

The Bledisloe Cup

The annual sporting spectacle of the Bledisloe Cup enthralled audiences around the world, appealing to citizens from two countries in particular. Since the early 1930s, The Wallabies and the All Blacks have vied for the coveted trophy. In any sporting encounter, Australia and New Zealand have long engaged in a friendly rivalry, and this rivalry extends to their national rugby union teams. While the teams compete in a number of international rugby competitions (including the Rugby World Cup), the Bledisloe Cup is the only rugby union trophy contested solely by the two neighbouring nations.

Charles Bathurst, Lord Bledisloe, introduced the cup at an inauguration ceremony in 1931, but it was not awarded (to New Zealand) for the first time until the following year. In its early history, the competition could not be held yearly, because worrying global events, such as the Second World War, demanded the attention, resources, and citizens of both Bledisloe Cup nations. Now, the Bledisloe Cup series is held every single year.

Lord Bledisloe

Charles Bathurst was born in 1887 in England. After immigrating to New Zealand, he became the fourth Governor-General of the country from 1930 until 1935. He was a popular figure in New Zealand at the time, partly because he was seen to be sympathetic to the plight of everyday New Zealanders (particularly agricultural workers), and he was charming and charismatic. He is famous for buying the land at the site of the 1840 signing of the Treaty of Waitangi. This acquisition allowed for the historical preservation and memorialisation of an important part of New Zealand history. Today, his name is most famous because of its link with the Bledisloe Cup.



In order to win the Cup, Australia and New Zealand must compete in a broader competition: The Rugby Championship (previously known as the Tri Nations). This competition involves a series of matches between four nations: Australia, New Zealand, South Africa and Argentina. Regardless of which team wins the competition, only Australia and New Zealand are eligible to collect the Bledisloe Cup.

The Wallabies won the trophy for the first time in 1934, but a consistently formidable New Zealand team has seen the trophy spend most of its life away from Australian soil. In fact, the Wallabies have not held it since 2003, which means that the All Blacks have had an enviable winning streak!



This year, fans will gather to watch the three deciding matches live at stadiums in Australia and New Zealand, or on television. Dedicated Wallabies' fans will be dressed in the team colours green and gold to show their support, and the All Blacks' fans will be sporting... Well, you can probably guess!



Questions

1. What does “spectacle” mean?

2. In what other ways do Australia and New Zealand have a rivalry?

3. When did New Zealand first win the Bledisloe Cup?

4. Why do you think the Second World War demanded the attention, resources and citizens of Australia and New Zealand?

5. Name three characteristics of Lord Bledisloe.

6. Which Rugby Championship teams are not able to win the Cup?

7. What does “formidable” mean?

8. Why does the author say “you can probably guess” in the last sentence?

Answers

1. What does “spectacle” mean?
A spectacle is an exhibition/entertaining event.
2. In what other ways do Australia and New Zealand have a rivalry?
Various answers.
3. When did New Zealand first win the Bledisloe Cup?
New Zealand first won the Bledisloe Cup in 1932.
4. Why do you think the Second World War demanded the attention, resources and citizens of Australia and New Zealand?
**The whole world was involved so it was in the news and a big part of everyone’s life.
The war was expensive, and money that might have otherwise been spent on recreational/sporting events was needed for defence.
The strong young men who usually played rugby were needed to fight in the war (conscription).**
5. Name three characteristics of Lord Bledisloe.
**He cared about everyday New Zealanders.
He purchased the land where the Treaty of Waitangi was signed.
He had a pleasing way with words.**
6. Which Rugby Championship teams are not able to win the Cup?
South Africa and Argentina are Rugby Championship teams that are not able to win the cup.
7. What does “formidable” mean?
Formidable means tough/challenging/intimidating.
8. Why does the author say “you can probably guess” in the last sentence?
Because the New Zealand team is the “All Blacks”, so we can guess that the team colours are black.