



NEW ZEALAND TEAM IN AUSTRALIA, 1884

Back row: J. O'Donnell, H. Udy, G. S. Robertson, Jas. Allan, E. B. Millton, T. Ryan, R. J. Wilson.
Middle row: J. G. Tainoa, G. Caster, J. T. Dumbell, W. V. Millton (Captain), H. Y. Braddon, G. H. Helmore, P. P. Webb, Mr. S. E. Sleigh (Manager).
Front row: E. Davy, J. Lecky, J. A. Warbrick, H. Roberts.
Absent: T. B. O'Connor.

NEW ZEALAND'S 'ALL BLACKS' JERSEY

Sean Fagan / October 7, 2013

<https://saintsandheathens.wordpress.com/2013/10/07/all-blacks-jersey/>

The 1888 New Zealand Native (Maori) Rugby football team: "They were the first to wear the black jersey with the silver fern leaf on the breast".

One of the most iconic brands in world sport is the New Zealand Rugby team's 'All Blacks' jersey. The black jersey with silver fern leaf was adopted by the NZRU in 1893.

The choice of the nation's native forest fern leaf (which under moonlight appears white/silver) as a badge to follow in the tradition of England's rose is obvious enough, but what remains a mystery is "Why is the All Blacks jersey black?" The minutes of that NZRU meeting (16 April 1893) record that:

"It was resolved that the New Zealand representative colours should be black jersey with silver fern leaf, black cap with silver monogram, white knickerbockers [shorts] and black stockings [socks] on the motion of Mr Ellison, seconded by Mr King."

'Mr Ellison' was Thomas Rangiwhahia Ellison – better known simply as Tom Ellison. Later in 1893 Ellison (a Maori) captained the first NZRU organised New Zealand team on their visit to Australia. Ellison had also been a member of the 1888/89 New Zealand 'Natives' team that played nine games at home, before embarking on an epic twelve-months long tour of Australia and Great Britain. The use of "all blacks" was attached to the team in some reports. Before the team had left New Zealand the *Otago Daily Times* reported the "uniform was all black with a silver fern leaf embroidered on the jersey." In Sydney in June 1889 at a game against NSW, the match report in *The Referee* stated "...N.S.W. led by 9 points to love up to the first few minutes of the second spell, it can be imagined how the all blacks played up during the last term to turn the tables as they did."



Why a silver fern on All Blacks jerseys?

The fern leaf had been representative of New Zealand to the outside world, here in a 1878 postage stamp.

It is surmised that it was the Natives team strip that influenced Ellison to make the suggestion that the NZRU adopt the same design. Why the Natives team chose black as its jersey colour is still unknown. There is nothing in the years before the Natives team linking the New Zealand colony with the colour black. *The first New Zealand Rugby team that went to Australia in 1884 wore a dark blue jersey. They too had a fern leaf badge – rather than white or silver, it was embroidered on the jersey in a gold colour.*

Interestingly, the Natives team played their first match (against Hawke's Bay) wearing "navy blue with silver fern leaf" (*Hawke's Bay Herald*, 25 June 1888). The same newspaper noted two days earlier that the Natives team "will play in their tour uniforms". The teams met again a week later, with the Natives again wearing their navy blue jerseys. Apart from the change in the colour of the fern leaf badge, the New Zealand Natives jersey appears to have been the same as the 1884 New Zealand team.

However, the Natives then turned out in their third match (against Auckland) wearing "all black with silver fern" (*Star*, 9 July 1888; *Otago Witness*, 13 July 1888). Unfortunately, there is no known report explaining why the team's sudden and late change of the tour jersey from dark blue to black.

The *Evening Post* reported in 1925 (15 June) that George Wynyard – member of the Natives team – had in recent conversation said:

"The all black jersey was selected as being most suitable in colour to withstand the wet and sloppy playing fields which were likely to be experienced in England."

A plausible explanation, yet few Rugby clubs in Britain seemed to share the same concern when choosing their club's colours. Perhaps the thinking was there was less likelihood of a black jersey clashing with other teams encountered on the tour.

The switch in colours though coincided with an outbreak of criticism of the Natives tour venture from local Rugby organisations and newspaper writers. The late addition of 'Pakeha' (non-Maori New Zealander) players to the tour party changed the dynamics of how the team was viewed. Questions about the team's amateur status, and underlying hopes by the promoters of making a financial profit, seemed to be of little concern when the team was all Maori players.

