

The 1994 US Women's World Cup Team

One of the Great U.S. Teams

"I recall bagpipes, lots, and lots of bagpipes."

The US women showed up to the finals of the [1994 Women's World Cup](#) having shattered the international scoring record.

Over four preliminary matches they had outscored their opponent by a combined score of 364-15. The local press described their play as 'pyrotechnics' for their explosive ability to score.

It was an extraordinarily talented U.S. team. The backline had four future Hall of Fame players including fullback [Jen Crawford](#), who at the time was celebrated as the greatest back in the women's game. Jen was joined by future Hall of Fame players Candi Orsini, Krista McFarren, and Patty Jervey (who was the most capped player on the U.S. team). The forwards were also a celebrated and experienced bunch. The most decorated U.S. prop at the time and 1991 World Cup alumna Annie Flavin, was at loosehead and MA Sorensen was the steady, powerful anchor at tighthead. 1991 World Cup alumnae Tara Flanagan, Jan Rutkowski, Kathy Flores, Mary Dixey, Patty Connell, Cassie Law and Captain, Barb Bond provided international experience and power. It was a large and impressive roster, and the players did not disappoint over the first four games. But in the finals, they met their match.

Selecting the US team:

After the 1991 World Cup win several U.S. players and administrators pressed USARFU to fund more international play for the U.S. women's team. The players recognized that to maintain U.S. supremacy they would need a plan for more international exposure and the addition of a developmental squad to the U.S. Women's National Program. USARFU made it clear to the women's committee that no such support would be forthcoming. Always in DIY mode, the U.S. selectors invited developmental players to the U.S. squad in 1992. The developmental players were given the opportunity to play in high level matches at the Champagne Classic, Can Am and the Canada Cup. A number of these players like Alex Williams, Amy Westerman, distinguished themselves and were on the 1994 World Cup roster. But identifying talent was a struggle for the U.S. Women's National Program partly because there really wasn't a national 'program', there were a handful of matches preceded by short gatherings of the squad. The engine for talent development and identification were the territorial teams.



Selections for the U.S. women's national team in the late 1980's and early 1990's were in the hands of a group of territorial selectors chosen by the Women's Committee and led by Elaine Recchiuti. All territorial selectors were charged with developing a territorial depth chart and 'positional pool' of players. The territorial selector worked with a group of local selectors who watched matches and rated players at territorial championships. At the end of the day the selectors would meet to discuss their observations and give all the paperwork to the lead selector. At the end of the weekend the lead selector would review all the paperwork, and mail copies to all participants (approximately 130 players), in addition copies needed to be mailed to territorial representatives, coaches, managers and members of the women's committee. All this was done on paper and through postal mail. It's something to see the notebooks with multiple copies of rosters, selections notes, and injury reports. In the documents you can see hashmarks and comments about players from selectors. These notes became numerical ratings fed into a master document. But one thing was clear, the sole vehicle for selection to the national team is ITT's (Elaine Recchiuti, correspondence, 10.22.93).

The 1993 Inter Territorial Championships (ITT's) were held December 4th and 5th in San Francisco, California. The location and format for the tournament was thrown into turmoil by the accusation that a few members of the Women's Committee had bowed to pressure to coordinate ITT's with a tournament at Stanford without notifying territorial representatives. It was a hairdo with some strongly worded letters, faxes and calls flying back and forth. But in the end, ITT's were held at Stanford in conjunction with a Stanford tournament and the player pool for the 1994 teams was selected.

As Jami Jordan, Chair of the Women's Committee from 1989-1993 recalls, *By and large, the Women's Committee operated on a consensus basis, but we did vote on things. My memory is that we agreed on many things and that we were usually in alignment or at least mostly in alignment. But the selection of national team coaches was the most contentious. Much of that can be attributed to intense regional loyalties to certain coaches that were off-putting to other regions.*

The selection process would remain a contentious issue for Head Coach Franck Boivert. After the loss to England in the final, Boivert offered: *I met the team just three days before the game and didn't know them very well. Also, I had to work with a selection committee that was not very competent. With the personnel we had we were not able to implement our gameplan.* (Michael Malone interview, April 24, 1994. Published in Rugby Magazine, May 23, 1994). The assertion that Boivert met the team three days before the first game is not accurate, as Boivert was in attendance for the two team camps at Stanford and he coached the U.S. team in the 1993 Canada Cup, which the U.S. lost to England.

