two pools, and both delivered some cracking contests. Pool A was a war of attrition, with ZOOM and MBFC Alpacas finishing tied at the top on 13 points apiece. ZOOM edged first place on try difference.

Sprite (3rd) and NUS (4th) stayed in the mix with key wins but couldn't quite keep pace, while Zion and TRC Amazons showed flashes of quality but had to settle for the bottom spots.

Pool B saw Todaks Amber set the tone early, unbeaten through their four games and conceding just three tries all day.

Legiste were right on their tail, also finishing with three wins, while NTU's spirited performances earned them third.

Raven Touch Football squeezed into the knockout rounds in fourth, leaving Orcas Blacks searching for their first win.

The quarter-finals went to script: ZOOM squeezed past Raven, MBFC Alpacas proved too strong for NTU, Legiste dispatched Sprite, and Todaks Amber flexed with a commanding 5-0 win over NUS.



That set up two mouth-watering semi-finals. ZOOM pushed hard but were undone by a clinical Legiste, who ran out 3-1 winners. On the other side, Todaks Amber edged a tense 3-2 contest against the Alpacas to book their spot in the showpiece.

The final was all about composure. Both sides defended superbly, but Todaks Amber found the key openings when it mattered, sealing a victory over Legiste to claim the Cup title.

 Todaks 2-0 Legiste



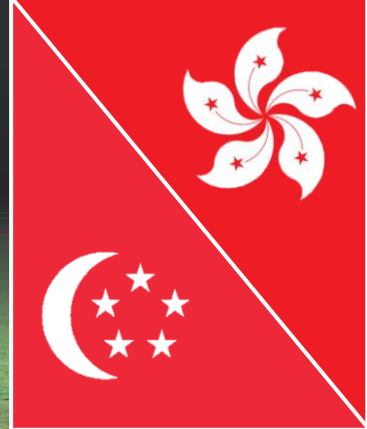
TOUCH CHAMPS





TEST SERIES

Over two weekends in September, Singapore hosted Hong Kong China in a six-category Test Series, with MO, WO, XO, W27, X30, M40. Across both competitive and friendly fixtures, fans were treated to 18 matches of top-class international Touch.



MEN'S OPEN

TEST 1



9 - 6



SINGAPORE

HONG KONG
CHINA

TEST 2



11 - 11



SINGAPORE

HONG KONG
CHINA

TEST 3



8 - 7



SINGAPORE

HONG KONG
CHINA

WOMEN'S OPEN

TEST 1



6 - 7



SINGAPORE

HONG KONG
CHINA

TEST 2



8 - 4



SINGAPORE

HONG KONG
CHINA

TEST 3



6 - 3



SINGAPORE

HONG KONG
CHINA



WOMEN'S 27

MEN'S 30

TEST 1

TEST 1



12 - 3

5 - 5

SINGAPORE

HONG KONG
CHINA

SINGAPORE

HONG KONG
CHINA

TEST 2

TEST 2



7 - 5

6 - 4

SINGAPORE

HONG KONG
CHINA

SINGAPORE

HONG KONG
CHINA

TEST 3

TEST 3



6 - 3

6 - 4

SINGAPORE

HONG KONG
CHINA

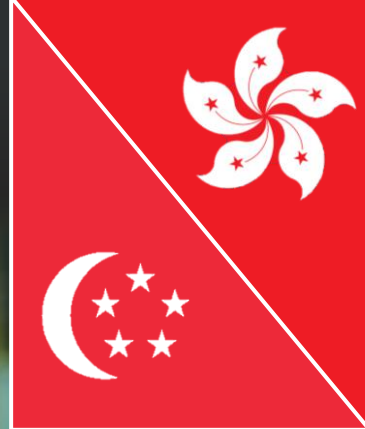
SINGAPORE

HONG KONG
CHINA

Credit: @Thatparticularshot



TEST SERIES



MIXED 30

TEST 1



15 - 5



SINGAPORE

HONG KONG
CHINA

TEST 2



9 - 4



SINGAPORE

HONG KONG
CHINA

TEST 3



7 - 4



SINGAPORE

HONG KONG
CHINA

MEN'S 40

TEST 1



9 - 3



SINGAPORE

HONG KONG
CHINA

TEST 2



9 - 3



SINGAPORE

HONG KONG
CHINA

TEST 3



5 - 2



SINGAPORE

HONG KONG
CHINA

OVERALL, Singapore took all six categories, four as official test series and two in friendly fixtures.

