

New Zealand Maori vs Japan, Napier - June 2008

Contributed by Mr BMR789
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Rugby fans in the Auckland region, Waikato and Hawke's Bay are in for a treat next year with the venues for New Zealand Maori's three home matches of the 2008 IRB Pacific Nations Cup confirmed today.

New Zealand Maori will play in the competition for the first time next year and will play home games against Tonga, Samoa and Japan.

The New Zealand Maori v Tonga match will be played at North Harbour Stadium in Albany on Saturday 7 June. Two weeks later on Saturday 21 June, the Maori will take on Samoa at Hamilton's Waikato Stadium with the final home match against Japan on Saturday 28 June at Napier's McLean Park.

The game in Napier will be the city's first international fixture since 2003, when the New Zealand Divisional XV played against Tonga.

New Zealand Maori's participation in the IRB Pacific Nations Cup means it will be the first time since 2005 that this iconic New Zealand rugby team will play on home soil. In their last home match, New Zealand Maori beat the British & Irish Lions in Hamilton in their first win over the tourists.

New Zealand Rugby Union Professional Rugby Manager Neil Sorensen said rugby fans in the host cities were in for a treat.

"For nearly a century New Zealand Maori has enjoyed iconic status in New Zealand and internationally and it is fantastic that rugby followers in the Auckland region, Waikato and Hawke's Bay will have the chance to watch this team play."

Sorensen said the performance of Samoa and Tonga on the world stage this year was a boost for the game in their countries and encouraging for next year's IRB Pacific Nations Cup. Similarly, Japan continues to impress at international level.

"As we know, Samoa and Tonga are proud rugby nations and they once again showed their ability at the Rugby World Cup this year. We are delighted to once again host our Pacific Island neighbours and Japan next year."

2008 home schedule for New Zealand Maori
7 June: New Zealand Maori v Tonga, Albany
21 June: New Zealand Maori v Samoa, Hamilton
28 June: New Zealand Maori v Japan, Napier

The IRB will announce the full schedule for the 2008 Pacific Nations Cup in due course.