As Women's Committee member at the time Jami Jordan noted, *'from the beginning the selection of the World Cup team was a push pull for control between the coaches and the Women's Committee.'* *The selection committee chose the best players available at the time who could afford to go. There may have been talented players available who could not afford to come up with \$4,000 or \$5,000 in a relatively short period of time but that was the reality of the situation at the time - a player would have to have the financial means to attend three camps and pay for the trip to Scotland to be considered.'*

Oddly after all the territorial investments and lists of player pools, twenty seven of the 1994 U.S. Women's World Cup squad came from just two territories, the East, and the Pacific. The thirty-player team consisted of fourteen

players from California and thirteen players from the east coast. Only three players, Krista McFarren (Louisiana via Maryland), Christie Nixon and Julie Gray (Minnesota) represented other parts of the country. Beantown had the greatest number of players on the roster with eight, followed by the Bay Area SheHawks (BASH) with six players on the roster.

Many players on the roster were perennial national team players with outstanding rugby reputations and resumes. Their experience and talent were known to the selectors, but all players had to show up and play 'head-to-head' for their spots at ITT's. This often meant three or four games at ITT's followed by a competitive camp to identify the top players in each position. Meanwhile the World Cup was falling apart.

Organizing the Second Women's World Cup:

By the fall of 1993, the 1994 Women's World Cup was hanging by a thread. That it did finally come together was a miracle cooked up by a tenacious group of Scottish women.

The Netherlands was slated to host the '94 Cup but months prior to the tournament they ran into trouble. While women's rugby in the Netherlands was integrated into the larger Dutch Rugby Union, the organizers decided to form a separate foundation for hosting the World Cup, *the Foundation for the Women's Rugby World Cup 1994*. While in communication with their male counterparts, The Foundation did not create formal ties with the Dutch Rugby Union or the International Rugby Board (IRB) now, World Rugby.

In October of 1993 several IRB member countries announced they would not allow their women's teams to participate in the World Cup as the event did not have formal ties with the IRB. The Dutch Rugby Union and the Foundation were forced to announce that they were postponing the tournament until 1996. This was a cancellation, not a postponement. The 1998 Women's World Cup would be held in the Netherlands. The first World Cup to have the IRB's blessing. [The US would again make the finals, this time against a dominant New Zealand team](#) in the final, losing 44-12. But in 1994, The Dutch women's team really had no say in the matter, the IRB was miffed and made it clear that if the Dutch went ahead with the tournament, the IRB would suspend the Dutch membership. The Dutch Rugby Union threatened the tournament organizers that if the Foundation went ahead with the tournament, they would cancel the entire women's national program. The Dutch Union (Nederlands Rugby Bond) notified the US Women's Committee December 29, 1993, of their decision to cancel the 1994 Women's World Cup.

That's when *Scotland women - fully supported by the Scottish Rugby Union and the Women's Rugby Football Union stepped into the breach. The tournament was scheduled for April 10-24, giving Scotland three months and ten days to organize the entire tournament. The lack of IRB approval meant that several women's teams would be unable to participate including, New Zealand, Germany, and Italy. As IRB continued to withhold approval the organizing committee began hedging their bets calling the tournament the 'World Championship' and the 'World Cup.' Given that some top teams were not going to be playing, some unions, including the U.S. raised concerns about calling it a World Cup. The distinction between a World Championship or a World Cup was significant as it affected the legitimacy of the tournament. Ultimately the organizing committee took a leap, dropping 'World Championship' from their materials and moved ahead with the title, World Cup. The organizers held their breath, but the IRFB did not push back.

Given the 'lean, mean' nature of putting on a World Cup in under three months, the tournament organizers informed all participating teams that they were solely responsible for their organizing costs including organizing their travel, accommodations, and practice logistics. In addition, teams were required to bring their own physicians and trainers as no medical support could be provided by the tournament organizers.

Final selections for the U.S. squad were announced February 7. U.S. players were told that in addition to funding their expenses to the World Cup, they would have to pay to attend four camps. Three of those camps were scheduled to be held at Stanford (one camp had already been held at Stanford immediately after ITT's), while one was to be held in Philadelphia (the Philadelphia camp would later be cancelled). The coaches and selection committee deemed the training camps mandatory and warned players that their selection would be jeopardized if they did not attend all the camps.

