



Kelly Russell

Kelly Russell, one of Canada's most capped women's rugby players, joined the Toronto Nomads Rugby Club at the age of 14. She made her first appearance for Canada seven years later, on November 4, 2007, against Scotland. Russell went on to earn 53 caps with Canada's Women's Rugby Team over 11 years, scoring 60 points and representing the country at three Rugby World Cups.

From 2011 to 2017, Russell captained Canada's Women's Rugby Team 34 times, becoming the most capped captain in the history of the team. She helped lead Canada to the 2013 Nations Cup title and to silver at the 2014 Rugby World Cup. Her accolades include being named the 2013, 2014, and 2017 Rugby Canada Women's Fifteens Player of the Year and the 2017 Gillian Florence Award winner, as well as being named as a finalist for the 2014 IRB (now World Rugby) Women's Player of the Year. She was also named to the Rugby World Cup tournament all-star team twice, in 2010 and 2014.

Russell also has a storied career in the sevens game. She represented Canada at the 2009 and 2013 Rugby World Cup Sevens, winning silver in 2013, and was a member of the gold medal winning team at the 2015 Pan American Games (scoring five tries and 27 points) and the bronze medal winning team at the 2016 Olympics. During the 2016 World Rugby Sevens Series, she was named MVP of the final at the Clermont-Ferrand Sevens.

Playing for the University of Western Ontario while earning a degree in Bioarcheological Anthropology, Russell was named as a CIS (now U Sports) First Team All-Canadian four times and as an OUA First Team All Star for three years in a row. She was also named to the CIS Tournament All Star Team three times. In her senior year, Russell was named the OUA MVP and nominated for the CIS MVP award. She was also one of three finalists nominated for the FWP Jones Award (Western Female Athlete of the Year), honoured with a Purple Blanket (awarded to Western's best in their graduating year), and named to the Western Mustangs Sports Hall of Fame.

Following the 2017 Rugby World Cup, Russell was one of two Canadian players invited to join the first ever Barbarians women's invitational team, playing and winning over Munster on November 10, 2017.

After her retirement, Russell gave back to the game as a coach, working with Canada's next generation of rugby players as Head Coach of the Maple Leaf Academy and Assistant Coach of the U20 Women's Team. Russell also served as interim Head Coach of the Women's Sevens Team at the Fast Four tournaments in Vancouver and Edmonton in 2021.

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