The Men's and Women's Open contests were the most competitive, with narrow margins and high drama across all games. Hong Kong pushed hard but couldn't quite crack the hosts across the two weekends.

In age-grade and mixed categories, Singapore's depth and cohesion shone through, highlighting the strength of their development pathways.



Men's Open | Singapore edge a thriller

The Men's Open series was as tight as they come. SGP struck first with a 9–6 win, before HKC dug deep to earn an 11–11 draw in Game 2. That set up a winner-takes-all decider on Sunday, where Singapore held their nerve to close out an 8–7 victory and take the series 2–0 (with one draw).

Women's Open | Hosts bounce back

Hong Kong drew first blood with a narrow 7–6 win in the opener, but Singapore responded in style. The home side's defence tightened up and they claimed the next two matches 8–4 and 6–3, securing the series 2–1.

Women's 27 | Singapore dominate

The Women's 27s were all business, sweeping the series 3–0.

A statement 12–3 win in the first test set the tone, followed by two controlled performances (7–5 and 6–3) to underline their superiority.

Men's 30 | Clinical in the clutch

Another close-fought battle saw Singapore prevail 2–0 (with one draw). After sharing points in a 5–5 opener, the hosts pulled away with two back-to-back 6–4 victories to claim the series.

Mixed 30 | Friendly but fierce

Although listed as a friendly, the Mixed 30s still produced some sharp touch.

Singapore swept all three games (15–5, 9–4, 7–4), showing strong combinations and finishing ability throughout.

Men's 40 | Experience tells

The most senior group on show, the Men's 40s, also ended as a clean sweep for Singapore. A pair of 9–3 wins on Saturday was followed by a 5–2 victory on Sunday, rounding off a commanding 3–0 result.



INTER INSULARS



MO



JERSEY

13 - 4



GUERNSEY

M45



JERSEY

5 - 6



GUERNSEY

WO



JERSEY

10 - 1



GUERNSEY

XO



JERSEY

14 - 2



GUERNSEY



MEN'S OPEN

It was the Men's Open which tapped off the 1st game of the 2025 Inter-insular Championship at Footes Lane, Guernsey. Jersey fielded a youthful side with 9 players aged 17 or younger and from the outset the visitors put the hosts under pressure with a high energy, aggressive defence.

Led by MVP, Archie Le Maistre the Jersey team's speed and direct play was too much for Guernsey to handle with Jersey running out 13-4 winners after a dominant display.

WOMEN'S OPEN

The Jersey team with a blend of seasoned players and youth debutants made life very difficult for their Guernsey opponents keeping them pinned in their own half for multiple possessions.

A solo effort by 15-year-old, Cara Howe, side stepping two players before outpacing the Guernsey defenders to the try line, rubberstamped a convincing 10-1 win for Jersey.

MEN'S MASTERS

Jersey Men's 45 team vs Guernsey's Men's 35 team. Two evenly matched teams battled it out for 40 minutes, which resulted in a 6-5 win for Guernsey, who scored two long distance, break away tries.

MIXED OPEN

The final game of the day saw Jersey's Mixed Open team live up to it's top ten world ranking, earnt at last year's Touch World Cup, by putting on a real show of attacking play, running out 14-2 winners. The game's MVP was Jersey's Jason Smith-Johnson who exhibited some solo attacking brilliance, scoring 5 tries.

Reflecting on the games, Jersey's Director of Coaching, Mark Knight said:

"Touch in Jersey has really progressed in the past 2-3 years, with all three teams adopting policies and practices seen at the highest level of the modern game. Our high energy press really allowed us to dominate the three Open's matches, giving us the platform to run some exciting attacking plays.

It was so pleasing to see so many youngsters come through from all the Youth Touch being played on the island now. Those players coupled with Jersey having two of the top players in Europe right now in Anushan Elanco & Cole Graham, made Jersey a formidable force for this year's games.

