

Cancellation of 2020 Barbarian National Secondary School 1st XV Championships

Media release sent on behalf of New Zealand Schools Rugby Union in partnership with New Zealand Rugby and School Sport New Zealand.

New Zealand Schools Rugby Union (NZSRU) have today announced the cancellation of this year's Barbarian National Secondary School 1st XV Rugby Championships (known as Top Four).

The cancellation included the Top Four Girls, Top Four Boys and Top Four Co-Ed events. The decision came as a result of the delay of the rugby season due to COVID-19 and, although regrettable, was supported by both New Zealand Rugby (NZR) and School Sport New Zealand (SSNZ).

The Championships involve secondary school teams who qualify through their respective regions and was set to be played in Palmerston North during the September winter tournament week.

NZSRU Chairman Garry Chronican said the early decision meant schools and organising committees can now prioritise running local competitions.

"The Top Four championships have traditionally been the culmination of the secondary school rugby year. We've seen the start of school rugby disrupted already and now local secondary competitions can plan for a full season.

"Ultimately, young people can hopefully now enjoy an uninterrupted season. That means more rugby for them and that's a real positive."

NZR Head of Participation and Development Steve Lancaster said the organisation backed the cancellation of this year's tournament.

"This was a tough call but one that was done so with the best interests of the players, schools and organising committees in mind.

"We know how important school rugby is to thousands of students and this decision allows everyone to focus on getting local competitions up and running as quickly and safely as possible."

School Sport New Zealand CEO Garry Carnachan added that many popular sports are faced with similar difficult decisions.

“Schools and organisers have faced significant disruption this year and we are disappointed for those students that were looking forward to these events. We know that as young sports men and woman do when faced with adversity, they will reset their goals and remain committed to their sport.

“Everyone is committed to ensuring young people can participate in sport and enjoy it and we’re supporting the decision to prioritise school and club competitions from July to September without the uncertainties of national sporting events.”

NZSRU and NZR continue to work closely together on talent development opportunities for secondary school rugby players in 2020. More information will be provided in due course.