

SEVENS by Sally Price.

Sally Price is the England Sevens Media Manager.

Sevens rugby has always been regarded as a great introduction to rugby. With its shorter games and fewer players, it is easier to understand than the fifteen-a-side version. The IRB Sevens is now in its seventh season and England is currently ranked second behind Fiji. The RFU uses sevens as a development tool for young elite players. England Sevens Coach, Mike Friday, looks to develop exciting young talent from the premiership clubs and help the players progress to the senior England team. One third of the senior England squad who were involved in the autumn Investec Challenge matches had been involved in England Sevens over the past few years, clearly illustrating how useful sevens can be in developing a player's core skills. Mike Friday says, "With only seven players on the pitch there is nowhere for the players to hide so a player's skills are exposed. The players have to be incredibly fit to cope with international sevens as they play up to six matches in two days in often hot and challenging conditions."

England departed for the next two legs of the IRB Sevens last weekend and the IRB has revealed that sevens continues to grow in popularity around the world. The first two IRB Sevens tournaments in this series, which were won by England and Fiji respectively, attracted record viewing figures around the world. Over 150 million homes in over 120 countries enjoyed the tournaments, which is already an increase of 35% season on season.

In the UK, ITV Sport broadcast their highlights programme on ITV1 and over half a million people tuned in to watch the England squad, which included Player of the Tournament Tom Varndell, alongside regulars Simon Amor and Henry Paul, lift the Emirates Airline Dubai Sevens for the second successive year.

The only UK based tournament in the IRB Sevens is also growing in popularity with 25,000 people enjoying the finals day at Twickenham last June. An impressive sixteen nations will contest the Emirates Airline London Sevens again on 3rd and 4th June.

The continued growth in popularity of international sevens is also reflected in interest in the rugby sevens at this year's Commonwealth Games in Australia. The second and final day of the sevens is a sell out, meaning that over 55,000 spectators will enjoy the likes of England, New Zealand and Fiji battle it out for a gold medal.

Keep up to date with England's progress on the sevens circuit at www.rfu.com/sevens