The hosts battled hard all the way to the final whistle and despite the scorelines, none of the games were a procession".



OT7 PROFILES WITH PURPOSE

GARY HARDING



If you've been around Touch long enough, you'll know names and faces that seem to pop up in different corners of the globe.

One of those is **Gary Harding.**

From Palmerston North to Portland, Cook Islands to Cayman Islands, Gary's journey is about more than just playing and coaching, it's about connection, culture, and carrying his people with him.

We caught up with Gary to talk about where it all began, the wild ride his Touch career has taken him on, and why his iwi (tribe) will always be at the heart of what he does.





PLAYING CAREER

- 1999 – Manawatu U21 2000 – Te Tairāwhiti U21 2003 – NZ Police Open Mixed, Wellington Open Mixed, Wellington M30, Wellington M35
- 2011 – Otago M30
- 2012 – Waikato M30
- 2015 – USA M30 – TWC
- 2015 – Taranaki XS, Māori Touch Nationals
- 2016 – Tauranga Moana XS, Māori Touch Nationals
- 2017 – Ngāti Porou XS, Māori Touch Nationals
- 2017 – Wellington XO
- 2000–2018 – Māori Touch Nationals for various iwi
- 2011–2019 – Tu Meke Touch Club (USA), Nationals in San Francisco & ESPN Wide World of Sports, Orlando

COACHING CAREER

- 2009–2011 – Gisborne Boys' High School (NZ)
- 2011–2019 – USA Touch
 - Portland Hunters MO – Nationals
 - M35 – TWC 2019
- 2019 – Cayman Islands Touch (preparation for USA Nationals, later plans for WCs)
- 2019–2023 – Victoria Storm W40 (Australia)
- 2024 – Sydney Scorpions XS (Australia)
- 2024 – Cook Islands MO – Pacific Cup
- 2024 – Cook Islands M30 – TWC

How did Touch start for you?

Touch really started for me back in Palmy after college. We had a team called *Ngāti by Nature*, that played in the local Kia Ora module out of Monrad Park. The team was made up mostly of Ngāti Porou people who had moved to Palmerston North, so it felt like a little slice of home away from home.

For me, it wasn't just about the game it was about whakapapa (genealogy) and whanaungatanga (kinship/connection). Running out with cousins and friends from the same iwi gave me a sense of belonging. That's when I realised Touch could be more than just a sport; it was a way to carry our identity and mana (prestige, authority) onto the field.

Your time with USA Touch was a big chapter. How did that come about?

It's funny, because at first I turned it down. My cousin George Jahnke asked me if I'd head over to the US to coach, but the timing wasn't right. A few years later, another cousin, TK Moeke, who had played for USA at the 2011 World Cup in Scotland, asked me again. This time, I thought: *kei te wā tika* (the time is right).

I first went over to Phoenix and linked up with the Tu Meke club at the nationals in San Francisco. After that, the next three years of nationals were at the ESPN Wide World of Sports in Orlando, Florida.

From there, I got the honour of captaining the USA Men's 30s at the 2015 World Cup. To stand there as captain, wearing another country's colours but carrying my whakapapa with me, was a real privilege. After that World Cup, I was asked to step into coaching and help develop the sport across the States in the lead-up to 2019.

Along the way, I connected with the Portland Hunters, spent a month living there, and coached them to a USA national title. That journey showed me the power of taking Māori values like kotahitanga (unity) and applying them in totally new environments.



You also linked up with Jamaica Touch at one point, right?

Yeah, that was a one-off in 2017 but one of those cool “Touch whānau” moments.

Jamaica came over to the USA Nationals as an invitational side, with a few Irish lads mixed in. They asked me to jump in to play against Galaxy NZ, the club I love dearly. It was light-hearted but meaningful.

There I was, playing alongside Jamaican and Irish boys in America, against a New Zealand side. That’s the global whānau of Touch in action. We had laughs, shared kai (food), and forged friendships that still stand today.

FOR ME, THAT’S THE ESSENCE OF TOUCH: KOTAHITANGA ACROSS BORDERS.



