RUGBY WORLD CUP : THE STORY SO FAR

World Rugby takes a stroll down memory lane to look back at the eight previous women’s editions of Rugby World Cup.

New Zealand will become the first southern hemisphere nation to host the women’s edition of Rugby World Cup in 2021, in what promises to be the biggest and best event yet.

Defending champions the Black Ferns, meanwhile, would become the first team to lift the trophy on home soil should they emerge victorious.

The inaugural event in Wales in April 1991 was won by USA, before England won in Scotland three years later. New Zealand have won five of the last six tournaments, with England breaking that run in 2014.

From its humble beginnings to a 2017 edition which was televised around the globe and attracted a record final attendance of 17,115, Rugby World Cup is expected to reach even greater heights in 2021 and be the most competitive tournament to date.

WOMEN’S RUGBY WORLD CUP 1991

Host nation: Wales
Dates: 6-14 April

Pool 1 – New Zealand, Canada, Wales
Pool 2 – France, Sweden, Japan
Pool 3 – USA, Netherlands, USSR
Pool 4 – England, Spain, Italy

Semi-finals
New Zealand 0-7 USA
England 13-0 France

Final
USA 19-6 England

Winning coaches: Kevin O’Brien and Chris Leach

Twelve teams took part in the inaugural tournament in hosts Wales, Canada, England, France, Italy, Japan, the Netherlands, New Zealand, Spain, Sweden, USA and the USSR with the teams split into four pools of three.

England, France, New Zealand and USA progressed to the semi-finals, but it was there that the challenges of Les Bleues and the Black Ferns ended. England led 6-3 at the break in the final at Cardiff Arms Park after Gill Burns converted a penalty try, but nothing could stop USA from claiming the country’s first – and last – major trophy since the men’s team won Olympic gold in 1924, as they reeled off 19 points without reply.
RUGBY WORLD CUP 1994

Host nation: Scotland
Dates: 11-24 April

Pool A – USA, Sweden, Japan
Pool B – England, Scotland, Russia
Pool C – France, Ireland, Scottish Students
Pool D – Canada, Wales, Kazakhstan

Semi-finals
USA 56-15 Wales
England 18-6 France

Final
England 38-23 USA

Winning coach: Steve Dowling

To avoid clashing with the men’s Rugby World Cup as the inaugural tournament had done in 1991, the second edition of the women’s event came just three years later in Edinburgh with Kazakhstan, Ireland and hosts Scotland making their debuts.

Amsterdam had been due to host, but when the Dutch pulled out Scotland stepped in with three months to go and even fielded a Scottish Students side to compensate for Spain’s withdrawal and keep the 12-team line-up.

It was evident from early on that the 1991 finalists were again the teams to beat as USA and England duly cruised to another title decider. This time, however, England exacted revenge in a hugely entertaining contest, winning 38-23.

RUGBY WORLD CUP 1998

Host nation: Netherlands
Dates: 1-16 May

Pool A – England, Canada, Netherlands, Sweden
Pool B – USA, Spain, Wales, Russia
Pool C – New Zealand, Scotland, Italy, Germany
Pool D – France, Australia, Kazakhstan, Ireland

Semi-finals
USA 46-6 Canada
England 11-44 New Zealand

Final
New Zealand 44-12 USA

Winning coach: Darryl Suasua
Four years after originally intended, Amsterdam did host a 16-team tournament which saw first appearances for Germany and Australia and the returns of New Zealand and Spain after missing the 1994 event.

New Zealand, led by their inspirational hooker Farah Palmer, quickly emerged as the biggest threat to previous winners USA and England as the trio were joined in the last four by Canada.

Defending champions England had been ruthless in the pool stages, as had the Black Ferns with a record 134-6 defeat of Germany, to produce the semi-final everyone wanted to see. It was a one-sided affair, though, with the 44-11 win a sign of the domination New Zealand were beginning.

USA swept aside Canada equally impressively in the other semi-final but had no answer in the title decider, Vanessa Cootes scoring four of New Zealand’s eight tries in a 44-12 victory to ensure a third champion in as many tournaments.

**RUGBY WORLD CUP 2002**

Host nation: Spain  
Dates: 12-26 May

Pool A – New Zealand, Australia, Wales, Germany  
Pool B – France, USA, Kazakhstan, Netherlands  
Pool C – England, Spain, Italy, Japan  
Pool D – Canada, Scotland, Samoa, Ireland

Semi-finals  
New Zealand 30-0 France  
Canada 10-53 England

Final  
England 9-19 New Zealand

Winning coach: Darryl Suasua

Spain were the next hosts of a tournament that would set new standards of excellence in terms of skill and fitness. Samoa enjoyed a dream debut with a 22-0 win over Ireland, but England and New Zealand appeared destined for the final.

