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never held the World Cup • Dana Johannsen · 09:00, Apr 06 2022

The World Cup winning captains who have



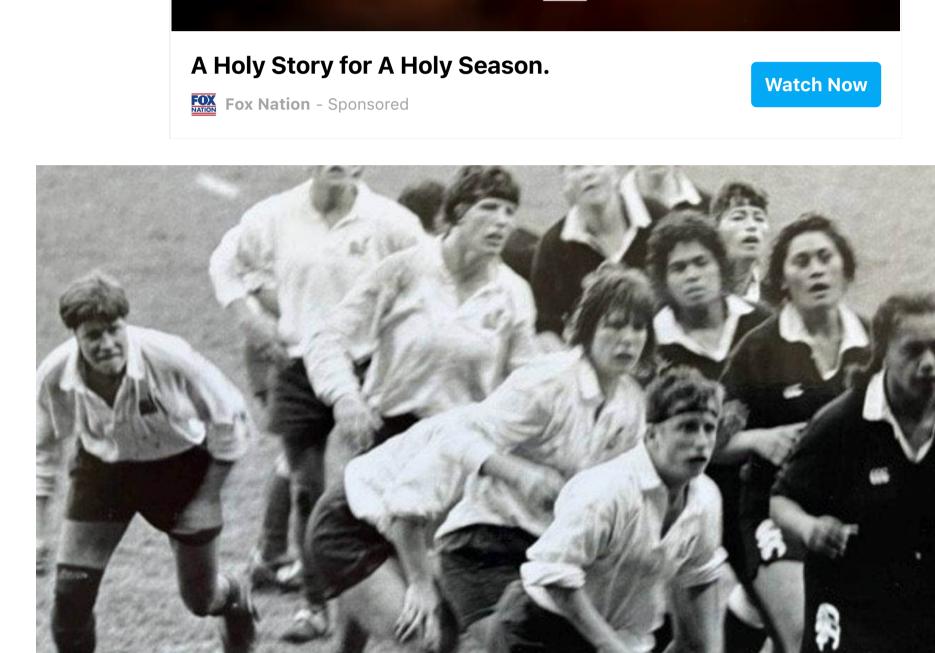
speaks to the first two World Cup winning captains about what the gesture means to them.

contribution to the women's game. National correspondent Dana Johannsen

For a magic two weeks in 1991, Barbara Bond did not need to explain herself. Back at home in the United States, the captain of the national women's rugby team was used to having to constantly have to justify her space in the game, whether that be explaining to well-meaning friends and colleagues that women do play rugby, or, at the other end of the scale, tackling opposition from within the men's rugby playing establishment. The inaugural women's Rugby World Cup in Cardiff - a tournament dreamed

up and organised by a group of four pioneering women in the UK - felt like "coming home". **ADVERTISING**

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section like 'here are these crazy women doing this crazy thing'," says Bond, who co-captained the US team with Mary Sullivan. "You always had to almost defend yourself, or justify what you were doing all

the time. So going to Cardiff, Wales - a rugby playing nation was huge. Here

was a place you never had to explain what rugby is, or what are the rules, so

that was just incredible. And we were among a whole bunch of women who

"To us, it always felt like a World Cup, regardless of what the IRB said."

The USA take on New Zealand in the semifinals of the 1991 Rugby World Cup. The USA scored a major upset defeating

"The weird thing about playing rugby in the United States - especially back

then - is you labour in total obscurity because people didn't even know what

rugby was. If there was an article in the newspaper it was always in the 'Style'

New Zealand 7-0 on their way to taking out the inaugural title.

all took rugby as seriously as I did."

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Bond's team went on to make history as the inaugural winners of the Rugby

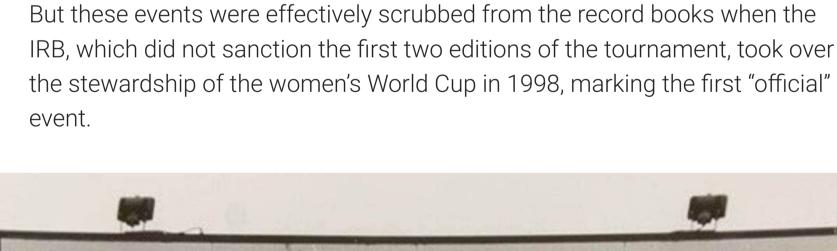
Bond scored the only try in a brutal 7-0 contest ("it was a pushover try, so it