In 2024, you were coaching the Cook Islands at the World Cup. How did that unfold?

That opportunity came through my friends Tere and Jo at NTLs. They asked if I’d consider coaching Cook Islands Touch heading into the World Cup. For me, it wasn’t just about another coaching gig, it was deeply personal.

My best friend and brother, Tere Vaetoru, passed away years ago during a storm back in the islands. His whānau had whāngai’d (adopted) me growing up, and I’d always wanted to honour that connection. Coaching the Cook Islands was my way of carrying Tere’s wairua (spirit) with me and giving back to his people.

The World Cup itself was incredible. The Cook Islands contingent brought this positive, infectious vibe everywhere they went. Their haka, their singing, their aroha (love) it was uplifting. Being a part of that culture on the world stage was something I’ll never forget.





Your Mataora is a powerful statement of identity. What does it mean to you on and off the field?

EXACTLY THAT! IT'S A STATEMENT OF MY IDENTITY

I am a proud Ngati Porou tribal man from a small place on the East Coast of New Zealand called Hiruharama, my sacred Mountain Hikurangi is the first place in the world to welcome in the rays of Tamanui te Ra each morning.

I am a direct descendant of the famous Voyager Maui who has connections through all of the islands of the south pacific ocean.

As a young boy I always dreamt or had visions of me having my Mataora as an adult but never told anyone.

My mother was the first in our family to reintroduce our cultural traditions and receive her moko kauae in the early 2000s when moko was being revitalised.

Fast forward to the beginning of 2016 while my beloved mother was on her death bed she asked if I would receive my Mataora as a way of continuing that our cultural traditions and connections to our tribe stay strong.

Not long after her passing while in wananga (traditional house of learning) with Tohunga Mark Kopua I was invited to receive the sacred markings as a way to acknowledge my mother and the passing of the mantle.



We have a saying in our culture:

***“KA MATE HE TETE KURA,
KA ORA HE TETE KURA”***

when one fern frond dies, another grows in its place.

It signifies the cyclical nature of life and leadership, offering hope and continuity, especially during times of loss or change.

The phrase symbolises new beginnings and the succession of leaders, where the passing of an elder makes way for a new generation.

My mother received her moko kauae at our family homestead in Tolaga Bay, by Tohunga Mark Kopua. That was also where she took her last breath, so fittingly was the exact same place where I received my Mataora.





Ngāti Porou Touch – what did that mean to you?

For 15 years, I'd gone to the Māori Touch Nationals but always ended up playing for other iwi. I loved those opportunities, but there was always this itch to stand under my own iwi's banner.

So in 2017, I put the call out to some of the Ngāti boys and girls, and we pulled together a Senior Mixed team. We went unbeaten in the round robin but missed the final on points difference. The results didn't matter as much as the kaupapa (purpose).

For once, we were playing as Ngāti Porou, carrying our own whakapapa onto the field. It wasn't about winning, it was about reclaiming our place.

Cayman Islands is a more unusual chapter...

That came off the back of Portland. After we won the USA title, a Kiwi guy, Scott McCarty, asked me to help Cayman Touch. Easy yes, who's turning down four weeks on the beach, coaching at night? We worked hard, got them set for USA Nationals, and had plans for the 2024 World Cup. Then COVID hit: travel stopped, flights were sky-high, and Cayman just couldn't afford it.

They came back in 2024, but I was already with the Cook Islands. I didn't want to leave them stuck, so I connected them with my mate Shannon Warren, who coached them at the TWC. He did a fantastic job, and I was proud to see Cayman get their shot on the world stage.

What's the thread that ties it all together?

For me, it's always been about **whānau, whakapapa, and whanaungatanga**.

Touch is just the vehicle, it's the relationships and the cultural connections that matter. Touch has taken me around the world: the US, Caribbean, Australia, the Pacific. But no matter where I've gone, I've carried Ngāti Porou with me.

That's the beauty

**KEI HEA AU HAERE,
KA KAWEA TE IWI**

**(wherever I go, I
carry the tribe).**





SET OF SIX

GARY HARDING

Pt1

You've got six touches, make 'em count.

1 First Touch

What's been the standout moment in your Touch journey?