Never slackers, the Women's Committee got to work organizing fundraising, marketing, and kit donations. The fundraising efforts were hampered by the time frame as well as the tremendous amount of work the members of the women's committee had to take on to work out the logistics of getting a thirty-person squad as well as coaches and support staff to the World Cup. In the end, thanks to a \$10,000 donation, the committee was able to raise approximately \$15,000. Ruggers Inc. stepped in to provide kit. But ultimately most of the cost of travel, lodging and food fell to individual players.

The cost for the entire World Cup experience was approximately \$3,500 per player. Players from the east coast faced a larger financial burden as they had to pay for travel to the west coast in three months. Mindful of this burden, the women's committee suggested that the players agree to a cost sharing arrangement: everyone invited to the camps would chip into a larger 'pot of money' (\$5000) and those funds would be used to offset player travel costs. Moreover, west coast players agreed to house players traveling to the camps.

Women's Committee member Jami Jordan recalls: *We were concerned that players on the east coast had to assume a larger financial burden than those on the west coast, so we did the best we could at the time. We were concerned that players could become resentful of one another over costs. Whether it [the cost sharing] worked is debatable.*

Another tactic was to choose a travel squad of thirty players, thus spreading the cost sharing over a larger group. However, with only four games over a two-week period there was a recognition that many players would not get much, if any, playing time. As a result of the meager budget, accommodations in Scotland were sparse. As one player recalls, the hotel was spartan and often cold - and meals were not adequate for rugby players. I remember how happy I was when we had time to go to a meal with parents—we pigged out!

#8 Alex Williams recalls: *We stayed in the Braid Hills Hotel, which was the same hotel my grandmother had honeymooned in many years prior. We were always hungry and there would be a race after practice to walk (run) into town to get to the tiny "jacket potato" shop to buy a hot baked potato, heaped with toppings, before they ran out. I doubt they ever got that much business again, we literally ate them out of potatoes every day.*

Jan Rutkowski recalls: *My mother and aunt came over to Edinburgh for part of the tournament. Their hosts where they stayed were so excited to hear that their daughter/niece played for the US. They kept their kitchen open to have me over for dinner after practice one evening. And they were very excited to get a USA pin from me. My mom and aunt were on the field after the final watching me sign autographs for young girls. That's when I think my mother's opinion of me playing rugby changed.*

The financial burden and loss of work time players incurred attending training camps made it difficult for the entire squad to come together for significant training time. Many believed that this lack of training time together would become the teams Achilles heel. In a postscript published by the Women's Committee, the consensus was that the *US squad lack of consistent opportunities to engage in high-level training and competitions* was clearly a significant impediment to their ability to win the Cup. Moreover, the players and coaches expressed frustration that their competitors, Canada and England were given the resources by their governing bodies to play a regular international schedule. The feeling was that without guaranteed funding support from USAR the U.S. Women would watch teams pass them by. (Nov 11-13, 1994, Women's Committee AGM Notes).

Emma Mitchell, the English scrumhalf recalls England facing similar challenges but disputes that the English women received support for a regular international schedule.

We received no support from the RFU. None. The Rugby Football Union for Women (WRFU) remained separate from the RFU until around 2006-2008. We operated under a 'pay to play' model covering all our own training and travel costs.

However, the English women were able to convene more often than the U.S. *We got together as a squad as often as we could (one or two weekends a month) during the season and in the build-up to the tournament.* (Emma Mitchell, correspondence 3/6/2024)

On to the games:

[Much thanks to Michael Malone, Rugby Magazine, May 23, 1994, pages 8-10 for the game reporting that informed the following]:

The scramble to put together the World Cup came together and in mid-April, twelve teams convened for the tournament. The teams were divided into four pools with the top two from each pool advancing to championship play. The U.S. found itself in pool one with Sweden and Japan. Pool two included England, Scotland, and Russia. Pool three included Ireland, France, and a combined Scottish University Side (who filled in after Spain dropped out days before the tournament). Pool four included Wales, Canada, and Kazakhstan.

