

WORLD RUGBY U20 TROPHY: THE STORY SO FAR

We take a stroll down memory lane to look back at the 12 previous editions of the World Rugby U20 Trophy.

The make-up of the squads at Rugby World Cup 2019 highlighted just how important the U20s pathway is to the process of developing future stars of the game.

While there were 218 players in Japan who'd experienced playing in the top-level U20 Championship, a further 83 had come up through the ranks via the U20 Trophy, international age-grade rugby's second-tier competition.

Georgia's Otari Giorgadze, Beka Gorgadze, Giorgi Kveseladze and Giorgi Melikidze, for example, were members of the Junior Lelos team that lifted the U20 Trophy in 2015, while 2008 graduate Lasha Khmaladze shares the record as the competition's most-capped player with Uruguay's Diego Magno (82 caps).

The U20 Trophy has also produced many memorable moments as well as players, but it would be hard to top last year's thrilling final between Japan and Portugal for drama.

In a free-flowing match unrecognisable from the weather-affected final played between these two teams in Montevideo in 2017, Japan once again came out on top to secure promotion back to the World Rugby U20 Championship – but not before Portugal gave them the mightiest of scares.

Japan raced into a 14-0 lead inside the first 10 minutes, but Portugal showed great resolve and no little skill to fight their way back into the contest at the Estadio Martins Pereira.

For a 40-minute period up to the 76th minute, the Portuguese were ahead on the scoreboard, but a try from full-back Ryosuke Kawase and the all-important conversion from Ryuto Fukuyama denied them a place in the World Rugby U20 Championship for the first time.

It was the third time Japan have won international age-grade rugby's second-tier competition, following on from their successes in 2014 and 2017.

Here is our tournament-by-tournament guide to the U20 Trophy.

U20 TROPHY 2008

Host: Chile

Dates : 15-27 April

Stades : Stade Français, Estadio San Carlos (Santiago)

Pool A: Chile, Romania, Namibia, Cook Islands

Pool B: Uruguay, Georgia, Korea, Jamaica

[VIEW FULL RESULTS >>](#)

Final : Chile 8-20 Uruguay

World Rugby U20 Trophy: The story so far

Winning captain: Matías Fonseca
Winning coaches: Martin Mendaro and Bruno Grunwaldt

Most capped graduates: Lasha Khmaladze (GEO) 82, Diego Magno (URU) 82, Leandro Leivas (URU) 69

Tournament statistics

Points: 877
Tries: 126

Top point scorer

Player: Goderdzi Jogleidze (GEO) 50
Team: Georgia 190

Top try scorer

Player: Kim Hyun Soo (KOR) 7
Team: Georgia 28

A Los Teritos team containing a test captain in the making in Juan Manuel Gaminara, and other future stars such as Diego Magno and Leandro Leivas, broke the hearts of the partisan 7,000 crowd in attendance at the Stade Français Club in Santiago, Chile, with a stirring come-from-behind win.

A final between the two unbeaten sides from the pool stages looked to be heading the way of the home side when they raced into an 8-0 lead, but Los Teritos replied with 20 unanswered points, scoring tries through Magno and fly-half Germán Albanell, to take the inaugural title.

The absence of a semi-final stage meant the pool runners-up went into a straight shootout for the bronze, Georgia winning an all-European affair with Romania, 34-10.

U20 TROPHY 2009

Host: Kenya
Dates: 21 April-3 May
Venues: RFUEA Ground, Impala Ground (Nairobi)

Pool A: USA, Kenya, Namibia, Cayman Islands
Pool B: Romania, Chile, Papua New Guinea, Korea

[VIEW FULL RESULTS >>](#)

Final: USA 13-25 Romania

Winning captain: Eduardo Marinca
Winning coach: Mircea Parashiv

Most capped graduates: Cam Dolan (USA) 51, Johan Tromp (NAM) 43, Madalin Lemnaru (ROM 35)

Tournament statistics

Points: 1,049

Tries: 152

Top point scorer

Player: Stefan Patrascu (ROM) 61

Team: Namibia 198

Top try scorer

Player: Ionut Puisoru (ROM) / Thomas Claps (CHI) / Sung Kun Cha (KOR) / Collins Omae (KEN) 5

Team: Namibia 30

Like the inaugural final, the champions had to come from behind with Romania overhauling a 13-3 interval deficit against the USA.

Barry Sheehan's yellow card on the stroke of half-time proved costly for the Junior All-Americans as Romania scored through Adrian Apostol within four minutes of the restart before Marian Pirvu and Stefan Patrascu added their names to the scoresheet late on.

