

Coaching Internship Programme profiles

COACHING INTERNSHIP PROGRAMME FOR RWC 2021

The first six participants on World Rugby's Coaching Internship Programme for Rugby World Cup 2021 in New Zealand were announced on [18 September](#), representing Australia, Canada, England, France, South Africa and USA.

Fiji's coach intern was confirmed on [16 November](#) and Wales' on [9 December](#) with New Zealand to confirm their intern at a later date. The remaining three teams to qualify for Rugby World Cup 2021 will also be afforded the opportunity to identify female coaches to participate in the innovative programme.

INGE VISSER (AUSTRALIA)

Visser had never watched or heard of rugby until aged 19 a friend told her to come to training at the beach, she played in the Beach Rugby Festival in Ameland – the Dutch island on which she grew up – and duly caught the eye of the Netherlands' head coach.

With only two seasons of rugby behind her, she was selected for the Dutch side and played at the Hong Kong Sevens from 2005-08. She then went backpacking around Australia – where she played for the Warringah Ratettes – and returned home with a desire to step up her involvement in rugby.

Visser was part of the Netherlands squad that stunned Australia in the semi-finals of the World Rugby Women's Sevens Challenge Cup in London in 2012, before she went on to play in the inaugural HSBC World Rugby Sevens Series.

After Rugby World Cup Sevens 2013 in Russia, Visser decided to move back to Australia, where she played for NSW Rugby. She was head coach of the University of New England (UNE) Rugby Lions in 2019 and has also set up a sevens academy for talented players on the Central Coast above Sydney and satellite programmes in rural New South Wales.

Last year she was accepted onto the inaugural Women's Sport Leadership Academy for High Performance Coaches.

MARIA GALLO (CANADA)

Born in La Plata, Argentina, Gallo emigrated to Canada in 1986 as a youngster and started playing rugby in Ontario once she finished high school. Like many North American rugby players, the hard-running winger was a talented all-round athlete who played football (soccer) before competing in bobsleigh to a high level during her rugby career.

She made her debut against the USA in 1999, and by the time she retired from international rugby in 2010 at the age of 32, after 11 years at the top, Gallo had amassed 55 caps in 15s and seven in sevens. At Rugby World Cup 2006 she gained notoriety for scoring five tries against Spain in a 79-0 win.

Gallo has since combined coaching with her full-time job as associate professor of teaching in the School of Kinesiology at the University of British Columbia. She is currently assistant coach of the Canada women's national team.

AMY TURNER (ENGLAND)

The charismatic Turner was part of six Women's Six Nations Grand Slam-winning squads with England as well as representing her country at two Rugby World Cups (2006 and 2010) and Rugby World Cup Sevens 2009. Her versatility saw her capped in three different positions for the Red Roses – at hooker, centre and, predominantly, scrum-half – in an international career that spanned seven years from 2005-12. She made her England debut as a replacement against Wales in Cardiff and went on to earn 59 caps.

Raised in south-west London, Turner played club rugby for Rosslyn Park, Harlequins, Richmond and Wasps, while also serving as a frontline officer in the Metropolitan Police. On retiring from playing, Turner was appointed assistant coach of the Harlequins Ladies before landing the position of Professional Pathway Officer (Women) with the Rugby Football Union. It is a role she combines with coaching England Women's U20s and Hackney men in London 2 North West.

ALANA THOMAS (FIJI)

A former Wallaroo, who played at Rugby World Cup 2006, Alana Thomas began working towards a career in coaching when she mentored her younger team-mates. Thomas played for the Wallaroos from 2006-08 and was named the NSW Waratahs Player of the Year in 2007 as well as Player of the National Tournament.

While taking time out due to injury, Thomas started assisting in coaching her local team. In 2015, Thomas attended a Rugby Australia development programme, which made her realise that she wanted to take her coaching further, and she became an emerging players' coach with Melbourne Rebels Women.

Thomas grasped that opportunity and 20 months later was promoted to the role of head coach. In 2017 she won the Rugby Australia Community Coach of the Year Award and the following year was named the head coach of the Melbourne Rebels team for the inaugural Super W competition.

The 38-year-old then returned to the Wallaroos set-up as an assistant to Australia A coach Moana Virtue at the Oceania Rugby Women's Championship 2019.