was really a team try"), before defeating England in the final at Cardiff Arms

Three years later in Scotland, Karen Almond's English side avenged the loss,

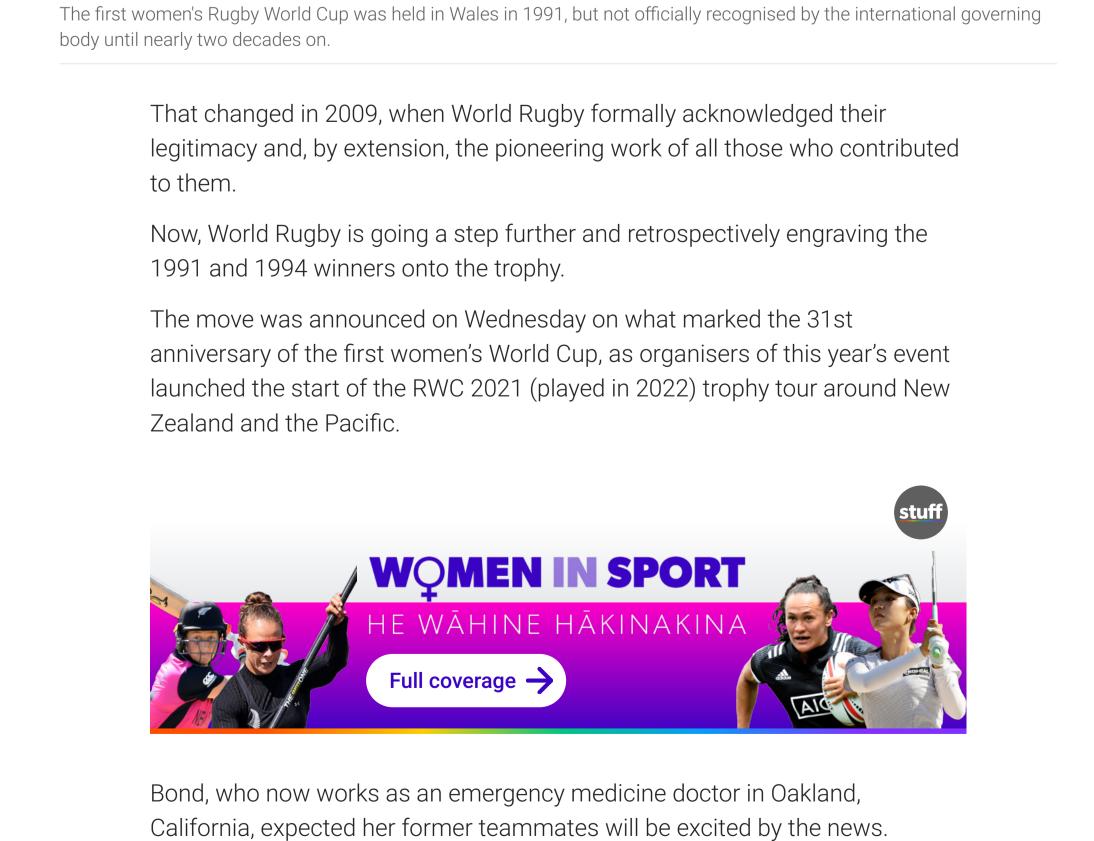
taking out the tournament with a 38-23 win over the US in the final.

World Cup, claiming an upset win over New Zealand in the semifinal, in which



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"I think a lot of people will feel like it is about time," says Bond.

"It was challenging to not have what we were doing at that time recognised,

acknowledged, not just for our team but for all people who participated. There

were so many people involved in trying to make that first tournament happen."

but people will be very appreciative also to have that accomplishment



The Rugby World Cup 2021 (played in 2022) trophy tour will kick off this month, reaching fans across New Zealand and the

