Media Release
Chiefs of Staff, News Directors

Saturday, 5 August 2017

University of Tasmania Lions revealed in historic step for women’s rugby

In an historic step for Australian female sport, the University of Tasmania has unveiled the side that will champion its flag in the upcoming Aon Women’s Uni 7s Series.

Dubbed the University of Tasmania Lions, the 24 strong squad is comprised of students, local players, Australian women’s sevens representatives and elite athletes from abroad.

University of Tasmania students selected for the side are Michaeleyne Arumbi, Wynnah Conway, Jessica Dobbie, Kristina Farrelly, Rebecca Hyland, Caitlin Ryan and Brielle Quigley.

They will don the black and red jerseys alongside high-profile national players who include Shanice Parker, Olympian Ellia Green as well as Sydnee Watanabe and Kiki Morgan from the United States, a duo bringing international expertise.

The team will make its national debut at University of Tasmania Stadium in Launceston on Friday, 25 August when the first of four tournaments in the series kicks off.

University of Tasmania Provost Professor Mike Calford said today’s announcement was a significant milestone for the institution.

“Our participation in this series strengthens the work the University is doing to increase opportunities for women in Tasmania, particularly through sport,” Professor Calford said.

“Having these talented athletes to engage with our institution through the University of Tasmania Lions is creating new pathways and opportunities that will help them progress their playing careers while jointly pursuing further education.

“Women’s rugby is still an emerging sport in this state and, in line with our social mission, we are committed to continuing its development which will ultimately have far-reaching benefits for the community.”
Coach of the University of Tasmania Lions Luke Burgess, former Wallaby and now Development Manager of the Tasmanian Rugby Union, said it was exciting to see the series taking shape.

“The Aon Uni 7s series is providing our local aspiring athletes with an opportunity to train, play, and be guided by some of the world’s best rugby players, and the experience, skills and mentorship they will impart is key to growing this sport in Tasmania,” Mr Burgess said.

“The coaching staff have been extremely impressed with the levels of commitment and the coachability of our playing squad. We are so proud of how far the group has come and can’t wait for the series to kick off.

“Selection has been extremely difficult with all players facing a two-stage process of identification, followed by analysis of their capacity to perform at this level and develop into elite players.

“We are extremely excited for the future of University Sevens Series rugby and look forward to turning Tasmania into a destination for elite Rugby Sevens players from all over the world.”

A competition inspired by Australia’s women’s sevens success at Rio, the series was announced by the Australian Rugby Union (ARU) in February to increase the number of pathways for aspiring athletes to progress towards national selection, while playing alongside the world’s best.

The University of Tasmania Lions are sponsored by WOTSO Workspaces, a leading provider of co-working space and serviced office space.

**University of Tasmania Lions squad:**

Ellia Green (Team Ambassador)
Michaelyne Arumbi
Hannah Butcher
Tahni Champion-Peakman
Wynonah Conway
Lauryn Cooper
Eugenia Dennison
Jessica Dobbie
Michaela Emblem
Kristina Farrelly
Lucy Featherstone
Ebony Hicks
Viivi Hokkinen
Rebecca Hyland
Rioko Learmont
Kira Maass
Kiki Morgan
Lauren Mufty
Shanice Parker
Brielle Quigley
Alice Robinson
Caitlin Ryan
Eloise Struwe
Sydnee Watanabe
Olivia White

2017 Aon Uni 7s Series Teams:

University of Tasmania, TAS
University of Canberra, ACT
University of Adelaide, SA
University of New England, NSW
Macquarie University, NSW
Bond University, QLD
University of Queensland, QLD
Griffith University, QLD

2017 Aon Uni 7s Series Fixture:

Round 1 - University of Tasmania Stadium, Launceston, 25-26 August;
Round 2 - Macquarie University fields, Sydney, 9-10 September;
Round 3 - University of Queensland fields, Brisbane, 16-17 September;
Round 4 - Bond University fields, Gold Coast, 29-30 September.

Information released by:
University of Tasmania, Communications and Media Office
Email: Media.Office@utas.edu.au