With the U20 Championship being cut from 16 teams to 12 in 2010, champions Romania missed out on promotion.

Maintaining their form from the year before, Chile claimed the bronze medal with a 19-17 win over the hosts Kenya.

U20 TROPHY 2010

Host: Russia

Dates: 18-31 May

Venues: Fili Stadium, Slava Stadium (Moscow)

Pool A: Italy, Romania, Uruguay, Papua New Guinea

Pool B: Japan, Russia, Canada, Zimbabwe

[**VIEW FULL RESULTS >>**](#)

Final: Italy 36-7 Japan

Winning captain: Tommaso Benvenuti

Winning coach: Andrea Cavinato

Most capped graduates: Ramil Gaisin (RUS) 52, Andrés Vilaseca (URU) 50, Alexey Shcherban (RUS) 47

Tournament statistics

Points: 703

Tries: 83

Top point scorer

Player: Alberto Chillón (ITA) 51

Team: Italy 156

Top try scorer

Player: Takaaki Nakazuru (JPN) 4

Team: Italy 22

Despite being guaranteed a return to the top-tier U20 Championship in 2011 as hosts of World Rugby's premier age-grade tournament, Italy were determined to take their place among the elite in their own right as U20 Trophy 2010 champions.

Kicking off with comfortable wins against Papua New Guinea (74-0) and defending champions Romania (30-7) in Pool A of what was a hugely competitive tournament, with Japan, Canada and Uruguay also having played at a higher level the year before, the Azzurrini then beat Uruguay thanks to a last-gasp penalty try to make it through to the final.

Pool B winners Japan threatened to be a formidable opponent but an early try from dashing centre Tommaso Benvenuti calmed any nerves the young Italians may have had, and Antonio Denti, Michele Mortali and Gabriele Cicchinelli confirmed their dominance in a 36-7 victory.

Denis Kukishev's penalty, 12 minutes into extra-time, saw Russia claim the bronze medal at Romania's expense.

U20 TROPHY 2011

Host: Georgia

Dates: 24 May-5 June

Venues: Avchala Stadium, Shevardeni Stadium (Tbilisi)

Pool A: Samoa, Uruguay, Russia, USA

Pool B: Japan, Canada, Georgia, Zimbabwe

[VIEW FULL RESULTS >>](#)

Final: Samoa 31-24 Japan

Winning captain: Patrick Faapale

Winning coach: John Schuster

Most capped graduates: Mateo Sanguinetti (URU) 57, Giorgi Tkhilaishvili (GEO) 57, Levan Chilachava (GEO) 54

Tournament statistics

Points: 879

Tries: 115

Top point scorer

Player: Bakhva Kobakhidze (GEO) 52

Team: Samoa 166

Top try scorer

Player: Robert Lilomaiaava (SAM) 9

Team: Samoa 26

The 2011 final followed the same pattern as the first two tournaments with Samoa trailing Japan 17-0 before finally showing the sort of form that had seen them sweep Uruguay, USA and Russia aside in topping Pool A with a perfect record.

Tries from winger Masakatasu Hikosaka and hooker Yoshikatsu Hikosaka put Japan on the front foot, but in typical Samoan fashion, they struck back with dangerous broken-field play leading to tries from Jordan Taufua, Robert Lilomaiaava and Faavae Faavae and a 19-17 half-time lead.

Winger Viliamu Alauni dotted the ball down to make it 24-17 to the Samoans, but back came Japan with prop Mao Enoki's second try in as many finals levelling the scores. Then, with the match heading into extra-time, full-back Peter Schuster scored at the death to win it for the Islanders.

Georgia outscored Uruguay two tries to nil to win the third-place play-off, 20-15.

U20 TROPHY 2012

Host: USA

Dates: 18-30 June

Venue : Murray Rugby Park, Salt Lake City, Utah

Pool A: USA, Tonga, Chile, Russia

Pool B: Japan, Canada, Georgia, Zimbabwe

[VIEW FULL RESULTS >>](#)

Final: USA 37-33 Japan

Winning captain: Will Magie

Winning coach: Scott Lawrence

Most capped graduates: Tamaz Mchedlidze (GEO) 56, Lasha Lomidze (GEO) 48, Stanislav Selskii (RUS) 40

Tournament statistics

Points: 1,015

Tries: 144

Top point scorer

Player: Madison Hughes (USA) 72

Team: Canada / USA 149

Top try scorer

Player: Hosea Saumaki (TGA) 7

Team: Japan / Tonga 22

The USA became the first host nation to win the World Rugby U20 Trophy after a thrilling 37-33 win over Japan in Salt Lake City, Utah.