So many! Winning Super 8 Final with Gisborne High School, Winning USA Nationals in 2018, my stint with Cayman Island Touch 2019, Cook Island Touch 2014.

2 Second Touch

Player, coach, mentor: which role tests you the most?

Playing at my age definitely pushes me the hardest. The young ones skill set, touch IQ and speed is unreal.

I love coaching and developing Touch across the world. I love learning and being a student of the game.

My favourite would be being a mentor, watching players develop into not only great athletes who are succeeding on the international sporting stage, but also seeing them grow into great people is a true testament.

3 Third Touch

How have the different environments shaped your approach to the game?

I've both played and coached at all levels of the game, from grass roots development level to the elite level at multiple World Cups and one thing always rings through.

Touch is a simple game, keep it simple and focus on getting the basics right, and then doing them at an elite level.

Secondly, always be a student of the game. Our beautiful game is always evolving





4 Fourth Touch

Coaching the Cook Islands men's sides at the World Cup, what did that experience mean?

I originally wanted to be apart of Cook Island Touch to honour my cousin, Tere and his family (The Vaetoru anau), after he passed away at a young age on the islands during cyclone Martin in 1997.

But also, as an indigenous man making that connection between the NZ Māori and Cook Island Māori people culturally was spiritually amazing.

5 Fifth Touch

Pre-game ritual?

Nothing out the gate or flash, just good old school 90s Hip Hop and RnB music.

6 Sixth Touch

Your dream starting six: any players, any era. Who makes your team?

Damn thats a tough one.

- 1) **Peter Walters** aka Mr Touch, great friend and mentor
- 2) **George Jahnke**. The man that introduced me to the game many moons ago (Ngati by Nature)
- 3) **Charles Sanderson** USA's Mr Touch, started off as bitter rivals, then had the pleasure of coaching the bro and becoming a great friend for life.
- 4) **Craig Martin** USA (there is no Charles without his mahi dawg Craig. Portlands finest.
- 5) **Haratio Edwards**. Cook Islands. had the pleasure of coaching H at the Pacific Cup. A name for the future. His work ethic at the 2024 WC was unreal.
- 6) **Iraia Nukunuku-Davis**. An up and coming future star, a young fulla I am currently mentoring that has the ability to go places , always willing to learn, always asks the right questions and is very committed to bettering himself



TOUCH NEW ZEALAND

PERFORMANCE COACHING CONFERENCE

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Touch Blacks Player



Matt Sinclear

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Ngawai Hawera

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Elizah Ward

Touch Blacks Coach



AJ Purnell

Touch NZ Performance Ref Advisory



Michael Cavanagh

Touch Blacks Coach



Manaia Wauldby

Touch NZ Player



Tiv Guthrie

7th Touch - Ex-Touch Black



Dr. Rahul Das

Touch Blacks - Mens Coach



Peter McIntyre

Touch Blacks - Womens Coach



Peter Walters

Touch Blacks - Advisor



Luke Chapman

Touch Masters Coach

13-14 September 2025 - Auckland

www.touchnz.co.nz



TOUCH NZ PERFORMANCE COACHING CONFERENCE

Every year, Touch NZ brings coaches together for a special opportunity to learn, connect, and be inspired by some of the very best in the game. This year's conference was all about growing knowledge, building confidence, and sharpening the tools needed to coach at the highest levels, whether that's in top-end modules, provincial programmes, or national representative environments.

Across 12 jam-packed hours over two days, coaches explored the art of coaching, evolving game trends, positional specialisation, and practical workshops designed to strengthen performance programmes.

Guided by Touch NZ pathway leads, high-performance experts, and specialist facilitators, the conference featured 10 incredible presenters working alongside 25 coaches from across Aotearoa.

Among the line-up were icons of the game including Mr. Touch himself, Peter Walters, Touch Blacks Women's Coach Peter McIntyre, and current Men's Open Captain Matt Sinclair.

As always, the real magic came not just from the presentations, but from the connections made in the room. Coaches left with new insights, fresh ideas, and, most importantly, new friendships.

As one attendee put it...

