



MEDIA RELEASE

PNGNRLC KICKS OFF 2026 SANTOS CUP

PORT MORESBY, 07th July 2026: The Papua New Guinea National Rugby League (PNG NRLC) is proud to announce the commencement of the 2026 Santos Cup, marking the third year of this premier national women's competition. This season represents a milestone in the development of the women's game, focusing on the pillars of "Elevate, Empower, and Excite".

The 2026 season expands the competition's reach, featuring 10 rounds total including the finals series, following a six-week preseason. The competition continues to drive women's participation in the sport, through major partners including Santos, PacificAus Sports, Kumul Mineral Holdings Limited (KMHL), and Digicel, which provides broadcast visibility to fans nationwide.

PNG NRLC Chairman Adrian Chow, also speaking on behalf of the Papua New Guinea Rugby Football League (PNGRFL), highlighted the competition's rapid evolution during the season launch. "We have witnessed clear progress in the women's competition, evidenced by faster play, fewer mistakes, and a notable advancement in technical proficiency." He further noted, "As we look toward the upcoming World Cup, we aim to leverage this stage to build our local players for potential identification and also for broader community impact and advocacy. A key focus is the Pawa Meri Round, which honors the involvement of women in our sport while championing an important cause."

The season also continues to focus on advancing the PNGRFL Gender Equality Strategy, with women making up 50% of the coaching staff, throughout the 6 participating teams, Central Dabaris, East New Britain Gurias, Goroka Lahanis, Lae Snax Tigers, Mt. Hagen Eagles and Port Moresby Vipers. The Santos Cup this season sees 5 female coaches in Head and Assistant Coach roles this year and highlighting the transition of players into coaching roles, with the likes of PNG Orchid #1, Cathy Neap leading the Central Dabaris for the 3rd year after 2 grand final appearances, PNG Orchids #46 Janet Johns taking up assistant coach with the Port Moresby Vipers and Amenda Pakure as Assistant Coach of the ENB Gurias who captained the side in 2025.

Leon Buskens, Country Chair of Santos, naming right sponsors, who have proudly supported women's rugby league since the inception of the PNG Orchids in 2017 said, "INSERT LEON BUSKENS QUOTE - The Santos Cup remains the focal point for the PNGRFL's commitment to participation, leadership, and visibility. By strengthening domestic competition, this ensures that female players have the opportunities and support necessary to compete at the highest international levels."





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The season was launched at the Santos National Football Stadium, in the presence of game partners and captains and Australian Deputy High Commissioner to Papua New Guinea His Excellency Mr. Andrian Lochrin.

For more information regarding the 2026 Santos Cup schedule and broadcast details, please visit the official PNGRFL website or contact the media office.

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