The final was typical of the nail-biting drama evident throughout a tournament that did much to boost rugby's appeal in the USA. In an epic match of 10 tries where the lead

changed hands seven times, the Junior All-Americans withstood one last onslaught from the Japanese to cling on for victory in front of a sell-out crowd.

Having lost the two previous finals, it was a case of more disappointment for Japan who were christened the 'Cardiac Kids' because of their involvement in a series of heart-stopping pool matches, and the final was no different.

Having fought their way back from a 14-point deficit in the first half, the match was ultimately won by winger Noah Tarrant's hat-trick try in the 76th minute – and the determined defensive rearguard that followed. Madison Hughes kicked 12 points in the match to take his overall tournament tally to 72 points, which is still a tournament record to this day.

Manase Fola'u's late try saw Tonga deny Georgia 31-29 in an equally thrilling third-place play-off.

U20 TROPHY 2013

Host: Chile

Dates: 28 May-9 June

Venues: Estadio German Becker, Estadio Municipal Freire, Estadio Municipal Pitrufquen, Universidad de la Frontera (Temuco)

Pool A: Italy, Chile, Portugal, Namibia

Pool B: Canada, Japan, Tonga, Uruguay

[VIEW FULL RESULTS >>](#)

Final: Italy 45-23 Canada

Winning captain: Angelo Esposito

Winning coach: Gianluca Guidi

Most capped graduates: Djustice Sears-Duru (CAN) 52, Tomas Appleton (POR) 39, Bruno Medeiros (POR) 31

Tournament statistics

Points: 840

Tries: 112

Top point scorer

Player: Shane O'Leary (CAN) 45

Team: Italy 187

Top try scorer

Player: Kai Ishii (JPN) 8

Team: Italy 27

For the second time in five years, the U20 Trophy was held in Chile but this time it was Italy instead of Uruguay who came out on top with a 45-23 victory against Canada.

The Azzurrini won all four of their matches in Chile to ensure their place among the world's elite U20 teams in New Zealand the following year.

Having safely negotiated their way through the pool stages, Italy made their intentions clear from the start of the final at the Estadio Germán Becker with Marcello Violi crossing in the opening minute.

But, despite leading only 10-6 at half-time, Italy took advantage when Canada had two players sin-binned in the second half, scoring five tries, including a second by Violi, to run out impressive winners.

Chile made it onto the podium, as they did in 2008, after beating Japan 38-35 to claim the bronze medal.

U20 TROPHY 2014

Host: Hong Kong

Dates: 7-19 April

Venue: Hong Kong Football Club

Pool A: Tonga, USA, Georgia, Hong Kong

Pool B: Japan, Uruguay, Namibia, Canada

[VIEW FULL RESULTS >>](#)

Final: Tonga 10-35 Japan

Winning captain: Rikiya Matsuda

Winning coach: Keisuke Sawaki

Most capped graduates: German Kessler (URU) 43, Ignacio Dotti (URU) 38, Lucas Rumball (CAN) 35

Tournament statistics

Points: 761

Tries: 82

Top point scorer

Player: Revaz Jinchvelashvili (GEO) 6

Team: Japan 134

Top try scorer

Player: Vakhtang Amiranashvili (GEO) / German Kessler (URU) 4

Team: Japan 19

Having fallen at the final hurdle on three occasions from 2010-12, Japan were determined to finally lift the trophy. The signs were not good when they lost their opening match to Uruguay, but they bounced strongly, winning the rest of their matches to march imperiously into the final, where first-time finalists Tonga were no match for them.

That said, it was Tonga who drew first blood early in the final when fly-half Mosese Latu knocked over a penalty, but Japan levelled the scores when opposite number Matsuda landed the first of his six kicks.

A long stretch of Japanese pressure on Tonga's try-line led to a penalty try and 10-3 half-time lead. Second-half tries from Shunta Nakamura, Shuhei Narita and Takayuki Watanabe confirmed the win and promotion to the U20 Championship.

The third-place play-off was a battle of the Americas – and two former Trophy champions – that went right down to the wire with the USA holding on to beat ill-disciplined Uruguay, who finished the game down to 12 men, 26-25.