Alex Williams: *The pool matches were held at clubs scattered around Scotland, so we spent a lot of time in coaches driving through the beautiful, green countryside. As it was spring, there were bouncy lambs cavorting literally everywhere. After those pool matches, our fans would tell us stories of hearing the old gents in the stands complaining about women playing the game before the match started. By the time the matches ended, they were in awe of the speedy, wide-open game we played. That USA squad definitely helped people realize maybe they weren't so dead set against women playing rugby after all.*

Pool one was based out of Melrose Scotland, a charming, 'rugby mad' town about fifty miles from Edinburgh. The US opened play April 11 against Sweden beating the Swedes 111-0. Fullback Krista McFarren led the US with six tries. Wing, Pam Irby scored five tries; Flyhalf Jos Bergman, four tries and four conversions, Center, Candi Orsini two tries, Center, Elise Huffer one try, and flanker, Sherri Hunt one try, Jen Crawford posted four conversion kicks. It was a scary display of U.S. firepower that immediately won over Scottish fans. Jen Crawford recalls: *as it turns out, Crawford is a very Scottish name, so they were yelling my last name REALLY loud "Come on Craaaaawwwford"!*

Four days later the U.S. kicked off against what seemed like a fit and determined Japanese side. But a few minutes into the match the U.S. was once again scoring at will. The forwards and the backs worked in synch exploding for 121 points and setting an international scoring record. The speed and the strength of the U.S. squad was frightening with the U.S. creating gaps, overloads or simply running over defenders. In the end, fullback Amy Westerman led the U.S. with five tries and three conversions. Alex Williams added three tries from the #8 spot, Brett Newton scored three tries from center, Tara Flanagan had two tries at lock, Patty Connell scored twice from the scrumhalf position and Laurie Spicer-Bordon added one try to the avalanche of points. Julie Dustrup recorded five conversions.

Flanker Sheri Hunt recalls: *One of the most inspiring moments for me was at the after-party with Japan. While we beat them 121-0, they were good sports after losing. As a team they were tactically perfect. Their players had skills and they really supported each other on the pitch.*

Over two matches in pool play the U.S. had scored 232 points. Neither Sweden nor Japan came close to the U.S. twenty-two much less the try line. The scoring tsunami had the press intrigued, it wasn't just the massive number of points, Scottish rugby fans were loving the balanced attack of the Americans and the beauty of the backline.

The U.S. women were proud of their performance but concerned that they had not faced a challenge – would they be prepared for April 17 quarterfinal match in Boroughmire against Ireland? The answer was a resounding 'hell yes.' The U.S. posted their third shutout of the tournament 76-0. As in the previous matches, the forwards fed the backline, and the hungry backs dazzled the Irish defense. The few times the Irish were able to gain possession the U.S. defense was particularly good, making several crushing tackles. Fullback Jen Crawford led the U.S. with three tries and a conversion. Wing, Amy Westerman accounted for two tries, a penalty kick and three conversions, Wing Pam Irby picked up two tries, Mary Dixey, Kerry Kelly, Jan Rutkowski, Brett Newton, and Julie Dustrup each scored for the U.S. But the stakes were being raised and three days later the U.S. would face a tough Welsh side in the semifinals in Galashiels and a flaw in the U.S. system would be exposed.

Semifinals:

The U.S. knew that Wales would be a test. The Welsh had beaten Canada and Scotland to advance. While those scores had been close, the Welsh forwards had controlled a large amount of the possession. The U.S. came out early with the same game plan they had used in three previous matches – unleash a crashing fullback, force the defense to commit numbers, offload and let the magic backs do their thing. It took one minute for the U.S. to put Jen Crawford through from a penalty at the Welsh twenty-two. While the U.S. backs were once again unmatched the Welsh forwards did prove to be a match for the U.S. forwards. The U.S. was up 25-5 in the first half when Wales started a rolling maul at midfield. They successfully rolled for two and a half minutes covering approximately

forty meters before forcing the U.S. into a penalty at the goal line. Wales was awarded a scrum and scored a pushover try. Captain Barb Bond recalls: *Wales rolling mauls were crazy. We had never encountered anything like that before.*

Emma Mitchell recalls: *...a fair bit of the game plan [for the final] came from what the coaches picked up watching the USA v Wales semi-final.*

