



PENGUIN INTERNATIONAL RUGBY FOOTBALL CLUB

Rugby Football Union
Kent County RFU

Lisbon Tour 15th to 19th May 2024

By Graeme Inglis, Sandra Soler-Gomez, Jay Nicholas and Craig Brown

Having played in, or coached, in 78 countries, there are several places' we Penguins love to return to. This year it was Portugal and the beautiful City of Lisbon. The last time the Penguins toured here was in 2010.

This year the Penguins migrated to Lisbon on mass. For the first time in our history, we arranged for the men's team (The Penguins), the women's team (The Rockhoppers) and the veteran's team (The King Penguins) all to go on tour together. **(The conclusion: why have we waited so long!)**. All up, including some Penguin supporters we had over 80 people on tour!



The tour kicked off on Wednesday the 15th of May, with players arriving in from far and wide. As always, the touring squad had a typically international flavour, with 11 nationalities represented.

Given the wide array of arrival times, day one on tour was designated as 'Meet & Greet' day and gave the players a chance to check into the hotel (TRYP Lisboa Caparica Mar Hotel) and pick up their tour kit. Early evening, we headed across to Tarquinio Beach-Bar for a few team bonding refreshments. Always great to feel the buzz of a new tour party as people get to know each other and share their excitement of the next few days. After a team dinner back at the hotel the players headed off into the night to see what Lisbon had to offer! (turns out nobody made it further than the cocktail bar across the road from the hotel (Bar Janus), which became our adopted clubhouse for the weekend).

Thursday morning gave the opportunity for our coaches to blow of some cobwebs from the night before and to start working on our game plan. This year the men's team was coached by long time Penguin Steve Hill and the women's team by first time Penguin and ex-Welsh internationalist Nic Evans. The King Penguins had Manager Jay organising and skipper Bruce coaching.

After training, the coaches announced the respective captains for the Penguins and Rockhopper teams for the weekend. For the men's team it was NZ 7s rep and Commonwealth Games Gold Medal winner Toby Arnold and for the women's team, Scottish Internationalist (and two-time Penguin) Megan Gaffney. It was a fitting end to Toby Arnold's glittering career, having retired after 11 seasons playing for Lyon in the Top 14 in France. Toby first toured with the Penguins to the COBRA 10s and Borneo 10s in Malaysia in 2007 (as a 22-year-old), so it was great to have him back before hanging the boots up for good!

Training over for the day and it was time for a road trip. Given the size of the touring party a fleet of transport turned up to whisk us away. After a quick stop to take in the stunning Praia da Comporta (beach), we headed to the beautiful José Maria Da Fonseca winery for a guided tour and some wine tasting. We then headed across the road to a local restaurant for a traditional Portuguese BBQ (at Casa das Tortas). It was not long before the singsong started to the bewilderment of some of the local passer's by. A great afternoon/evening was had by all.

The King Penguins were busy Friday lunch time with a visit to and assist with a rugby outreach program. The "Oh Gui: Rugby para todos" program, a community initiative launched in 2012. This program aims to provide regular rugby practice opportunities to athletes from local institutions, promoting physical and mental health. It focuses on developing values such as loyalty, teamwork, camaraderie, self-esteem, concentration, and discipline, which are essential skills for other areas of life. Penguin CEO Craig Brown expressed pride in participating in this program, noting how these activities align with Penguin Rugby's mission to make a positive impact and support rugby development at the community level. He remarked the King Penguins adapted quickly to the level of the participants.



Friday morning meant another training session for the Penguins and Rockhoppers and a chance for the coaches to add some finishing touches to their preparations. With the afternoon free, most the players headed into Lisbon for a look around and to test out a few Pasteis de Nata. Everybody then headed along to watch the King Penguins play Belenenses Vets (The Lawbsters). In what was a highly entertaining game Belenenses won out 29-21, but KP's Captain Bruce Fair was please how his troops had stuck on in there, despite being significantly down at half time, to almost pinching it towards the end.



