



The Lusaka Mosi International 7s



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The Mosi International Sevens – History

1999 – Innauguration

Following the club's success in the Kenya Safari Sevens, the committee decided to put together a tournament that would enable us to bring foreign teams to Lusaka. In 1999 the Mosi International Sevens was born, with the first tournament comprising one South African club side, two Zimbabwean and nine Zambian clubs. The final, played in front of over 3,000 spectators saw a victory for Lusaka against Pretoria Gardens of South Africa and crowned what had been an undoubtedly successful day.

2000 – Consolidation

After the tremendous success of the inaugural Mosi International Sevens tournament, the club went all out to make the 2000 Mosi Sevens and even bigger event, this time attracting Mphumalanga – one of South Africa's top provincial sides – and Samurai, a touring side from the UK comprising of players from many of the countries top league clubs – included in their squad were players from Leicester, Swansea, Pontypridd and London Irish. In order to give the local players more chance against the big names, it was decided that the Zambia national A and B teams should participate along with select sides from the Midlands and the Copperbelt of Zambia, the two regions in which rugby is played. The Zambian A side comfortably disposed of its Zimbabwean opponents and in the quarter final trounced Pretoria Gardens. Mphumalanga proved too much in the semi final and eventually went on to beat Samurai in the final.

2001 – Expansion

2001 saw the Mosi Sevens expanding to be what was probably the biggest single international sporting event held in Zambia that year. For the first time the event was held over two days consisting of 16 teams, the tournament attracted Western Province and Mphumalanga from South Africa, Public School Wanderers and Samurai from the UK and three club sides from Zimbabwe. Again the Zambian participation was in the form of National A and B sides and regional select sides. The first day of the tournament consisted of four round robin groups of four teams, with the top two from each group going through to the quarter finals on the following day.



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In front of crowds of 5,000 the Zambian teams put up a commendable performance, with Zambia B only losing 21-20 in the dying seconds of their game against Samurai. The A team again lost in the Semi final, this time being beaten by public school wanderers, who in the final were unable to contend with the power of Mphumalanga who won the tournament for the second year in a row.

For the first time in the history of the tournament, 2001 saw the introduction of co-sponsors. Whilst many smaller contributions were made by companies such as Graphicam, Manzi, Crystal Products and Sable Transport, US\$3,000 or equivalent in kind, was required to become a co-sponsor. Holiday Inn, Multichoice, Danzas, Chilanga Cement, British Airways Comair, Telecel, Shoprite, Barclays, Standard Chartered Bank, Stanbic, Armcor and Plascon all came on board, with all expressing satisfaction with the mileage obtained.

2002 – More big teams

The appointment in 2001 of Gert Grobbelar (Mphumalanga Manager) as Lusaka Rugby Club's South African Ambassador gave as a means of contacting more of the bigger South African clubs, and this resulted in the participation of FreeState Griffons and Boland Cavaliers for the first time. In fact the tournament attracted such interest that we were forced to reject an entry from the Blue Bulls as the allotted 16 places were already full.

For the first time in the history of the tournament, we were able to also attract other African National teams with Botswana participating and Kenya choosing to use the event as a warm up for the upcoming Commonwealth Games.

Although crowds were slightly down on the previous year – attributed to live screening of African teams playing in the football world cup over the same weekend – the tournament still attracted total numbers in excess of 6,000, who witnessed a standard of sevens rugby never before seen in Zambia.



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As expected, the South African teams dominated the later stages of the tournament, with the two UK teams, Public School Wanderers and Samurai, struggling to acclimatise to the heat and altitude of Lusaka. Zambia once again entered with national A and B teams and six regional select sides. Under the expert guidance of Musa Zimba, assisted by Chris Buitendach from Mphumalanga and Blue Bulls, the Zambian national sides showed that they had learnt a lot since 2001, with both teams giving the South Africans a run for their money. For the regional sides, the tournament offered an excellent opportunity for some of Zambia's up and coming rugby players to gain experience against some of the continents best sevens players.

Mphumalanga were aiming to take the title for the third year in a row, but with several of their biggest names being held back for the following weeks Currie Cup match, they finally went down in the final to Boland Cavaliers.

In a bid to not only improve the standard of Zambian play, but also to improve the standard of Zambian refereeing, two referees from South Africa and two from Zimbabwe also attended, with these referees holding clinics for their Zambian counterparts. It was also made a stipulation of entry that all foreign teams provided at least 5 players to take part in a schools coaching clinic which was attended by 12 schools from both the government and private sector.

A further innovation for the tournament was a charity gala dinner hosted by Fergus Slattery (former Ireland international), Ray Mordt (former Springbok) and Andy Capagstonio of Supersport. The event raised over K33 million for the disadvantaged kids of Lusaka and also gave the sponsors international coverage as parts of it were featured in Supersport's Boots n All programme.

