

★ ★ ★ ★ THE AMERICANS ROAR IN AND THE COACH'S CRY IS 'EAT 'EM'



Crash: U.S. girl catches a Warwick player

Rugby without frills from the deadly women in white

By SANDRA BARWICK

THE tackles came in hard, the injury toll mounted.

There was no quarter asked or given in the first Women's Rugby Football Union tournament yesterday.

Even the Americans were there, fielding two sides that looked fitter and faster than anyone and equipped with a coach who could shout the opposition.

'C'mon guys,' yelled Darlyn Million to her charges, 'eat 'em.'

On the pitch at Shenley, Hertfordshire, the fourth girl of the day lay waiting for the ambulance. A St John Ambulance man shook

his head: 'When they said it was women's rugby I thought it would be a quiet day. This is worse than the men.'

Britain's women's rugby is just seven years old and with only a few sides mainly from universities and colleges. Twenty-two were playing yesterday. In America, which has more than 300 clubs, the game has been going for ten years. Yesterday that extra experience showed as the British demonstrated the national virtue of being good losers.

Kathy Flores, from Florida, captain of one of the Wivern (Women's International Vagabonds Emissaries and Rugby Nomads) sides, said: 'We've got a lot of aggression and energy and we really go in to very hard tackles. We hit them real low and throw them up.'

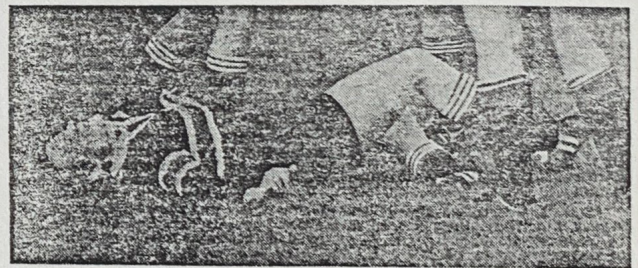
Chilled

In navy shorts and white shirts, her team had tanned, hard-muscled legs in contrast to the chilled-pink limbs of some Welsh opponents.

Even the most fragile-looking Americans were fiercely fit on a regime



Bang: This time it's a Warwick player diving into the tackle



Wallop: Kate Fletcher of Warwick is floored

of weight training and hard running. Carmen Morrison, a 30-year-old who plays wing three-quarter, showed the scorching pace expected from a former Olympic class hurdler.

And she disproves the notion that all female rugby players must be 'butch'. She lists her hobbies as dance and fash-

ion and holds down a job with a fashion company.

'Being fit is not unfeminine,' she insisted. 'And I really enjoy playing rugby.'

Limping

The Wyvern sides have slaughtered all opposition on their British tours.

They reached the semi-

finals yesterday but were drawn to play each other and so withdrew, leaving the way open for Wasps, a team from Wembley, to win.

The tournament's final injury count was four in hospital (none hurt seriously) and numerous bumps and bruises.

Warwick University's Kate Fletcher, 21, ended up limping and bandaged to the knee.

'I just ran wrong,' Sue said. 'Rugby girls, you see, don't complain.'

PICTURES: BILL CROSS