However, after the inclusion of other New Zealanders in the team, concerns and doubts were raised about how the Natives would be viewed by the English RFU, and if they were subsequently banned as 'professionals' that would reflect upon all of Rugby in New Zealand, potentially destroying hopes of an official New Zealand team going to England.

After a month of debate over the issue the *Otago Witness* (20 July 1888) concluded:

“If a New Zealand team is to go Home [England], well and good, but by all means let it be a thoroughly representative one and in that case it should be a team sent Home by the New Zealand unions and not a money-making venture...”

In the turmoil of questions and criticism about whether the Natives team was ‘representing’ New Zealand, the distinct possibility exists that, to end speculation as to the side’s official status, that the tour jersey was changed away from the dark blue of the 1884 New Zealand team to black. Of course, while that may explain why the change in colour was made, it doesn’t address why black was preferred over any other colour. Today black, red and white are traditional Maori colours.

Wynyard’s explanation 36 years after the tour is all we have, other than what may be useful quotes from Sydney newspapers in 1910 about the first official Maori team, who were just about to arrive in Australia.

The Sydney Morning Herald stated that the tourists would play in a black jersey with a red band around the centre, as “red and black is the original Maori colour”, while *The Sydney Mail* explained that “Red and black are the original Maori colours blended; so the team will wear black jerseys with red bands round the centre”. New Zealand newspapers reported the Maori tourists [1910] playing kit as:

“The colors of the team will be black jersey with 8in. red band round chest and red band round sleeves, white collar with gold fern on left breast; black pants and stockings.”

In any event, the 1888/89 Natives team’s black jersey and silver fern was revived by Ellison at the 1893 NZRU meeting, and as a result of that decision, went on to become the national colour of all New Zealand sport and culture.

Or was it? Was Ellison acting on his own initiative?

Or had black already begun to assume patriotic significance for New Zealanders before the NZRU adopted the colour?

In February 1889, with news of Natives teams matches reaching New Zealanders no matter where they were, in San Francisco a number of ex-pats came together to form a Rugby club. The *Taranaki Herald* carried a report from an American newspaper:

NEW ZEALAND FOOTBALL CLUB IN SAN FRANCISCO.

“Young New Zealanders are ‘great’ on the game of football; and wherever a number of them congregate a Club is sure to be formed. From a recent San Francisco paper we learn that a large meeting of football enthusiasts was held at the Baldwin Hotel by former residents of New Zealand for the purpose of organising a club to play that game. After some discussion, it was decided to name the association the ‘New Zealand Football Club’, and to play under the Rugby rules. These allow the ball to be handled by the players. The uniform chosen will consist of a black jersey and knickerbockers. The season will be opened one week from Sunday next with a practice game.”

In choosing black were they simply replicating the Natives? Or had the Natives use of black in Australia and Britain led to an assumption that this was New Zealand’s national sporting colour? Perhaps they just chose black, and it is merely a coincidence...

Except that in Australia in April 1889 the Zealandia Rugby club “consisting of New Zealanders resident in Sydney” was formed (*The Evening Post*, 29 April 1889):

“A club has been formed in Sydney composed entirely of New Zealanders, the uniform being black with a silver fern-leaf on the breast. The club has entered for the senior championship.”

The Observer adding (28 March 1891) that “the colour picked for the Zealandia Football Club is black, with a silver fern leaf.” The club had sufficient footballers for two grades, and continued playing in Sydney competitions until at least 1893.

On 4 March 1890 (reported in the *Star*) the recently formed New Zealand Amateur Athletic Association announced its team for the upcoming NSW Championships in Sydney would be wearing:

“The New Zealand team’s colours were fixed as black, with silver piping, with the Association’s monogram and fern leaf supports.”

On 26 March 1892 the *Observer* predicted the kit for the New Zealand athletes leaving to compete in The English Amateur Athletes meeting:

“Our New Zealand representatives will, it is anticipated, compete (while at Home) in the New Zealand costume — black and silver, with silver fern worked on the left breast of the jersey— used when the New Zealand team competed in the New South Wales Championship.”

When Ellison and his New Zealand Rugby team arrived in Sydney in late June 1893, their recently adopted all black jerseys with silver fern were seemingly of little surprise.