The Olympic Stadium in Barcelona provided a fitting backdrop for a final screened live in the middle of the night in New Zealand. The 8,000 crowd in the stands were treated to a blend of tactical awareness, gritty forward play and attacking rugby as the Black Ferns successfully defended their crown with a 19-9 victory.

**RUGBY WORLD CUP 2006**

Host nation: Canada  
Dates: 31 August-17 September

Pool A – New Zealand, Spain, Kazakhstan  
Pool B – England, Australia, Ireland
Pool C – France, USA, South Africa
Pool D – Canada, Scotland, Samoa

Semi-finals
New Zealand 40-10 France
Canada 6-10 England

Final
England 17-25 New Zealand

Winning coach: Jed Rowlands

RWC 2006 broke new ground as the first tournament held outside of Europe, South Africa making their debut in Canada as the bar was raised once more by the 12 teams. It was the usual suspects in the semi-finals with France and Canada unable to prevent another New Zealand-England final.

New Zealand's backs had taken women's rugby onto a new level with the triumvirate of Amiria Marsh, Stephanie Mortimer and Claire Richardson in particular impressive throughout. The final was another close affair, only settled when Marsh scored in the dying minutes for a 25-17 win to give Black Ferns captain Palmer the perfect send-off.

RUGBY WORLD CUP 2010

Host nation: England
Dates: 20 August-5 September

Pool A – New Zealand, Australia, South Africa, Wales
Pool B – England, Ireland, USA, Kazakhstan
Pool C – France, Canada, Scotland, Sweden

Semi-finals
New Zealand 45-7 France
England 15-0 Australia

Final
New Zealand 13-10 England

Winning coach: Brian Evans

England welcomed the world in 2010 and invested heavily in preparations, hoping to avoid a third successive final loss to New Zealand. There were some upsets along the way with Ireland beating USA and South Africa edging Wales, while Australia made the semi-finals for the first time.

The final, played before a packed Twickenham Stoop, was a nail-biting affair and one that went right down to the wire. New Zealand had three yellow cards, but with one converted try apiece it was Kelly Brazier’s penalty that proved the difference and secured a fourth successive crown.
Rugby World Cup: The story so far

**RUGBY WORLD CUP 2014**

Host: France  
Dates: 27 July-19 August

Pool A – England, Canada, Spain, Samoa  
Pool B – Ireland, New Zealand, USA, Kazakhstan  
Pool C – France, Australia, Wales, South Africa

Semi-finals  
Ireland 7-40 England  
France 16-18 Canada

Final  
England 21-9 Canada

Winning coach: Gary Street

The penultimate women’s edition of Rugby World Cup was played in the French capital and saw one of the biggest upsets in the tournament’s history as Ireland ended New Zealand’s 20-match unbeaten run in the tournament with a 17-14 victory, one which meant the Black Ferns missed out on the semi-finals for the first time.

Ireland joined hosts France, England and Canada in the semi-finals with a first-time finalist guaranteed. Canada became only the fourth side to reach the final after a wonder try from Magali Harvey against hosts France, but it was England who were crowned champions, 20 years on from their last triumph after a 21-9 win.

**RUGBY WORLD CUP 2017**

Host nation: Ireland  
Dates: 9-26 August

Pool A – New Zealand, Canada, Wales, Hong Kong  
Pool B – England, USA, Spain, Italy  
Pool C – France, Ireland, Australia, Japan

Semi-finals  
England 20-3 France  
New Zealand 45-12 USA

Final  
England 32-41 New Zealand

Winning coach: Glenn Moore

Ireland played host to the most recent edition of Rugby World Cup as Hong Kong became the 20th nation to grace the showpiece event and Japan and Italy returned for the first time in 15 years. All three sides would end the pool stage in Dublin winless, however, as New Zealand, England, USA and France qualified for the semi-finals. The hosts, who had wowed fans three years earlier, were beaten 21-5 by Les Bleues in the Pool C decider and would finish the tournament eighth.
RWC 2017 headed north to Belfast for the knockout stages as the Kingspan Stadium hosted the semi-finals and final. England proved too strong for France, while New Zealand overpowered USA to set up a fourth RWC final between the sides. A record 17,115 fans watched on as a hat-trick from Player of the Match Toka Natua secured a fifth title for the Black Ferns.

For more information on Rugby World Cup 2021, visit www.rugbyworldcup.com/2021.