"It's always a great feeling when you've talked to people for the first time, and you leave feeling like old friends."



A FEW GOLDEN NUGGETS FROM THE WEEKEND

- Be a good person first and you'll go far. Great coaches are great people who care first.
Luke Chapman
- Use game footage and creative training activities to grow your players' success opportunities, they'll thank you for it.
Dr. Rahul Das
- Stats matter, especially when it comes to understanding penalties. Help the ref help us.
AJ Purnell

The aim is for the energy, passion, and knowledge shared over the weekend will now ripple back through communities, inspiring the next wave of players and coaches across the country.

80% of success is showing up” We all have reasons why we can’t attend a course or event. I highly recommend you take any opportunity to be around like-minded people..... the odds are you will thank yourself for it!

**George Jahnke – Touch NZ
Community Coaching Manager**



LUXEMBOURG PLAYS FOR A CAUSE



September saw the 24th edition of Luxembourg's much-loved annual Touch tournament – and it was more than just a day of Touch.

Since kicking off back in 2001, the event has always been about community, connection, and giving something back. This year was no different, with over €2000 raised for the Omega 90 hospice.

Sixteen teams rolled out, split into family and adult pools, showing off the side of touch we love most – inclusivity. Mixed teams, young and old, first-timers and veterans – all taking to the field together.

Music pumping, Mettwurst grilling, laughter spilling over the sidelines, and Touch being played in the best spirit.

The local rugby scene was flying the flag too, showing the sport is finding strong roots in the Grand Duchy.

Terre Rouges took home the honours on the field – but everyone agreed the real win was the support shown for Omega 90.

“A fantastic day for community sport. Families playing together, smiles all around. Big credit to the organisers – they nailed it.”

Organiser Joe Lister couldn't have said it better:

“Whether you're into the sport or not, it's about showing up, having fun, and meeting people. Luxembourg's multicultural, fun environment makes days like this special – and if we can make a difference at the same time, even better.”



SIX DARTS TOUCH SERIES EXPANDS WITH INTERNATIONAL EDITION

Arroyo de la encomienda, Valladolid, played host to the first large-scale international edition of the Six Darts Touch Series, welcoming **11 teams from England, Spain, and Portugal.**

The event marked a milestone for the tournament, blending competitive action with the unique camaraderie that defines the sport of Touch Rugby.

From the opening matches, the atmosphere was both spirited and friendly. While each side aimed to showcase their skills on the field, the true hallmark of the day was the sense of cooperation between teams.

When squads found themselves short on numbers, opponents were quick to lend a hand. Notable examples included a combined Getxo Touch and Osos Oviedo side, Mallorca Rebels fielding reinforcements from local club El Salvador, and Banbury Saxons integrating new Arroyo Alligators players into their ranks.

The festival-like mood carried throughout the day as players and supporters mingled, swapping stories and enjoying the shared celebration of the sport.

That spirit extended well beyond the pitch, with the post-tournament meal offering another opportunity for international friendships to grow, an enduring tradition in Touch Rugby.

Organisers and participants alike praised the seamless coordination of the event. Special recognition was given to Mark from Arroyo Alligators for his role in bringing the tournament to life, as well as to the Ayuntamiento of Arroyo de la Encomienda for their support in hosting.

In the end, it was Académica Touch Rugby who lifted the trophy, earning congratulations from all in attendance.

The full roster of competing teams included Mallorca Rebels, Pakaru Touch, Arroyo Alligators Touch, Intocables Cantabria, Osos Touch, C.R. Ingenieros Soria Touch, Banbury Saxons Touch, Getxo Touch, Braga Rugby Touch, and Agrária Touch Rugby.

The success of this edition leaves little doubt that the Six Darts Touch Series is heading in the right direction.

Next stop Getxo Bilbao on the 25th of October 2025.