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WHERE DOES THE “ALL BLACKS” SILVER AND BLACK COME FROM?

Tom Ellison, the man who introduced the black jersey with the silver fern to New Zealand rugby and who captained the first official team in 1893. The seeds for the playing uniform may have been sown by Sleight’s 1884 team. They wore the dark blue jersey of Otago but on the left breast was a golden fern.

According to Māori legend, the silver fern once lived in the sea. It was asked to come and live in the forest to play a significant role in guiding the Māori people. Māori hunters and warriors used the silver underside of the fern leaves to find their way home. When bent over, the fronds would catch the moonlight and illuminate a path through the forest. This distinctly New Zealand symbol is considered a badge of honour by the NZ people. It has been the symbol of New Zealand’s national rugby team since the 1880s and is now proudly worn by all our top athletes and prominently carried by many of our top companies.

The silver fern is the native ponga. The symbol comes from the leaf of the New Zealand fern - *Cyathea Dealbata* (Ponga is the Maori name). It was chosen as an emblem in its white form by Joe Warbrick, captain and organiser of the New Zealand Natives rugby team of 1888 was inspired by two Maori proverbs:

“Mate atu he toa ara mai he toa.”

“When one warrior dies, another arises.”

“Mate atu he tetakura ara mai he tetakura.”

“When one fern dies, another arises.”

But why the black jersey?

The answer comes from All Black Tamati Ellison's family, whose ancestor Tom was a star of that Natives team. More to the point, it was Tom Ellison's idea in 1893 to make the black jersey with silver fern the official New Zealand team uniform. According to the Ellisons, Joe and Tom just thought black was the colour that would provide the best contrast with the white fern. I can guess why Warbrick would have felt that way. You see, in 1884 he'd been in the first-ever New Zealand rugby team. And that team played in blue jerseys with a gold fern. We know that, because the one was loaned to the New Zealand Rugby Museum by the family of the team's first try-scorer.



1884 NZ Rugby Team & Golden Fern



1888 NZ Rugby Team & Silver Fern

The 1884 rugby team in blue jerseys and (invisible?) gold fern. Were these players having their ferns dry cleaned that day? Or did the dark gold simply not show up against the blue? Could it be that Warbrick wanted a colour contrast that would let his emblem be seen in black and white photos, and so chose, um... black and white? The photo of the 1888 team suggests he succeeded – and a tradition was born. The 1888 Native team, now in black jerseys with white fern. In the 121 years since, the silver fern has been 'our maple leaf', representing New Zealand in sporting and non-sporting fields alike.

It started life in the ground – as a native of the New Zealand bush.



1884 NZ Rugby Team Cap

Joe Warbrick



Joseph Astbury Warbrick - All Black Legend

<http://www.ngatirangitahi.iwi.nz/about/nga-korero/joe-warbrick-all-black-legend>

Born on 1 January 1862 in Rotorua to Englishman Abraham Warbrick and his Maori wife Nga Karauna Paerau, Joseph Astbury Warbrick was one of five children (four sons and a daughter). After his mother passed away, his father's second marriage to Harina, cousin of his deceased wife produced seven more half-brothers and sisters. Four of his brothers - Alfred, Arthur, Frederick and William - were also very good rugby players and played alongside Joe on the 1888 New Zealand Natives tour.

Joe was educated at St. Stephen's Native College in Auckland and played club rugby for Ponsonby, Tauranga, Wellington, Rotorua and Matata. He started playing rugby at school and became famous for his unusual ability to drop long distance goals, quite often barefooted. While still at school he appeared at full back for Auckland against Otago in his first match for the province in 1877 at the age of 15, though the match does not appear in the Auckland records, as the Union was officially formed in 1883. Joe was, and still is, the youngest player to ever play first grade rugby in NZ.

In 1884, he was selected for the first ever New Zealand team that toured New South Wales. He played in all seven tour matches, but no international caps were awarded. He is officially acknowledged as the 17th All Black (although this name was not applied to New Zealand representatives until 1905). In 1888/89 he coached, captained and played for the 1888 Native Team on their legendary overseas tour. The 26-member Natives team (also wrongly known as the 1888 Maoris as a few pakeha were included), played a record 107 rugby matches on the tour, the longest and most arduous rugby tour in history. They won 78 of them, lost 23 and drew six. They played 74 matches in the British Isles, 16 in Australia and 17 in New Zealand. They also played 10 Australian Rules matches for good measure.