Earlier in the same year, Thomas had attended the World Rugby Women's High Performance Academy in Stellenbosch, South Africa. The New South Wales native, who hails from Glen Innes, also enrolled in the virtual High Performance Academy in May.

Thomas will work as a defence and skills coach with the Fijiana.

CÉLINE ALLAINMAT (FRANCE)

A full-back/winger with a keen eye for the try-line, Allainmat made her debut for Les Bleues against Wales in February 2003 and played in two Rugby World Cups in 15s, in 2006 – where she earned a bronze medal – and 2010, as well as the inaugural tournament in 2009 for sevens, her preferred format of the game. Unfortunately, an injury in March 2015 proved to be career-ending, preventing her from making France's team for the Rio 2016 Olympic Games.

Inspired by her rugby-playing father, Allainmat never dreamt she would go on to win 40 caps for Les Bleues when she first became actively involved in the sport, aged 14, at the local Sporting Club

Saint Pierre du Mont. This was followed by eight years at Pachys d’Herm, before she enjoyed a one-season stay at Clifton RFC in England, which exposed her to a higher level of rugby. When Allainmat returned to France, she spent three seasons at Bayonne before finishing off at Stade Rennais, where she moved into coaching and now holds the role of both fitness coach and backs coach for the women’s team. She has also worked as fitness coach to the France U20 women’s team in recent years.

LAURIAN JOHANNES-HAUPT (SOUTH AFRICA)

Johannes-Haupt became the first female to take charge of a South African national team when she was appointed as the Women’s U20 coach last May. She earned the historic post following five years working in the Western Province age-grade structures, and subsequently led the team into its first matches for six years.

It was the latest step on a rugby journey that began at the University of the Western Cape, following a little subterfuge. Having told her parents she had taken up badminton at university, she asked her father to buy a pair of rugby boots for a ‘friend’ who didn’t exist.

Her father soon got over the shock of seeing her playing rugby, however, and she has repaid her family’s support. The prop represented South Africa at Rugby World Cup 2010, and would become the country’s most-capped female provincial player, turning out more than 50 times for Western Province.

Johannes-Haupt has also coached Western Province’s senior women’s team since 2018, the first year in an assistant coach capacity before taking over as head coach in 2019.

KATE DALEY (USA)

Daley first picked up a rugby ball at high school and impressed enough to be selected for the USA U19 squad in her senior year. She subsequently played at Penn State University where, towards the end of her college career, she was selected for a USA U23 tour of New Zealand that proved to be a springboard.

The number eight made her test debut against Canada in January 2010 and although she missed out on a place in the USA squad for that year’s Rugby World Cup in England, she established herself in the side a year later. Daley captained the Women’s Eagles at RWC 2014, and by the time of her final test — against France in November 2016 — had earned 22 caps.

Having started her coaching journey at the University of Notre Dame, Daley returned to Penn State in order to rehab a broken leg suffered during RWC 2014. She began coaching the women’s team, and subsequently joined USA Rugby as an assistant coach.

SOPHIE SPENCE (WALES)

The opportunity to join the Wales coaching staff as part of the Rugby World Cup 2021 Coaching Internship Programme has arrived faster than Sophie Spence could have expected.

Following the end of her playing career in 2018, Spence moved to Wales with her wife, Anwen where she opened a coffee shop and began coaching the forwards at men’s National League Division 1 West club, Penclawdd.

She has long held a desire to gravitate into coaching, however, having earned a BAsC in Sports and Exercise Coaching Science, a Masters in Sport Psychology and a Postgraduate Certificate in Education. Earlier this year, she began a Level 3 coaching course with the Welsh Rugby Union.

Spence will bring a wealth of experience to the Wales set-up. She first picked up a rugby ball as a 21-year-old at Teesside University and progressed via Darlington and DMP Sharks to Old Belvedere, Leinster and full Ireland honours.

The 33-year-old played 40 tests for Ireland and appeared at two Rugby World Cups – including 2014 when Ireland stunned New Zealand in the pool stage – and one Rugby World Cup Sevens. Spence also represented the Barbarians alongside Wales skills coach Rachel Taylor.

For more information on the Coaching Internship Programme, please visit www.rugbyworldcup.com/2021/news/583788.