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## Six Nation's face-off for Northumbria sports students

Two Northumbria University rugby teammates could find themselves on opposite sides of the scrum this weekend as they each represent their country in the Six Nations.

Abbie Scott and Abi Evans have been picked to represent England and Scotland, respectively, in the Rugby Union International. The two teams will go head to head this Friday night at Darlington's Mowden Park.

The pair are used to playing on the same field for Team Northumbria's

currently unbeaten Women's Rugby Union 1<sup>st</sup> team – but this week's game is the first time they will come face to face on the international stage.

Abbie Scott, who also plays for Darlington Mowden Park RFC, is a History and Politics graduate who is currently studying for a Masters in Professional Practice in Sport Coaching. She already has three international caps under her belt from the tournament – and scored a try in England's winning match against Italy last month.

“It is a huge honour to put on the England shirt and it's something I feel very passionately about,” explained Abbie. “Simon Culley, head of rugby at Northumbria, has been paramount to my development as player – he is always on hand to help out with skills sessions and match analysis.

“Last year, I had to have reconstruction surgery on my knee which was a big set-back but all the support I've received from the University has been phenomenal and has made me become a much better athlete.”

Abi Evans, who is in her first year of studying Sport Management at Northumbria, took up rugby while she was at secondary school in her home town of Oban, Scotland. She made her international debut in the Six Nations opener against France and now, like her teammate Abbie, boasts three international caps.

She said: “Representing Scotland has been my dream ever since I started playing rugby when I was 12. Studying at Northumbria and playing for Team Northumbria has given me a great opportunity to train and play with girls my own age who are focused on playing a high level of rugby. It has progressed me as a player and given me a great deal of confidence. I feel incredibly fortunate to be where I am right now.”

Simon Culley, Head of Rugby at Northumbria, has worked with both women and says he has very high hopes for their future careers in rugby.

“This is a fantastic achievement and we are all extremely proud of Abbie and Abi. They have displayed great focus and drive in managing their full-time studies alongside competing at such a high level,” he said.

“The structure of our Team Northumbria rugby programme means that we are

able to invest a lot of time in the long-term personal development of our most talented and focused players, whilst still achieved on-field success as a team. I have no doubt that both Abbie and Abi will go on to have a huge impact on the international game.”

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