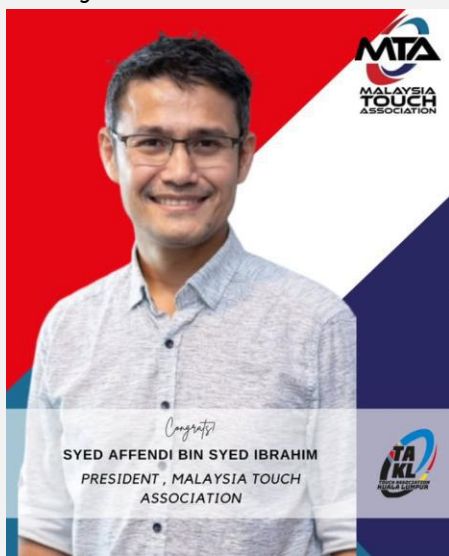


QUICK SNIPPETS

Malaysia Touch have got a new board.

The MTA held its 2025 AGM on 13 September, presenting the 2024 reports and electing a new committee for 2025–2027.

Thank you to the outgoing team (2023–2025) for their service, congratulations to the new leadership. Welcome to Syed Affendi Bin Ibrahim on taking up the mantle. Here's to driving touch forward in Malaysia.



New leadership for Touch Portugal training

A strengthened structure with two key positions. Filipe Pacheco brings a decade of Touch experience and 25 years as a college lecturer. He'll oversee national training plans.



Joining him is Pedro Brites, a level 3 referee with international experience, Pedro will drive ref development, update rule applications, and promote fair play across the game. Together, the duo bring experience, vision, and passion to support the growth of touch in Portugal.



TFA Championships set for shake-up in 2026

Touch Football Australia has confirmed a refreshed format for The Championships from 2026, following community feedback and review.

The flagship event will return to four days, with finals on Saturday, and Opens/20s divisions reverting to full 20-minute halves in line with international standards. Masters and All Abilities teams will also see expanded player numbers, boosting participation while managing player load.

Further consultation is underway ahead of a full independent review later in 2026, with the changes designed to balance growth, pathways, and the event experience.



Redlands will again host the Queensland Junior State Cup in 2026 and 2028

The 30th anniversary tournament has now been locked in for July 9–11, 2026. The 2024 edition delivered a \$5.6 million boost to the local economy, drawing more than 12,000 visitors a day and showcasing over 250 teams, 3,000 athletes and hundreds of referees, coaches and managers.

From just 50 teams back in 1996 to a projected 280 in 2026, the Junior State Cup has become Queensland's biggest Touch event and a key pathway for young players. For many, it's the carnival that sparks lifelong involvement in the sport – and a highlight circled on the calendar every year.



What a day for Swiss Touch!

The National finals took place with 165 players, 24 games, 2 divisions and 2 fields of non-stop action from start to finish.

Cup Champions

- 1 Bern
- 2 Zürich Geezers
- 3 Zug



Liverpool Otters run inter-club comp.

An awesome time was had across the club at pseudo club World Cup tournament! After some super close games with plenty of cool tries, it was the green team "Super Schills" that lifted the Otter Trophy



Big Bang take a historic win in Berlin

For the 11th time in a row, Big Bang took the spoils in the recent Touch Berlin German Champs event, demonstrating unbelievable longevity and leadership. Congrats!



Queb Touch Cup 2025

The annual tournament took place in Montreal under a cloudy sky hidden by smiles!

The Queb Touch Cup was a great success for the club.

Congrats to the winners

- 1 - 3 doors, 2 goats, 1 car
- 2 - Glorious Hong Kong
- 3 - Touch Norris



UPCOMING EVENTS LIST

Saint Nicolas tournament

- 📅 29 November 2025
- 📍 Gent Rugby Club, Belgium
- 💰 €450 per team
- 👤 Mixed
- 🔗 [link](#)



38th Anniversary Tournamament

- 📅 20 December 2025
- 📍 Wellington, NZ
- 💰 £150 per team
- 👤 Mixed
- 🔗 galaxysports5@gmail.com





ON THE SEVEN EVENTS

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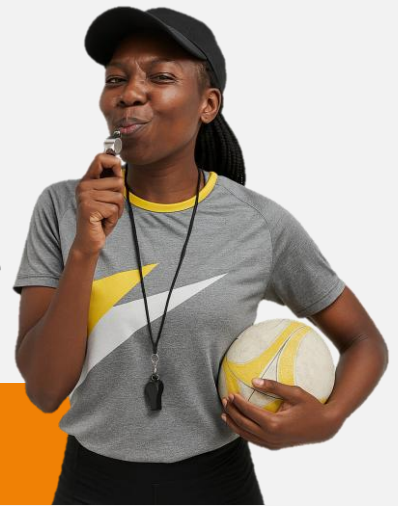


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OFF THE MARK

Welcome to *Off The Mark*, the part of the magazine where common sense takes a water break. If you came here for serious analysis, you've taken the wrong pass.