U20 TROPHY 2015

Host: Portugal

Dates: 12-24 May

Venues: Estadio Universitario, CAR Rugby do Jamor (Lisbon)

Pool A: Georgia, Uruguay, Fiji, Portugal

Pool B: Canada, Namibia, Tonga, Hong Kong

[VIEW FULL RESULTS >>](#)

Final : Georgia 49-24 Canada

Capitaine vainqueur : Badri Alkhazashvili

Entraîneur vainqueur : Ilia Maisuradze

Most capped graduates: Lucas Rumball (CAN) 35, Beka Gorgadze (GEO) 27, Damian Stevens (NAM) 27

Tournament statistics

Points: 862

Tries: 114

Top point scorer

Player: Revaz Jinchvelashvili (GEO) 51

Team: Georgia 144

Top try scorer

Player: Christo van der Merwe (NAM) 5

Team: Georgia / Tonga 20

Georgian reaffirmed their status as a growing power in world rugby with a maiden U20 Trophy title.

For many in the Junior Lelos' ranks, the win in the final over Canada marked the start of something special, especially scrum-half Vasil Lobzhanidze who, just four months later, would go on to become the youngest player to appear at a Rugby World Cup, aged just 18 years and 340 days.

Canada went into their second final in three years with a settled team showing only one change from the starting XV that had beaten Tonga in the pool decider.

But the Canadians were second-best for large periods of the game against a Georgian outfit that demonstrated their ability to be clinical in the tight as well as the loose.

Tries before the break for Mikheili Babunashvili, Giorgi Melikidze, Badri Liparteliani and Tornike Zoidze were followed by three more in the second half, scored by Anzor Sichinava, Giorgi Kveseladze, Revaz Jinchvelashvili.

For Canada, captain Lucas Rumball scored a try on the stroke of half-time, while fellow loose forward, Luke Bradley, grabbed a brace.

Tonga and Uruguay served up a feast of tries in a third-place play-off that ended in a 44-43 win for the South Americans.

U20 TROPHY 2016

Host: Zimbabwe

Dates: 19 April-1 May

Venue: Harare Sports Club, Harare

Pool A: Samoa, Fiji, Uruguay, Zimbabwe

Pool B: Spain, Namibia, USA, Hong Kong

[VIEW FULL RESULTS >>](#)

Final: Samoa 38-22 Spain (AET)

Winning captain: Jarred Adams

Winning coach: Ramsey Tomokino

Most capped graduates: Jordi Jorba (ESP) 21, Alvar Gimeno (ESP) 18, Cliven Loubser (NAM) 17, Obert Nortje (NAM) 17

Tournament statistics*

Points: 1,054

Tries: 141

Top point scorer

Player: Hanco Germishuys (USA) 48

Team: Samoa 180

Top try scorer

Player: Hanco Germishuys (USA) 8

Team: Samoa 24

The Harare-based tournament was played under trialled scoring laws with six points awarded for a try and the focus firmly on attack.

A then tournament record 1,054 points were scored in Zimbabwe, with 70 of them coming in a classic final between Samoa and Spain that was won by the Pacific Islanders in the fifth minute of extra-time thanks to a try from replacement Tivoli Masaga.

Even for a tournament where entertainment had been the order of the day throughout, few people would have predicted that the final would have been quite so dramatic.

Leading by eight points with nine minutes left to go, Spain threatened to cause an upset against the side relegated from the U20 Championship in 2015. However, Elia Elia completed his hat-trick and Tivoli Masaga scored a try in the corner to turn the game around.

Despite his treble, Elia missed out on the top try scorer award to another number eight, USA's Hanco Germishuys.

In the third-place play-off, five first-half tries meant the bronze medal was Fiji's long before Namibia staged a second-half fight-back.

U20 TROPHY 2017

Host: Uruguay

Dates: 29 August-10 Septembre

Venues: Estadio Charrúa, Punta del Este (Montevideo)

Pool A: Japan, Namibia, Chile, Canada

Pool B: Portugal, Uruguay, Fiji, Hong Kong

[VIEW FULL RESULTS >>](#)

Final: Japan 14-3 Portugal

Winning captain: Hinata Takei

Winning coach: Satoru Endo

Most capped graduates: Nuno Mascarenhas (POR) 17, Antonio Vidinha (POR) 15, Domingo Saavedra (CHI) 13

Tournament statistics

Points: 727

Tries: 101

Top point scorer

Player: Alejo Piazza (URU) 40

Team: Uruguay 152

Top try scorer

Player: Faulua Makisi (JPN) 6

Team: Uruguay 22

Not even the torrential rain could dampen Japan's enthusiasm as they celebrated a return to the World Rugby U20 Championship at the first attempt following a 14-3 victory over valiant Portugal in a truncated U20 Trophy final.

With large pools of surface water on the Estadio Charrúa pitch worsening all the time and thunderstorms rolling in, the decision was taken to abandon play with 15 minutes to go with Japan, 11 points up when referee Francisco González led them from the field, declared the winners.