Game Day – Back on the bus and off to the Stadium in Cascais. Both the men's and woman's team were playing a Lisbon select side, stacked full of Portuguese internationalists. First up, the women's game. The first half was very tight with both teams defending well. Having soaked up a lot of pressure the local side managed to break away for a couple of early tries against the run of play. However, the Rockhoppers managed to claw back two tries of their own to go into the break all square. In the



second half the Rockhoppers were able to lift their game and began to get the measure of the opposition. A brace of long range tries (including one particular beauty from captain Megan Gaffney) finally took the wind out the opposition sails and the Rockhoppers ran out 48-21 winners.

Next up the Penguins. In a similar match to the Rockhoppers the first half was evenly matched with some impressive defence from both sides. Again, in a similar manner to the previous game, the Penguin side started to find more room early in the second half and pulled out to an insurmountable lead. Despite a couple of well taken consultation scores by the local team the Penguins ran out 37-22 winners.

Matches over, party time! All three teams and much of the opposition hung around after the game for a few drinks and much fun at the club house. Before we knew it the buses were back to pick us up to take us back to the hotel. As the teams were not keen to pack up for the evening just yet, there was only one thing for it...back to Janus!

As always, many people to thank who made the tour possible. First up a big thanks to all the tour managers, Jingles (Penguins), Sandra (Rockhoppers) and Jay (King Penguins).

Thanks to the team coaches Steve (Penguins), Nic (Rockhoppers) and Bruce (King Penguins)

To our Physio team from Synapse, who joined us all the way from Kuala Lumpur! Fantastic effort Marc, Ting and Zailene. Veteran Penguin Sue was also on hand for strapping and much needed massages. We thank you for your continued support!



Thanks also to Andrew Chambers and his team at Tsunami for once again providing us with some 'Sick Stash'. (We heard one of the players say that!).

**NEWS
EXTRA**

Penguins put on show with Portugal stars

THE serial touring rugby club, the Penguins RFC, were back on the road this month, under the leadership of CEO Craig Brown, taking three squads to Lisbon, Portugal. A men's squad, a women's squad (the Rockhoppers), and the Veterans team (the King Penguins) based themselves in Caparica on the west coast of Lisbon. Two training sessions – obviously not for the King Penguins – and some evening bonding, over food and much drink, helped bring the squads closer together.

After spending Friday afternoon coaching a squad of disabled teenagers the King Penguins, captained by Bruce Fare, lost 29-21 to a younger, less weary vets team, the Belenenses Lawbsters.

On Saturday afternoon the Rockhoppers, managed by Sandra Soler-Gomez and coached by Nic Evans secured an

impressive 48-21 win over a Portugal Select XV at Cascais RFC. Following that match the men's team played a strong Lisbon Select XV which included a number of the players who represented Portugal at the 2023 World Cup squad.

This was a ferocious match with no quarter given. While both teams attacked from everywhere the Penguins defensive organisation proved decisive. The Penguins International XV, managed by Graeme Inglis and coached by Steve Hill, eventually secured a 37-22 victory. The post-match festivities, with 75 Penguins members and many more Portuguese rugby folk, were tremendous and by some way the most important part of the weekend. The two Saturday squads comprised players of eight nationalities from 31 rugby clubs.

STEVE HILL

We also have several people who kindly signed up to Sponsor a Day on Tour. Thanks again for your continued support.



- ❖ Tom & Penny Wacker
- ❖ Yuill Irvine
- ❖ Abby Moonbeam-Brown
- ❖ Ben Dormer
- ❖ Marianne Øckland
- ❖ Bill Calcraft
- ❖ Ian Warbrick



Finally, a big shout out to our Portuguese friends Antonio and Pedro for making the tour so successful. For this trip we used the services of Antonios's Sports Management Company (Move Sports <https://www.movesports.com/en/>), who organised all our transport, hotels, training facilities, excursions, and games. The whole tour ran extremely smoothly and all 80 of the Penguin contingent had a fantastic few days back in Lisbon. Obrigodo!