The U.S. went into the half up 25-10 and remained confident in their backlines unmatched scoring power. Five minutes into the second half Jen Crawford scored a beautiful try, taking the ball in the U.S. half and crashing through the Welsh backline, shedding tackles, and scoring to bring the U.S. to a 30-10 lead. But a few minutes later the Welsh forwards answered with another rolling maul, this one from fifteen meters out to bring the score to 30-15. The U.S. forwards were unnerved but the backs seemed unfazed and quickly answered with a scoring bonanza. While the Welsh flyhalf was content to kick for touch on most possessions, the U.S. fought to get the ball into the hands of their centers at every opportunity. The exhausted Welsh could not keep pace with the speed and handling of the U.S. backline and watched the Eagles run away with the match by a score of 56-15. Once again, fullback Jen Crawford led all scoring with five tries. Flyhalf Jos Bergmann had one try, five conversions and two penalty kicks. Patty Jervey and Candi Orsini each had a try.

The Finals

The U.S. had powered their way into the finals which would take place April 24, in historic Raeburn Place in Stockbridge against their 1991 finals foe, England.

[England](#) had a less glamorous road to the finals, defeating Russia, 66-0, Scotland 26-0, Canada 24-10, and France, 17-6. In each match the English forwards showed their dominance, controlling the ball and feeding it to steady flyhalf Karen Almond. The English showed they were a side that could dominate the possession and they trusted their backs to score points, not a lot of points, but enough points to win games. Their game plan favored efficient, technical, low-risk rugby.

An estimated five thousand spectators came to the final with an unknown number watching from the rooftops and rowhouses that surrounded the field. The match was played under grey skies that soon gave way to rain, bad news for the U.S. forwards.

Karen Almond the England Flyhalf recalls: *Our mindset going into the Final was 'confident but wary.' We knew we had the game plan and had done everything we could to prepare. Our squad was stronger, fitter and more tactically astute than the '91 team. We had also beaten them [the U.S.] in the Canada Cup. However, those USA backs were incredible and capable of tries from anywhere. We had to play at the top of our game and keep focused on our strategy; strangle them of possession.*

The match opened as usual with Jen Crawford crashing through the line on the opening kickoff and going into England territory. But at the first scrum the English pack drove the U.S. scrum back fifteen meters, the U.S. was forced into a penalty and England flyhalf Karen Almond scored a penalty kick from twenty-five meters out. In the sixth minute of the game, Jen Crawford did what Jen Crawford always did, she crashed the defensive line and dragged defenders with her over the line to put the U.S. up 5-3. But then, the rain began to fall, and the English pack began to flex. From ten meters out the English walked the ball over the line, forcing the U.S. again into a penalty, the referee awarded the

English a penalty try. Jen Crawford and the U.S. backs responded crashing into English territory and spinning the ball to wing Patty Jervey for a diving try that brought the crowd to its feet. But as the rain continued to fall the English pack continued to exert its power. Under intense pressure, the U.S. struggled to get the ball out to the backs. The U.S. backrow and scrumhalf had little experience working under such intense pressure, while the English did a great job of continually applying that pressure. At the half the English led 24-10.

Karen Almond: Our confidence was shaken in the first minute when their U.S. backs fielded the kickoff and nearly ran through our whole team! We had to refocus remain calm and trust our game plan. I told the team they were always going to score tries we just had to score more.

The U.S. came out determined and were able to come away with a penalty kick in the first few minutes for a 24-13 score. But the England forwards were relentless. England #8, Gill Burns, was particularly dominant in the scrum and the lineouts, winning ball and keeping possession away from the U.S. backline. As the clock was ticking the U.S. continued to believe in their ability to score quickly under pressure. They worked every magic trick they had to get the ball out but under pressure an errant pass went into English hands for a backbreaking score and with time running out England had a comfortable 31-13 lead. The U.S. attempted to claw their way back into the game, but it was too little too late, and as the rain continued to fall, England celebrated a 38-23 win.

England scrumhalf Emma Mitchell recalls: Towards the end of the game, the USA had scored another try (a second in quick succession) and I can remember feeling exhausted and thinking that, with possession, their backs were almost able to score at will and I was unsure if we would be able to hang on. We had kicked off at 2.30pm and, as I got ready to muster what energy I had to run out at Jos' conversion attempt, I heard a man from behind the posts say: "it's alright England, it's 4pm". As we ran out and the conversion went over, Jim Fleming blew the final whistle. Karen, Giselle, and I hugged under the posts (Jane soon joined us) and the most overwhelming initial emotion was relief followed by (as you can imagine) euphoria.