2003 - IRB Recognition

In 2003 the International Rugby Board were invited to attend the Mosi Lusaka International Sevens. Since it's inauguration, the Lusaka Rugby Club Committee had dreamt of getting the Mosi 7's onto the IRB World



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Sevens Circuit. Although still a long way away from that goal, the attendance of two representatives from the IRB showed that the tournament and its success had been noted in the higher echelons of rugby. The smooth running of the tournament and the high quality of the participating teams impressed the IRB sufficiently for Zambia to be awarded the status of hosting nation for the 2004 World Cup Qualifiers. Another step nearer to the ultimate goal.

The night before the event kicked off, another highly enjoyable charity dinner was held, this time hosted by Dannie Gerber and Fannie Vermaak. The tournament itself bought another new team, the ESS Army. Although new to the Mosi 7's, they were not new to this part of the world, having won the Kenya Tusker 7s on several occasions. After having watched the Army team in several of their group games it was no surprise to anyone that they went on to win the competition comfortably. Western Province put up some kind of opposition in the final but you always got the impression that the Army team had a few gears that they could step up whenever they wanted.

The defending champions for the previous two years, Mphumalanga, came with two teams, both of whom were rudely awakened by the ever improving Zambia National team. Zambia beat both of the Mphumalanga teams on their way to winning the Plate event. In front of a partisan and noisy crowd, Zambia battled and battled against the bigger and more experienced South Africans to win their first ever silverware at the Mosi 7's. This was a great result and was a fore taste of what the team was going to produce later in the year at the Dubai and George Sevens.

2004 - Combined with the 2005 World Cup Qualifiers

Following on from their visit in 2003, the IRB awarded Zambia the honour of hosting the Southern and Eastern African World Cup Qualifying tournament for the 2005 World Cup sevens to be held in Hong Kong. In order to provide the best weekend of rugby possible, Lusaka Rugby Club proposed that this event be combined with the Mosi Lusaka International Sevens, a proposal that was accepted by the Zambia Rugby Football Union.



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This meant that the Mosi 7s was cut to 8 teams, with a further 8 national teams participating in the World Cup Qualifiers. On the Saturday of the event, Kenya, Uganda, Zambia and Swaziland played in one group of the WCQ with Namibia, Zimbabwe, Madagascar and Botswana battled it out in the other group. Running simultaneously were two groups of four in the Mosi 7's tournament. These groups included a South African Rugby Union development side, Golden Lions Western Province and Stellenbosch University, along with the Zambia National B team and 3 Zambian select sides.

On the second day of the event, things became more complicated with the 3rd and 4th placed teams from the WCQ dropping down to play in the Mosi 7s tournament. With Zambia unfortunately finishing third in their group, the highlight of Sunday's play was the match between the Zambian national side and Golden Lions of South Africa. Zambia narrowly lost, but suggested with their style of play that had they played like this the previous day, they would have been in with a good chance of qualifying for the World Cup in 2005. Eventually it was Kenya who grabbed the one available place for Hong kong, beating a very physical Namibian team in the final. The Mosi event was won by the SARFU team who included, according to their coach, several players that were expected to go on and play for the Springboks.

As usual with the Mosi Lusaka International Sevens, the weekend was not only about what happened on the pitch. On Friday evening preceeding the weekend's rugby, another highly successful fund raising dinner was held at the Pamodzi hotel, with Gary Teischman as guest speaker. Those who were lucky enough to attend were treated not only to an evening of his interesting and at times amusing anectdotes, but were also lucky enough to be able to particpate in a question and answer session which Gary presided over along with Andy Capagstanio, who had again bought the Supersport cameras with him.

2005 - The Future

The tournament now has a solid history behind it and although the excitement of the World Cup Qualifiers is past for a few more years to come, the Mosi Lusaka International Sevens will in 2005 return to it's normal format



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with the hope that this year it can be even bigger and better. It is hoped that the international teams will come from further afield, with teams from both Australasia and main land Europe being invited. Closer to home, the Zambia National team will have put aside the dissapointment of failing to qualify for Hong Kong and will again be looking to fire up the home crowd with some more wins against the might of the South African professionals.

In 2005 the tournament will be held on the weekend of the 2nd and 3rd of July, which in Zambia is followed by 2 days of public holiday. It is hoped that this will encourage a larger crowd to come on the Sunday which has traditioanlly attracted smaller numbers of spectators but of course, being the knockout stages, generally provides the more exciting rugby matches. Holding the tournament over this weekend will also enable Lusaka Rugby Club to put on a large concert at the end of the tournament, without having to worry about fans having to work the next day. It is hoped that this concert will attract people who are not rugby fans to come out and see what the whole event is all about. All in all, Luaska Rugby Club expect that the 2005 Mosi Lusaka International Sevens will surpass anything that has gone before and that both sponsors and spectators will be waiting expectantly for 2006.