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Welcome to a new blog series where we explore different countries and what makes them unique in the world of netball. A few days ago, we took to Instagram and asked our followers which country's netball they were most interested in. The winner, of course, was New Zealand's Silver Ferns.

The Silver Ferns have come a long way since their inception in 1938. To put that into perspective, this was before World War II, before nuclear power (such as nuclear bombs), before Disney's first animated movie (Snow White and The Seven Dwarfs), and even before Superman made his debut! During the 1960s and 1970s, netball saw a surge in participation, driven by the rise of televised matches and structured international tournaments. The Silver Ferns' early success at the Netball World Cup (formerly the World Netball Championships), particularly their first title in 1967, cemented their place as one of the top teams in the sport.

Over the years, netball in New Zealand has grown significantly, leading to the

creation of prestigious tournaments such as the ANZ Premiership.

1. Notable teams and their Silver Ferns representatives include:

Central Pulse – Kelly Jury [GK] & Maddy Gordon [C]

Northern Mystics – Phoenix Karaka [GD] & Grace Nweke [GS]

Southern Steel – Kate Heffernan [WD] & Kimiora Poi [WA]

Waikato Bay of Plenty Magic – Ameliaranne Ekenasio [GA]

Mainland Tactix – Jane Watson [GK] & Karin Burger [GD]

2. Major Silver Ferns Highlights:

1967 World Cup Victory – The Silver Ferns secured their first Netball World Cup title in Perth, setting the foundation for their future dominance.

1979 World Cup Win (Shared Title) – A rare moment in netball history where New Zealand, Australia, and Trinidad & Tobago shared the championship title.

2003 World Cup Win – A legendary moment as New Zealand triumphed over Australia 49-47 in Jamaica to claim their second outright title.

2006 Commonwealth Games Gold – A thrilling 60-55 extra-time victory over Australia secured New Zealand's first Commonwealth Games gold medal in netball.

2019 Netball World Cup Win – Coached by Noeline Taurua, the Silver Ferns clinched a hard-fought 52-51 victory over Australia, ending a 16-year wait for another World Cup title.

2023 Netball World Cup Performance – Although they finished as runners-up, the Silver Ferns' performance demonstrated the strength and depth of netball in New Zealand.

2024 Constellation Cup Champions – New Zealand made history by defeating Australia, winning 3 out of 4 tests in a dominant series performance.

The Silver Ferns' success has been shaped by key contributors over the years.

Players such as Irene van Dyk (a dominant shooter for 14 years, originally from South Africa), Laura Langman (midcourt powerhouse known for her leadership and relentless fitness), Maria Folau (renowned for her long-range shooting accuracy), Casey Kopua (a defensive icon), and Amelíaranne Ekenasio (current New Zealand captain, celebrated for her composure and precision) have all left their mark on the sport. Their achievements would not have been possible without legendary coaches such as Lois Muir (1974-1988), Ruth Aitken (2001-2011), and Noeline Taurua (2018-present).

3. The Psychology Behind Their Training

Now, let's dive into the psychological and training aspects that shape the Silver Ferns. New Zealand's training philosophy across multiple sports emphasizes the Mahi (meaning "work" in Maori). Every training session is designed with the purpose of creating intention through movement. As netballers, we understand that the effort we put into our training dictates our level of performance on the court.

Based on the values of the Maori people, the Silver Ferns uphold key principles:

Kaitiakitanga (Guardianship & Responsibility) – Players are encouraged to honor past generations and uphold a strong team culture.

Mana (Respect & Integrity) – Emphasizing sportsmanship, discipline, and accountability both on and off the court.

Resilience & Adaptability – Training in high-pressure environments prepares players for the intensity of competition.

Strength & Conditioning – The Ferns incorporate scientific approaches, including plyometric training, endurance drills, and injury prevention techniques.

Game Intelligence & Tactical Play – Video analysis, strategic rotations, and defensive agility drills help refine players' decision-making skills.

4. Training Methods

From a young age, Silver Ferns players undergo specialized conditioning with a focus on agility and strength. Some of their core training techniques include:

Speed & Agility Drills – Fast footwork around objects (e.g., hula hoops or cones),

rapid changes of direction, and sprint variations.

Hand-Eye Coordination – Drills involving catching tennis balls at unpredictable moments to improve reflexes.

Explosive Power – Hurdle jumps, resisted sprints, and plyometric movements to enhance acceleration and jumping ability.

Strength Training – Resistance bands are wrapped around a netball and tied to a fence or pole, where players practice passing motions while holding tension for a set duration to build arm and shoulder endurance.

Hip & Core Stability – Weighted jumps, controlled footwork drills (stepping in and out of cones at high speed), and compound movements such as high knees combined with a shoulder press.

5. A Legacy of Hard Work & Grit

Throughout the years, the Silver Ferns have built a reputation for their resilience, teamwork, and relentless work ethic. Individual fitness and skill development are key components that contribute to the overall success of the team. With influences from top netball nations such as Australia and South Africa, New Zealand has curated a netball powerhouse that continues to thrive on the international stage.

As the sport evolves, the Silver Ferns remain a testament to the power of dedication, strategy, and cultural values. Their training philosophy, deeply rooted in Maori traditions, continues to shape the next generation of netball stars, ensuring that New Zealand remains a dominant force in the world of netball.

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