As Jen Crawford offered about the final: We played on an historic field and the crowd was just fantastic. It was electric, it was energizing, it was maddening, it was painful watching England keep the ball within the pack, it was a big fat bummer, but it was fun.

Flanker Sheri Hunt recalls: We really believed we were going to win right until the last moment.

Emma Mitchell: I honestly think that we were the only people in Edinburgh that day who thought we had any chance of upsetting the USA side who were such huge favourites.

Alex Williams: Being a reserve and watching the final was extremely frustrating. Those were still the days where you didn't get into the game unless someone was well and truly injured and couldn't play, so there was no opportunity to try to help turn the game around. That said, it was my first World Cup, and I was so honored to have had the opportunity to play for the USA with such talented and dedicated teammates. I cherish both the memories and the World Cup silver medal.

While the U.S. players were understandably heartbroken, the players spoke graciously about England's strategy and World Cup victory. The press continued to show the U.S. side love, complimenting them for their skill on the field as well as their gracious demeanor in a tough loss. It was notable to the players that no representatives from USARFU

(USAR) beyond members of the Women's Committee were present. The players had won silver at the World Cup and broken an international scoring record yet were met with complete silence from USARFU.

While little was written about the U.S. performance after the 1994 World Cup, much of what was written focused on the loss. 1994 was a different era in coaching, many coaches at the time relied on subjective measures of players performance. It's tough to read the critique of the U.S. forwards from Head Coach Franck Boivert. In an interview with Rugby Magazine right after the U.S. loss, Boivert said, I'm disappointed in our tight five. I feel they quit on us. I told them before the match they had to be ruthless for 80 minutes and they didn't do it....

In a final match report Boivert continued to assert the loss was the result of the forwards inability to be aggressive. In a lengthy document to the Women's Committee, he called the forwards as, 'naïve, mediocre and lacking in fighting spirit.' *First, the absence of any fighting spirit in our forwards, who gave up very quickly. Other than the obvious problems in the scrum, it seemed that the English forwards simply wanted it much more. They were not only more aggressive in the scrum, but also in every other aspect of the game. They wanted to win. I believe too many of our players were happy just to play in the final and too few of our players played the way you need to play in a final match. It was a great disappointment because I believe the preparation was good without overdoing the motivational speeches and Joe Kelly took good care of the basics with the forwards.*

U.S. Captain Barb Bond recalls: *The forwards did not give up nor did we lack fighting spirit. There is no doubt we were outmatched in set pieces but the reasons for this were complex. The lack of time together as a pack was limiting, it takes time and competitions to gel into a cohesive unit. The team that played together for the final had had very few matches together. We had an amazing forwards coach in Joe Kelly but the constraints of time in preparation ahead of the tournament limited how much we could do once the tournament was in progress*

Lock Jan Rutkowski: *That 'we lacked fight and gave up' is absolutely untrue. I, and my fellow tight five, gave our all that day.*

Jen Crawford recalls: *We were devastated by the loss. In the locker room after the game players looked to Joe (Assistant Coach Joe Kelly) because we were so crushed, and Franck was just not there for us. Joe's speech to the forwards after the finals was just incredibly heartfelt.*

Boivert's postmortem was long and difficult to read. More troubling he did very little reflection on his own contributions to the outcome. At the time Boivert was juggling his role as the Head Coach of the Women's National Team with his job as the Head Coach of the Stanford men's side. He flew home to California to coach the Stanford men in the Pacific Coast Collegiate Championship between the U.S. match against Wales and the final against England. A trip a few U.S. players felt compromised the team's preparation.

He also seemed to lack an understanding of the limited power of the Women's Committee and USARFU's general lack of interest in the women's game. At the time, USARFU seemed determined to ignore the success of the women's program as they believed it detracted from the men's game. At that time, the U.S men's team struggled mightily in international play. Throughout the 1980's and 1990's the U.S. men made three trips to the World Cup but only managed two wins in pool play, one against Japan and one against Uruguay.

