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## **Northumbria students invited to train with Rugby World Cup team!**

Northumbria University students have had the opportunity of a lifetime after being invited to train alongside the Tongan Rugby World Cup team.

The students from Team Northumbria's first and second rugby union teams were invited for a friendly run-out by the Tongans, who are using the University's sports facilities ahead of their game against New Zealand at St James' Park tonight (Friday 9 October).

The University has made its outdoor pitches at Bullocksteads and strength

and conditioning facilities in [Sport Central](#) available for the team and has also received some specialist equipment from RWC2015 organisers – including a ruck machine and dumbbells weighing a huge 70kg – to help the Tongans with their training.

Second year Geography student Charlie Burrowes was one of the lucky students selected to train with the team. “Rugby was one of the reasons why I came here because I knew it was a fantastic sporting university and this just characterises it,” he said.

“We’re getting asked to train with a World Cup side – they could have gone to any other team and they came here to us. If you’d told me “come to Northumbria and you’ll play against a World Cup team” I would have laughed but today I’ve rolled out of bed to play against a World Cup 2015 squad – it’s an out of this world experience!”

[Leadership and Management](#) student Alex Westgarth added: “The whole squad are buzzing. Running around, being involved and seeing some of these top quality players when you aspire to be at that level yourself is great. They’re a lot bigger than the lads we usually play against!”

Northumbria’s Director of Sport, Colin Stromsoy, said: “I think it says everything about where we are with sport at Northumbria now that we can attract a team of Tonga’s calibre to train at the University, using all of the services and facilities we have. It’s a great reflection on the University and a phenomenal achievement and we’re enormously proud to host them.

“This has been an amazing experience for our students – how many students can say they get the opportunity to train against a World Cup team. It’s fantastic and I know this is a day that they’ll remember for a long time.”

He added: “The legacy we have from this is phenomenal. A lot of the strength and scrummaging equipment we have been given will be left for us to use after the Tongans leave so it’s not just about what we’re doing here this week, it’s about how the legacy will run and benefit our students in the future.”

Kyle Willoughby from Tonga Rugby Union’s management team praised the support the team have received from the University, saying: “The facilities

here are absolutely brilliant. The University has gone out of its way to look after us and it's been wonderful. The facilities are brilliant and give the guys a good basis to train on ahead of our game against the All Blacks on Friday.”

Northumbria was selected as the official team base for the Tongan team by Rugby World Cup organisers who judged the University's state-of-the-art facilities as being suitable for this prestigious international tournament.

Northumbria's sports facilities are ranked top 10 in the UK and are open to members of the public, as well as staff and students. For more information visit [www.northumbria.ac.uk/sport](http://www.northumbria.ac.uk/sport)

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If you have a media enquiry please contact our Media and Communications team at [media.communications@northumbria.ac.uk](mailto:media.communications@northumbria.ac.uk) or call [0191 227 4571](tel:01912274571).

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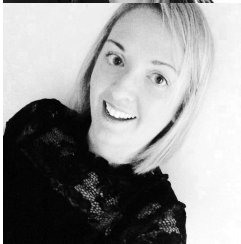


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