PROFESSOR PLAY-ON takes care of all your Touch problems, needs and wants, think of her as your favorite (Agony) Aunt...



Dear Professor Play-On

Every time I go for a touch, I end up just awkwardly patting people on the back. I think I've given out 400 free massages this season. How do I look less creepy?

Overfriendly Defender, Durban

What you've discovered is not poor technique, it's customer service

You're offering relaxation *and* marking up in defence. My advice: lean into it. Bring massage oil to your next game. Once your reputation spreads, players will actively run into you for the spa treatment. That's when you pounce, touch, and turnover. Defence plus wellness, a winning combo.

Massage with pride,
Professor Play-on

Dear Professor Play-On

Our team huddles are a disaster. The coach shouts "execute the triple-phase overlap decoy switch" but nobody knows what it means. How do we tell him?

Confused Captain, Cardiff

Organisation is overrated, don't overthink this one

I once coached a team where every play was just called "The Thing."

The key was saying it with absolute conviction.

My tip? Pick a random word each week, pineapple, shoelace, marmalade, and yell it like you mean it.

The opposition will assume it's a coded masterplan. Your team won't have a clue, but at least you'll all be equally confused.

That opens the psychic connection between your link and wing. When everyone is confused, that's the moment to score

Play loud, not smart,
Professor Play-on

SEND US YOUR QUESTIONS!

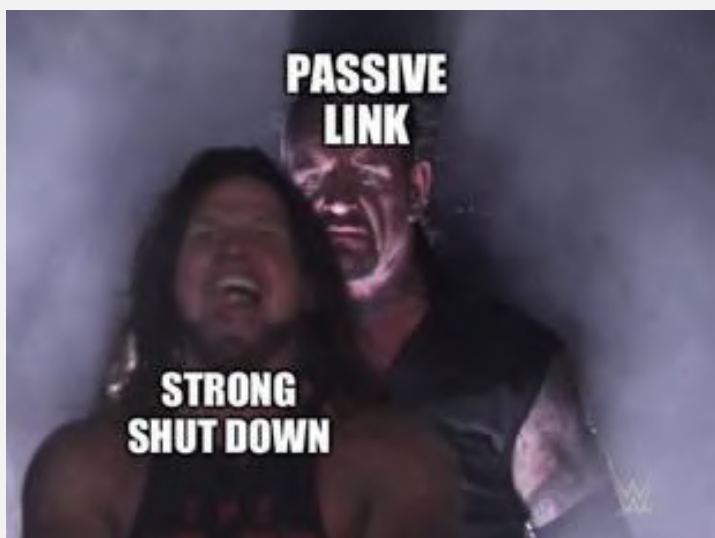
Send your questions to Professor Play-On by emailing

play@onthesevenevents.com



WARNING: MEMES AHEAD

Thanks to Meme2Touch for the memes...
Go check them out on [instagram](#)



THE OT7

THE SCOOP

TALES FROM THE TOUCHLINES

YOU'VE REACHED THE END. LEGEND STATUS.

There's still no medal, but take a bow, you've stuck with us all the way and we thank you.

This issue has been fuelled by stubborn passion, questionable snacks, and the occasional sprint to a deadline (faster than we ever manage on the pitch).

Got a tale from your Touch turf? Maybe your team's kit looks suspiciously like pyjamas, or you've perfected the art of warming the bench with style.

From the first whistle in Fiji to the final huddle in Helsinki, if it's about Touch, we want it.

Drop us a line. You bring the stories, we'll bring the pages.
Fire them all over to: Play@OnTheSevenEvents.com

We'll read everything. Eventually. Probably over coffee.

Until next time, keep running forwards and passing backwards...

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