Captain Barb Bond recalls: *I think the major 'fault' for the '94 World Cup outcome falls to USARFU. Not only for the lack of support leading up to and during that tournament but for the failure to recognize that USA rugby had a unique opportunity to be competitive on the world stage for years to come following the success of the '91 team. Advice from me and, I'm sure others, that we will quickly lose our competitive advantage without investment in the women's game went unheeded.*

While Rugby Magazine carried some of Boivert's critique of the team in a full-page interview, the larger document was not seen beyond a few members of the Women's Committee and a few members of the team. In hindsight this a good thing, as the document is far from an accurate assessment of the team's performance.

Others did offer more measured observations of the U.S. performance in the final. Emil Signes, rebutted Boivert's assertion that the tight five were overmatched and under-aggressive. Emil noted that the U.S. backrow and hooker were overmatched in size by twenty pounds per person thus giving the US women a decided disadvantage in set pieces. His observation was astute as the U.S. tended to favor backrow fitness and mobility over size and power. This made sense as the backrow were integral to keeping the ball alive for the explosive backline. England on the other hand understood the value of a heavy backrow. You can see the impact of the 1994 England scrum in subsequent World Cups. England continues to produce big, mobile backrow players. Gill Burns' influence can be seen in the English backrows in subsequent World Cups, such as the great, Maggie Alphonsi (2010) and 2023 player of the year, Marlie Packer.

Moreover, England coaches scouted the U.S. and noted that the U.S. flankers were instructed to drop off defensive scrums in anticipation of a backrow move. This gave England an eight-on-six advantage on their own scrums, which they took full advantage of to a crushing degree.

The U.S. forwards were the top players from some of the best club teams in the U.S. Most came club scrums so dominant, they rarely if ever moved backwards. Moving backwards was a new experience for most of the U.S. forwards. As Krista McFarren recalls, *I did not come from a club with a dominant pack and I gained new respect for the scrumhalves I played with who really had to scrap, dig in, dive pass to give the backs decent ball.*

Thirty years later watching the video of the final, reading the excitement in the match reports and the notes from the Women's Committee on the 'mountains that had to be moved' to get the team to the tournament I am left believing that the 1994 team was truly one of the great U.S. teams, deserving of a celebration they never got. Their play electrified rugby and its impact can be seen today in the quality of rugby across the globe. There was no one like Jen Crawford at the time. No back line with the combination of speed, power, skill, and confidence that the U.S. displayed in every match. The forwards faced a different challenge but a 'lack of fighting spirit' was not one of those. These were elite, well tested forwards who loved and honored the game with their play. The 1994 U.S. Women's World Cup team was a resounding success worthy of our respect.

Jen Crawford: *In the end, it's the little moments that made the hours we spent grinding it out into a special time. I don't even know how to describe it - the togetherness, teamwork, being a family. All of those and more - the Twin Towers from Hell donning kilts, the hotel staff quietly amused at all our antics, Betsy Hill being late for practice by saying she forgot the time, laundry day when we each took turns, pranks we played on each other. There truly is nothing like those bonding moments. They last a lifetime.*

US Roster

Name	Position	Ht	Wt	Age	Club
Jos Bergmann	flyhalf	5'5	145	25	BASH
Barb Bond	#8	5'8	165	31	BASH
Sue Brooks	lock	5'8	145	28	Berkeley
Patty Connell	scrumhalf	5'3	120	30	Beantown
Jen Crawford	fullback	5'7	150	29	Berkeley
Mary Dixey	flyhalf	5'4	140	32	Beantown
Julie Dustrup	fullback	5'8	160	28	Maryland Stingers
Tara Flanigan	lock	6'0	185	30	UCLA
Annie Flavin	prop	5'4	165	32	Beantown
Kathy Flores	flanker	5'5	145	39	Berkeley
Julie Gray	hooker	5'2	145	27	Twin City Amazons
Betsy Hill	prop	5'4	170	38	Peninsula Chaos
Elise Huffer	center	5'4	130	32	Peninsula Chaos
Sherianne Hunt	flanker	5'5	145	32	San Diego Surfers
Pam Irby	wing	5'5		29	Peninsula Chaos
Patty Jervey	wing	5'4	135	30	Florida State
Kris Kany	flanker	5'4	144	32	Boston
Kerry Kelly	scrumhalf	5'6	125	34	BASH
Cassie Law	flanker	5'8	145	29	BASH
Krista McFarren	fullback	5'6	135	32	New Orleans
Candy Orsini	center	5'6	135	37	Florida State
Brett Newton	center	5'4	144	29	Beantown
Beth Pepper	hooker	5'5	155	34	BASH
Jan Rutkowski	lock	5'8	175	38	Beantown
M.A. Sorensen	prop	5'6	172	37	Philadelphia
Laurie Spicer-Bordon	flanker	5'7	140	29	Beantown
Lisa Weix	prop	5'4	145	31	BASH
Amy Westerman	fullback	5'6	164	27	Beantown
Alex Williams	#8	5'10	185	24	Beantown
Christine Nixon	lock	5'11	180	34	Minnesota
Franck Boivert	Head Coach				
Joe Kelly	Assistant Coach				