Understandably the tactics of both teams were clear from the start – kick for territory and hope for a mistake, and Japan’s first try from Faulua Makisi, his sixth of the tournament, came from a charged down clearance kick. If the first owed itself to an opposition error, the second and ultimately decisive try of the match came about when scrum pressure resulted in a penalty try seven minutes into the second half.

Hosts Uruguay managed a repeat of the bronze medal they won in Lisbon two years earlier with a relatively comfortable victory over Namibia in the penultimate game of the day.

U20 TROPHY 2018

Host: Romania

Dates: 28 August-9 September

Venue: Stadionul National Arcul de Triumf (Bucharest)

Pool A: Samoa, Namibia, Hong Kong, Romania

Pool B: Fiji, Uruguay, Portugal, Canada

[VIEW FULL RESULTS >>](#)

Final: Samoa 8-58 Fiji

Winning captain: Raikabula Momoedonu

Winning coach: Koli Sewabu

Most capped graduates: Rodrigo Marta (POR) 8, Joao Maria Lima (POR) 7, Santiago Civetta (URU) 6, Duarte Azevedo (POR) 6, Manuel Marta (POR) 6

Tournament statistics

Points: 1,164

Tries: 166

Top point scorer

Player: Denzo Bruwer (NAM) 59

Team: Namibia 203

Top try scorer

Player: Manuel Ardao (URU) 6

Team: Fiji 32

Fiji celebrated a return to the World Rugby U20 Championship for the first time since 2014 in typically flamboyant fashion.

Inspired by full-back Nabetelevu Turaganivalu and centres Vilimoni Botitu and Ilikena Vudogo, Fiji were irrepressible in attack as they ruthlessly capitalised on basic Samoan

errors, of which there were many, to put the two-time champions to the sword, scoring nine tries in a 58-8 win.

Samoa's lack of patience in attack and high turnover rate hurt them badly and Fiji could even afford to lose a man to the sin-bin in each half as they recorded the biggest win in the history of U20 Trophy finals.

In a match of 16 tries, Manuel Pinto, Nuno Mascarenhas and Duarte Campos each bagged a brace as Portugal maintained their form from the year before to beat Namibia 67-36 and win the bronze medal.

U20 TROPHY 2019

Host: Brazil

Dates: 9-21 July

Venues: Estadio Martins Pereira, São Jose dos Campos (São Paulo)

Pool A: Japan, Uruguay, Brazil, Kenya

Pool B: Hong Kong, Tonga, Portugal, Canada

[VIEW FULL RESULTS >>](#)

Final: Japan 35-34 Portugal

Winning captain: Shota Fukui

Winning coach: Yoshitake Mizuma

Most capped graduates: Jose Madeira (POR) 6, David Costa (POR) 3, Pedro Lucas (POR) 3

Tournament statistics

Points: 1,106

Tries: 159

Top point scorer

Player: Will Percillier (CAN) 65

Team: Japan 185

Top try scorer

Player: Raffaele Storti (POR) 9

Team: Japan 27

When Japan scored a promotion-clinching try with two minutes to go in the final against Portugal, it brought the curtain down on a final day of high drama at the Estádio Martins Pereira.

Their 35-34 victory, in what was a rerun of the 2017 showpiece, was the third consecutive match to be decided by three points or less.

In addition to the Japan v Portugal thriller – arguably the best U20 Trophy final of all-time – Brazil's seventh-place play-off with Hong Kong went to sudden-death extra-time, the hosts winning their first match at this level thanks to a drop goal. Tonga's play-off for

bronze with Uruguay would also have gone beyond the 80 minutes had Los Teritos kicker Matias D'Avanzo not struck the upright with an all-important conversion.

Japan's success ensured captain and back-row Shota Fukui created a piece of U20 Trophy history. Fukui, then a winger, was part of the triumphant 2017 side and therefore became the first player to win the title twice – and in very different positions, too!

Portugal may have lost out on a maiden U20 Trophy title, but they unearthed a player with a very bright future in 18-year-old winger Raffaele Storti. A brace of tries in the final took the speedster's tally to nine, equalling the record for a single U20 Trophy tournament set by Samoa's Robert Lilomaivava in 2011.

U20 TROPHY 2020

Due to be staged in Spain from 14-27 September, the tournament was cancelled due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

**Law trials with points (Try = 6, Penalty Try = 8, Conversion, penalty, drop goal = 2)*

Statistics on most-capped graduates correct at 25 June, 2020. For latest information, contact Karen Bond (karen.bond@world.rugby).