

# Women Claim A Footballing First

Submitted by the Cambridge Football Club

A group of women footballers may have created their own small part of sporting history when they turned out to play in the sand beside Lake Karapiro. Teams from Cambridge and Te Awamutu played a beach football match in the sand courts at Mighty River Domain as part of Waipa's Monsta Community Day held on Waitangi Day. In doing so, it may have become the first game of women's beach football in New Zealand to be played to

international rules and standards.

"I'm pretty sure it's a first for New Zealand," said Paul Toohey, who is the Beach Soccer Development Officer for FIFA's Oceania Football Confederation.

Toohey, whose job is to promote the sport in 12 Oceania countries, including New Zealand, came to Lake Karapiro to help set up the event but also to check out the venue.

"Without doubt Lake Karapiro is a world class venue that could

host international beach soccer," he says. "Not only because of the quality and size of the sand pitch but also the surrounding facilities from top notch accommodation to the high performance facilities in the immediate vicinity."

The Cambridge and Te Awamutu football clubs arranged matches between their men's and women's teams while much of the day was spent giving children the chance

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"One of the features of beach soccer is the aerial side of the game which of course is the most difficult aspect to master. It was encouraging to see players trying to flick the

ball up off the sand and even attempt a few bicycle kicks. In particular a few of the kids that I worked with in the grassroots session in the morning mastered the flick very quickly."

Beach football is particularly popular in the Pacific Islands and coastal countries in South America but has yet to develop a foothold in New Zealand, mainly because of the lack of suitable facilities.



Members of the Cambridge and Te Awamutu women's football teams after their history-making game of beach football.  
Photo by Paul Toohey.