*Sue Brodie and Sandra Colamartino, Scottish players, and organizers of the 1994 World Cup, will premiere their play 90 Days, 12-14 April 2024 in Edinburgh, coinciding with the 30th anniversary of the tournament.

This is the [link for tickets](#) to the 90Days theatre production in Edinburgh:

For those who can't attend in person, this is the [link for the livestream](#) which will be made available to every donation over £20.

Also check out [The Original Red Roses video](#) which tells the story of the 1991-1994 journey through the stories of English players Emma Mitchell, Karen Almond and Gill Burns.

Postscript:

During and immediately following the 1994 World Cup, the second International Conference on Women's Rugby was held. The women in attendance harbored a vision of creating the first Women's International Rugby Board (WIRB) which they proposed would:

- Promote, develop, and extend the women's game
- Settle all matters or disputes relating to or arising from the playing of an international match
- Control all matters relating to tours of national representative teams including the World Cup in which any union is concerned
- Control any other matters of an international character affecting the game of women's rugby
- Abide by IRB regulations and develop a formal, integrated relationship with the IRB. (Paper submitted by Rosie Golby, Secretary, WRFU)

Unfortunately, the dream of a women's international governing body was not to be. The IRB sent a representative to the meeting. While he was impressed with the organization and planning of the women, he recognized that a separate women's organization was a threat to the IRB's ongoing discussion with the Olympic Committee. In the fall of 1994, the IRB created the Women's Advisory Committee (WAC). The first members of the WAC were the outstanding administrators, Rosie Golby, Jill Zonneveld, and Jami Jordan. However the IRB chose to ignore women's leadership and appointed Rob Fischer from New Zealand as the board liaison.

The message to the women advocating for the establishment of the WIRB was, *'you don't need a separate governing body because you are now part of the IRB.'* Soon after, the IRB asked all its member nations to rein in separate women's organizations and to fold them into existing national governing bodies. But to what extent women were to be 'folded into' existing governing bodies was up to the individual member nations. The decision to disband women's leadership and curtail their autonomy was devastating to women's rugby.

While our outcomes were never realized, the WIRB was a great example of how women can put their egos aside and come up with the right strategy, all without really knowing each other well. (Jami Jordan)

Almost in defiance of the IRB ruling, a women's international conference was held again in 1998 in the Netherlands where women from different rugby nations met to contest the idea of 'full integration' into existing governing boards. The consensus was that there were gross disparities across countries for how national governing boards treated women's rugby. But, as if to make it painfully clear that there would be no routes for women to bring their grievances to the IRB, the IRB incongruously appointed a man to be the chair of the women's liaison committee, dismissing the experience, expertise and ability of women who had been moving mountains.

In the US, the Women's Committee continued to operate as usual through 1994. In late 1994, prior to the World Cup, USARFU folded the Women's Committee into its existing list of committees and allocated a paltry \$1250 annual operating budget. Some of the Women's Committee members stayed active and worked on USARFU committees on behalf of women's rugby, but decision-making about women's rugby fell to committees populated mostly by men. Some men were longtime allies of women's rugby and did much to support women's rugby, others were ambivalent or obstructionist. The loss of women's leadership and ingenuity not just in the US but across the globe was heartbreaking. But what our 'foremothers' accomplished was remarkable and worthy of celebration.



[View "US RUGBY WOMEN'S PLAY OF THE DAY, featuring Jenn Crawford, on YouTube](#)