Press report: The Rugby Paper, 26 May 2024

Move Sport feature on the trip with an interview with Penguin CEO Craig Brown

<https://www.movesports.com/en/field-stories/sports-tours/exploring-penguin-rugby-s-impactful-tour-to-portugal-exclusive-insights-from-ceo-craig-brown>

King Penguins supporting the Oh Gui: Rugby para todos" community initiative program



King Penguins in Action



King Penguin Squad

Player/Official	Club	Player/Official	Club
Bruce Fair (Tour Captain)	Northampton	Goncalo Foro	CUDL
Jay Nicholas (Tour Manager)	West Hartlepool	Joao Alvim	CUDL
Liam Turner	Redcar	Nate Morris	Wasps
Kanwaljit Basra	Bedford	Pedro Neto	Belenenses
Gary Coltherd	Orkney	Pierre Azzopardi	Kavalleri
Antonio Da Cahuna	Belenenses	Tiago Girao	CUDL
Bernardo Duarte	Agronomia	Julio Farias	Belenenses
Bernardo Salvador Marques	Cascais	Glen McLellan	Orkney RFC
Dan Romford Holmes	Hertford	Ross Haddow	Leicester Tigers
Derek Robb	Orkney	Jon Chico	Longwy Leicestershire U21s
Francisco Bello	CUDL	John McLellan	Watsonians
Craig Brown (Boss)	Waikato Uni	Dougie Meikle (Hydration Officer)	Watsonians
Graeme Inglis (Entertainment Officer)	Watsonians	Doug Thackery (Chico Minder)	Dubai Hurricanes
Duncan McNab (Comedy Officer)	Howe of Fife		

The Penguins in Action



Penguin Squad

Player	Club	Honours	Player	Club	Honours
Charlie Brabham	Chinnor	Wales U18, Bristol	Mark McCormack	Newton Stewart	Glasgow District
James Imrie	Hawks	North & Midlands	Alex Sears	Esher	Counties U20
Ale Loman	Lugi Lions	Sweden	Leo Jowett	Coventry	
Calum Harris	Westcombe Park	Scotland U20	Joe Ross	Billingham	
Ben Gompels	Cambridge Uni	Bristol Bears	Jak Rossiter	RAMS	
Gregor Gillanders	Rosslyn Park, Leicester	England U19 & U21	Ien Ashcroft Leigh	Barnes	Spain
Oscar Larsson	Pingvins	Sweden	Antonio Kiri Kiri	Maidenhead	Manawatu, Blues, NZ 7s & U20

Matt Harrison	Westcombe Park	Counties U20, Kent	Toby Arnold (captain)	Lyon, Tauranga Sports	Bay of Plenty, NZ 7s
Player	Club	Player	Club	Player	Club
Rory Marsh	Barnes	Ben Henderson	RAMs	Finlay Broomfield	Watsonians
Ollie Southgate	Mosely	Toby Wallace	Westcombe Park		

The Rockhoppers in Action





Rockhopper Squad

Player	Club	Honours	Player	Club
Katie Dougan	Wasps	Scotland XV's	Marion Ridgway	Sale Sharks
Molly Kelly	Sale Sharks	Wales XV's	Katie-Louise Moore	Sale sharks
Emma Hardy	Loughborough Lightning	England U20 & 7s	Karis Stevens	Bonymaen
Morfudd Ifans	Caernarfon	Wales XV's	Lucy Lawford-Wilby	Saracens
Pearl Kellie	Heriot's Rugby Club	Philippines 7s	Eloïse Bloomfield	Old Albanian Saints
Lucy Winter	Watsonians FC	Scotland XV's	Cara Cookland	Sale Sharks
Megan Gaffney	Heriot's	Scotland 7s & XV's	Alice Iwanejko	Sale Sharks
Vivian Bahlmann	Richmond Rugby	Germany 15s - 6 Caps	Zoe Dare	Cheltenham Tigers
Olivia Andrews	Canterbury	Ireland U18s & 7s	Georgina Kreysa	Old Albanian Saints
Emma Hennessy	Cheltenham Tigers	Wales 7s	Bethany Plumpton	Ivybridge Ladies
Francesca Sberna	Rugby Calvisano	Italy 7s & XV's		
Matilde Goes	Sport Lisboa e Benfica	Portugal 7s & XV's		
Evie Tonkin	Sale Sharks	Scotland 7s & XV's		
Danyelle Dinapoli	Cheltenham Tigers	Wales Rugby League		

After Match & Supporters

