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Schools Sevens grows

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In under three years, the @lantic Sevens series has exploded into arguably the largest schools Sevens rugby tournament in the world.

Launched in August of 2007, as part of an initiative aimed at developing rugby in South Africa at grassroots level, the @lantic Sevens has been responsible for launching the careers of a number of South African rugby stars.



Schoolboy rugby at its best!

@lantic sponsored the Pumas (Mpumalanga Rugby Union) and then wanted to focus on schools rugby and decided on Sevens "as the ideal development channel".

The series consists of 15 provincial tournaments hosted in each of the traditional rugby provinces. To date, 600 schools have participated, exposing 7500 schoolboys to the game.

Tournaments are played at various schools across South Africa including DF Malan (Cape Town), Stirling High (East London), Diamantveld (Kimberley), Jim Fouché (Bloemfontein), Sundown Ranch (Rustenburg), Glenwood (Durban), Oosterland (Secunda), Excelsior (Cape Town), Daniël Pienaar (Uitenhage), Waterkloof (Pretoria), and Monument (Krugersdorp) to mention but a few.

Each tournament is open to all schools in the surrounding areas, with a minimum of 16 schools taking part in each round.

Dederick Venter, @lantic's Marketing Director, said: "Because of the demand we have for some of the tournaments, we have expanded to 24 schools and have even looked at the possibility of moving to 32 where necessary."

He continued: "A significant aspect of the series is that the majority of the players are from previously disadvantaged communities, this is key to the development of the game and we have already seen a number of players come through the system who would otherwise have been lost to SA rugby."

"It also gives the small rural schools the chance to compete with, and in some cases upset the traditional rugby power houses, which is great for the development of the game."

As part of our development programme, at each event, a player of the tournament is selected. From these top players, ten are chosen to represent the @lantic Invitational Team in an international senior Sevens tournament.

To date the team is unbeaten in three international senior tournaments - taking the honours for two consecutive years at the Dubai IRB Sevens as well as the inaugural IRB Namibia Sevens in Windhoek.

Venter explained: "The quality of players coming through the system is excellent and best of all there is a wonderful blend of talent from all cultural backgrounds, and as a result, there is no need to talk about quota systems."

"All players who come through the series whether black, white or coloured, are there on merit and this can only bode well for the future of rugby in South Africa. This combined with the excellent sportsmanship and camaraderie displayed by the players, makes this a truly special series."

Players who have graduated through system include, Gerhard van den Heever (Bulls), Guy Cronjé (Sharks), Branco du Preez and Hofmann Maritz (Springbok Sevens), as well as Brian Shabangu, Jacques Erasmus and Danie Poolman (Emerging Springbok Sevens).

"The quality of the programme is underlined by the fact that almost all of the players who have made the Invitational Team have been offered provincials contracts," added Venter.

Because of the growing popularity of the series, a Mini Sevens series has been introduced to give potentially 10,000 youngsters aged between six and ten a chance to compete in regional tournaments. Venter says by developing Sevens skills at a young age, it ensures that by the time these players reach high school they have the skills needed to compete at the next level.

"With the backing of Paul Treu, who has been using the programme as a feeder system for the

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Springbok Sevens team and the support of high profile rugby figures; Dick Muir, Warren Brosnihan, Rob Louw and commentary by the legendary Hugh Bladen, the popularity of the series and Sevens rugby as a whole will continue to grow," he said.

According to the series promoter, Willem Strauss, who is well known for the international tours that he brings to South Africa, this is the best development initiative he has been involved with in his 20 year career in South African rugby and the amount of talent coming through is absolutely unbelievable.

"Sevens rugby is now a respected international sport, with players able to make a living playing the sport full-time. This shift in mindset has been felt throughout South African rugby circles and has resulted in the Springboks winning their first ever IRB Sevens Crown in 2009," added Venter.

"With Sevens now an official Olympic sport as of 2016, the game will continue to grow, so don't be surprised to see the @lantic Sevens stars of today being the heroes of 2016.

"Sevens is a wonderful game, where speed and agility are just as important as size and strength. Because of the space on the field it also creates opportunities for individuals to shine, who may otherwise have been lost in the 15-a-side game," he continued.

"To ensure the growth and development of sport in South Africa, it is important that business gets involved at the grassroots level of the game and helps play a part in developing tomorrow's stars today."

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7's Development

"the @lantic Sevens has been responsible for launching the careers of a number of South African rugby stars..."

7's stars perhaps, but no stars in 15 man rugby. Those who excelled in 7's were spotted in the 15 man game and only some have adapted well to that form of rugby.

. Skim

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