Joe married Harriet Burt and had one daughter, Orini Rosa Warbrick (married name Anderson). He later became a tour guide in the geyser fields of Rotorua. Geysers had been given a major boost in 1900 when the Waimangu ('black water') geyser burst into life. It was the largest geyser recorded anywhere in the world between 1900 and 1904. In August 1903 it exploded unexpectedly, killing Warbrick and a party of three tourists. After his tragic death his wife Harriet married William Lees and had three sons Sydney (Toss), Ronald and Maurice (Mo), all of them fine athletes. William Lees was the nephew of another member of the 1884 international rugby team, Timothy Behane O'Connor.

Joe Warbrick's wider contribution to rugby was recognised in 2008 when he was inducted into the International Rugby Board's Hall of Fame.

Joe Warbrick



Full name	Joseph Astbury Warbrick
Date of birth	1 January 1862
Place of birth	Matata, New Zealand
Date of death	30 August 1903 (aged 41)
Place of death	Waimangu, New Zealand
School	St Stephen's College ^[1]

Rugby union career

Playing career

Position	Three-quarter
New Zealand No.	17

Amateur clubs

Years	Club / team
1877	Ponsonby Tauranga

Provincial/State sides

Years	Club / team	Caps (points)
1877, 1882–83, 1886, 1894 ^[2]	Auckland	
1879–80, 1888 ^[3]	Wellington	7 ^[5]
1885, 1887 ^[4]	Hawke's Bay	

National team(s)

Years	Club / team	Caps (points)
1884	New Zealand	7 (12)
1888–89	New Zealand Natives	21 (10)

Career Highlights

- The youngest player (15) to represent Auckland and the youngest to have played first grade rugby in New Zealand history.
- He had an unusually long playing career with 17 years between his first game for Auckland in 1877 and his last game in 1894.
- Played for Auckland against NSW in 1882, the first ever international tour in history.
- Played for Wellington against the 1888 British Team, the first ever tour of the southern hemisphere.
- He was the inspiration, the captain and coach of the 1888 Natives Team.
- Played for New Zealand seven times, winning all seven and scoring three drop goals.
- Credited with the invention of the black jersey, silver fern and haka which were adopted by the New Zealand Union after its formation.
- Joseph's career and achievements remain an inspiration to all Ngāti Rangitihi. E te tīpuna rongonui, moe mai rā i tō moengaroa.

1884 New Zealand team

In 1884 a team of New Zealand players, organised by the Canterbury player and administrator William Millton, and Dunedin businessman Samuel Sleigh, was selected to tour New South Wales. This is now regarded as the first official representative New Zealand side. Warbrick was included in a squad of players that were selected from throughout the country; this was all performed without the oversight of a national body – several provincial Rugby Unions did exist, but the New Zealand Rugby Football Union was not formed until 1892. The squad's 19 players were expected to assemble in Wellington before disembarking for Sydney on 21 May, however Warbrick missed his ship from Auckland and so travelled to Sydney alone. Millton was elected captain, and Sleigh managed the team. The side won all eight of their matches on tour, including the three games against New South Wales. Warbrick appeared in seven matches and scored three drop goals; one of the goals was reportedly kicked from well inside his own half. He played at both fullback and three-quarter, and was noted for his good ball handling and speed, as well as his ability to drop kick.

June 1888 until August 1889, the Native team

<http://www.teara.govt.nz/en/photograph/40004/new-zealand-native-football-team-1888-89>



Over 14 months from June 1888 until August 1889 the Native team played 107 rugby matches in England, Ireland, Wales, Australia and New Zealand. Organised by Thomas Eyton and Joe Warbrick, the team was predominantly Māori and included four of Warbrick's brothers.

It was the first team to wear the black jersey with the silver fern.

The team members are:

(Back row) Arthur Warbrick, Alexander Webster, James Scott (manager), George Williams, William Warbrick, Alfred Warbrick;

(Middle row) 'Smiler' Ihimaira, William Wynyard, David Gage, Joe Warbrick, Fred Warbrick, Henry Wynyard;

(Front row) Richard Taiaroa, Thomas Ellison, Richard Maynard, Wi Karauria and Charles Goldsmith.

There were also 10 other team members, not pictured here.