

AMENDMENT: China Lions ready to roar into competition

China Lions head coach Mike Rogers has selected a squad that has a blend of youth and enthusiasm mixed with power, speed and experience.

Global Rapid Rugby season one, officially kicks-off this weekend and Rogers says he is happy with the squad he has chosen for Rapid Rugby 2020.

“We have some really great talent in our squad and the side is looking forward to getting the season underway on a positive note.”

The Lions played a preseason warmup match against Manuma Samoa at Blake Park, in Mount Maunganui, New Zealand on Saturday, beating the visitors 42-14.

Rogers says the side is now looking forward to their season opener against the Fijian Latui at ANZ Stadium, Fiji at 6.15pm (local time).

“There are no easy games and it’s going to be a challenge but it’s an exciting one. It’s a little bit like Formula One Racing.

“To begin with it’s a technology race, then it becomes a team race. In our instance it’s adapting to new rules and putting together a squad of players with the right skill-sets that will suit the modified rules.

“Then once the competition gets underway, it’s going to be a real race around figuring out how we do this.”

Lions’ captain Hugh Blake says the side is hungry and energised for their first hit up against Fijian Latui.

“You only do something for the first time once and the pressure is on us to show what the China Lions’ style of rugby is. You could say Rapid Rugby is the perfect canvas to show that.”

The fast moving, high scoring, action packed game that is ready to burst onto the world stage, has made Rogers look to some other senior players to help Blake mould his younger players into the international arena.

“We’ve got a little bit of a different approach for our leadership model. Currently we have only four players, that is Hugh, Fa’asi Fuatai, Dan Hollinshead and Mathew Skipwith-Garland, but we also have a wisdom group and that comprises of Hoani Matenga, Dwayne Sweeny and Greg Pleasants-Tate,” the coach says.

“In our recruitment we were really mindful of wanting to bring in guys who will really help the younger players along. They have played a lot of rugby in the Super Rugby level. Their job is around training, on and off field leadership, being really calm and collected. To have these guys in our squad is really powerful.”

Rogers says he is also looking forward to the Chinese coaches and players joining the squad once the travel restrictions are lifted.

“Getting them into this environment it will be a great opportunity to expose Chinese players and coaches to this level of rugby, having them fully integrated into this environment will not only help these individuals but Chinese rugby as a whole.”

The China Lions is part of an innovative partnership between China Rugby Football Association and Bay of Plenty Rugby.

China Rugby Football Association’s, Director of the Multi-Ball Games Administrative Centre of the General Administration of Sport Yingbiao Chen says the Chinese people enjoyed sport and there is a lot of opportunities for rugby to develop in the country because of the partnership.

“The joint venture will benefit both countries and I am confident the China Lions team will have a great season.”

Bay of Plenty Rugby chief executive Mike Rogers, (who shares the same name as the Lions’ coach) says seeing Rapid Rugby come to fruition is a satisfying feeling.

“We are really excited about the inaugural season of Global Rapid Rugby. We have assembled a strong team and expect the side to be competitive and play a dynamic brand of rugby.

“Our partnership with China Rugby Football Association is a long-term commitment to fostering rugby in China and we look forward to building a strong fan base in China over the coming seasons.”

How to watch China Lions games

- For avid rugby fans who are wanting to watch all China Lions games, Rapidrugby.com will be the number one destination for Season One matches in 2020.
- Worldwide digital provider Rugby Pass will also carry all 31 games live and on-demand through its free-to-view YouTube Channel in all regions (excluding New Zealand).
- In China, you can watch for free on Rapidrugby.com or RugbyPass.com
- In Australia, subscription streaming service Kayo Sports will broadcast all 31 matches live and on-demand in Australia. Subscription TV provider Fox Sports may broadcast some matches live and on replay
- In Fiji, Fiji Broadcasting Corporation will broadcast games on free-to-air television
- In New Zealand, Sky Sport TV will broadcast games on to paid subscribers
- In Samoa, TV1 Samoa will broadcast games on free-to-air television

Home Game Tickets

New Zealand games

Online Prices:

Under 5’s: Free

Child: \$5.00 (5-15 years)

Adult: \$10.00 (16+)

*Booking fees apply

Gate Prices:

Under 5's: Free

Child: \$10.00 (5-15 years)

Adult: \$15.00 (16+)

Tickets available from www.ticketmaster.co.nz from Friday 13 March.

Australia games

Details to be announced at a later date

China Lions

Forwards

Abraham Papali'i	No 8	Bay of Plenty, NZ
Apitoni Toia	Prop	Bay of Plenty, NZ
Gao Yinghao	Flanker	Shandong, China
Greg Pleasants-Tate	Hooker	Southland, NZ
Haereiti Hetet	LH Prop	Waikato, NZ
Hoani Matenga	Flanker	Bay of Plenty, NZ
Hugh Blake	Flanker	Bay of Plenty, NZ
Iosefa Maloney-Fiaola	Lock	Bay of Plenty, NZ
Joe Johnston	Flanker	Bay of Plenty, NZ
Kohan Herbert	Flanker	Bay of Plenty, NZ
Li Haitao	Lock	Shandong, China
Liu Luda	Flanker	Shandong, China
Nic Souchon	Hooker	Bay of Plenty, NZ
Nico Aandewiel	Prop	Waikato, NZ
Ray Tatafu	Lock	Southland, NZ
Solomona Sakalia	LH Prop	Bay of Plenty, NZ
Stan van den Hoven	Lock	Bay of Plenty, NZ
Tevita Mafileo	Prop	Bay of Plenty, NZ

Tevita Sole	Prop	Bay of Plenty, NZ
Viliami Leo Tosi	Prop	Southland, NZ

Backs

Dan Changshun	Wing	Shandong, China
Dan Hollinshead	1st/2nd Five	Bay of Plenty, NZ
Declan Barnett	Wing	Bay of Plenty, NZ
Dwayne Sweeney	1st/2nd Five	Waikato, NZ
Fa'asiu Fuatai	Wing	Bay of Plenty, NZ
James Little	Centre	North Harbour, NZ
Leroy Carter	Half Back	Bay of Plenty, NZ
Liam Coombes-Fabling	Fullback	Waikato, NZ
Luke Campbell	Half Back	Bay of Plenty, NZ
Mathew Skipwith-Garland	Centre	Bay of Plenty, NZ
Pryor Collier	Fullback	Bay of Plenty, NZ
Solofa Silipa	1st/2nd Five	Auckland, NZ
Te Aihe Toma	Half Back	Bay of Plenty, NZ
Tyler Campbell	Wing	Waikato, NZ

Management

Clayton McMillan	Campaign Manager	Bay of Plenty, NZ
Mike Rogers	Head Coach	Bay of Plenty, NZ
Marty Bourke	Assistant Coach	Bay of Plenty, NZ
Mike Delany	Assistant Coach	Bay of Plenty, NZ
Yu Xiaoxiang	Assistant Coach	Shandong, China
Wayne Brill	Manager	Bay of Plenty, NZ
Guan Yanbin	Assistant Manager	Shangxi, China
Thomas Stebbing	Strength & Conditioning	Bay of Plenty NZ
Scott Joblin	Asst Strength & Conditioning	Bay of Plenty, NZ
Andrew Tai Kie	Doctor	Bay of Plenty, NZ
Brandon Olsen	Physiotherapist	Bay of Plenty, NZ