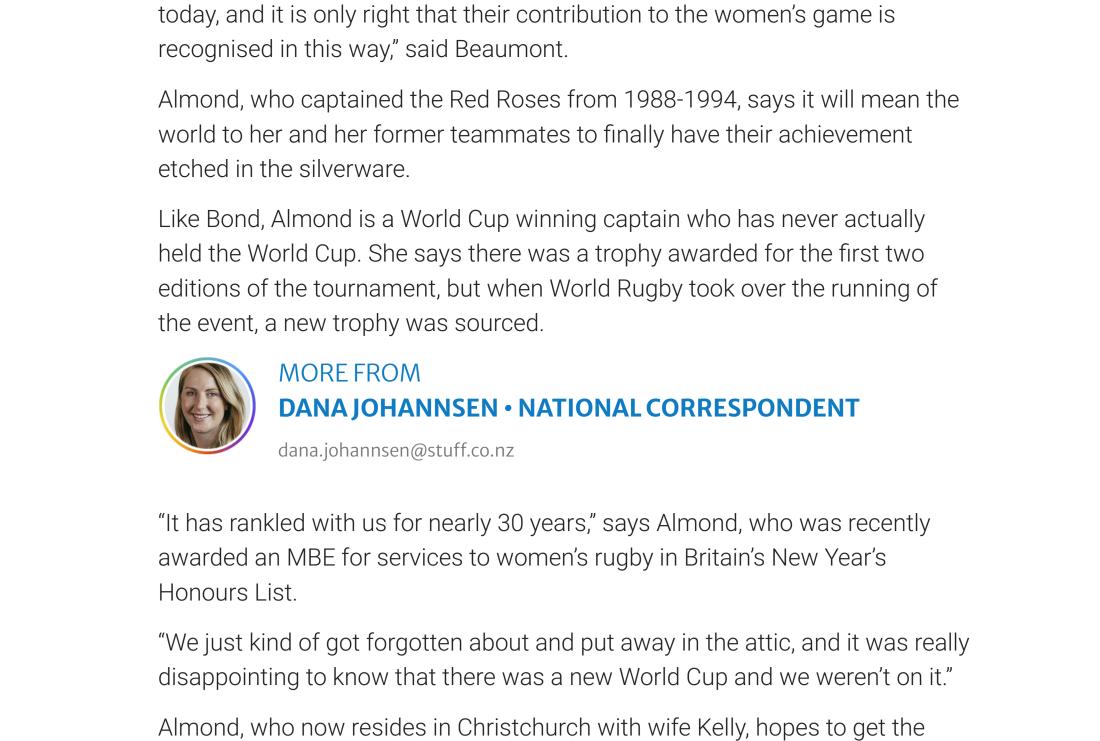
World Rugby chairman Bill Beaumont acknowledged that the gesture was an

important step in honouring the dedicated women who got the tournament

"Those involved played a significant role in paving the way for the players of

Pacific Islands in the lead-up to the tournament.

off the ground.



opportunity to get up close to the World Cup later this year when New Zealand

host the tournament for the first time. She plans to get up to Auckland to

watch England, one of the favourites for the title, and hopes some of her

"For us, the memories from 1991 and 1994 are still so fresh," she says.

women who basically drove women's rugby forward and tried to get a

"It was purely amateur, purely voluntary, purely a bunch of very dedicated

foothold in what was then a very male-dominated bastion. The adversity we

Wednesday marks the start of the Rugby World Cup 2021 Trophy Tour which

kicks off at Eden Park, Auckland where the opening match day will be staged

The tour will reach fans in every corner of Aotearoa New Zealand, including

former teammates will be able to travel out to join her.

faced really brought us together."

on October 8.

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About the RWC 2021 Trophy Tour

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Stewart Island and the Chatham Islands off the east coast of the South Island. A detour across the South Pacific will also see the trophy take in Samoa, Tonga, Fiji, Papua New Guinea and the Cook Islands, as part of Rugby World Cup 2021's Championing Oceania programme to grow and support women and girls' rugby in the islands.

The trophy tour offers the chance to see silverware up close, take part in fun

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rugby activities, learn about the women's game and meet women's rugby

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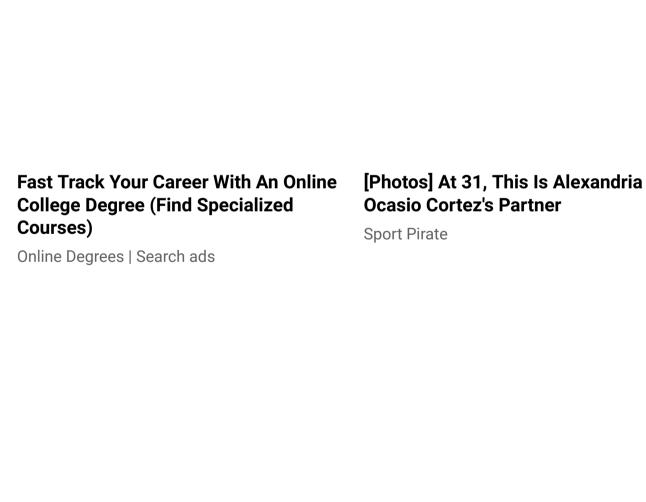
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