

Guide to the World Cup 2008



Pool 1



The rules

- Teams receive two points for a win, one for a draw
- Top three teams in pool one will qualify for the semi-finals, with the winners of the other two pools playing off to decide the fourth semi-finalist

Pool 2



Pool 3



Pool one

Australia, England, New Zealand, Papua New Guinea

The super pool that will produce three of the semi-finalists. No prizes for guessing which three. It is why Papua New Guinea threatened to pull out after seeing the draw. Their disgust mellowed and the Kumuls are

out to gatecrash the last four, which is why they are targeting beating England tomorrow. Watch out for fireworks in Townsville. England have the pack to go all the way to the final and a belief in Tony Smith's unhindered approach to the game that suits them. Whether they have the back line to make the most of tryscoring opportunities is the biggest question mark against them.

Injuries and turmoil are testing the theory that Australia could put out two or three squads and win. Wally Lewis, the Australian great, went so far as to suggest that they should field New South Wales and Queensland. "The biggest

no-contest since the Christians versus the Lions," said one Australian commentator, encapsulating the familiar bravado. Under the inspirational and level-headed leadership of Darren Lockyer, any thoughts of a walkover will be banished.

New Zealand, a team in transition under the mercurial Stephen Kearney, are first to go up against Australia in Sydney on Sunday. The Kiwis suffered a series whitewash at the hands of Great Britain last year, but the green shoots of recovery are poking through and they remain the biggest obstacle to England encountering Australia in the final

Three to watch

James Graham (England)

● The 2008 Man of Steel can write his name large on this tournament. A 23-year-old prop with immense skill and endurance, more than capable of going the full 80 minutes, as he showed for St Helens this season



Krisnan Inu (New Zealand)

Hugely talented and versatile 21-year-old with Parramatta Eels who is comfortable at full back, centre or wing and also kicks goals. Made his international debut last year after one club appearance



Greg Inglis (Australia)

Sensational 21-year-old outside back for Melbourne Storm who is averaging a try a match for his country in seven appearances and, unlike some in the NRL, rejected the money on offer in French rugby union

Pool two

France, Fiji, Scotland

Scotland defied the odds at the expense of Wales to reach the finals stage. Their National League journeymen and a couple of star acts in Danny Brough at scrum half and Michael Robertson on the wing are unlikely to roll over a well-drilled France on Sunday, but Scotland, by footballing tradition, are always ones for a World Cup party.

France are a more serious proposition, thanks to the spectacular rise of Catalans Dragons in the engage Super League, and a semi-final place is achievable.

Fiji, with the benefit of some established NRL players, also have expectations of reaching the play-off against the winners of pool three

Pool three

Samoa, Tonga, Ireland

Ireland are up against it in the Pacific "Pool of Death" and they call on one star act in Pat Richards, the Wigan Warriors back, up against a glittering multitude for Samoa, the tournament's dark horses. So many former Kiwis are included that they are potentially stronger than New Zealand.

The formidable band of Polynesian brothers, including George Carmont and Harrison Hansen, the Wigan players, are a force to be reckoned with, although they will need all their experience for a mighty clash against Tonga, who can also call on a fair amount of Super League and NRL pedigree

The fixtures

- October**
- Tomorrow 25 Pool one, 9.55am **England v Papua New Guinea** Townsville
 - Sunday 26 Pool two, 6.25am **Scotland v France** Canberra
 - Sunday 26 Pool one, 8.55am **Australia v New Zealand** Sydney
 - Monday 27 Pool three, 7.55am **Tonga v Ireland** Parramatta
 - Friday 31 Pool three, 7.55am **Samoa v Tonga** Penrith
- November**
- Saturday 1 Pool two, 6.25am **Fiji v France** Wollongong
 - Saturday 1 Pool one, 8.55am **N Zealand v Papua New Guinea** Gold Coast

- Sunday 2 Pool one, 8.55am **Australia v England** Melbourne
- Wednesday 5 Pool three, 7am **Ireland v Samoa** Parramatta
- Wednesday 5 Pool two, 9am **Scotland v Fiji** Central Coast
- Saturday 8 Ranking play-off, 6am **Runner-up of pool two v runner-up of pool three** Rockhampton
- Saturday 8 Pool one, 8.55am **England v New Zealand** Newcastle
- Sunday 9 Ranking play-off, 6.25am **Between third-placed teams in pools two and three** Penrith
- Sunday 9 Pool one, 8.55am **Papua New Guinea v Australia** Townsville

Semi-final qualifier

Monday 10, 8.55am **Winner of pool two v winner of pool three** Gold Coast

Semi-finals

Saturday 15, 8.55am **Runners-up v third-placed team in pool one** Brisbane

Sunday 16, 8.55am **Winner of pool one v semi-final qualifier** Sydney

Final

Saturday 22, 8.55am Brisbane

UK times. All matches live on **SKY SPORTS**

The venues



Roll of honour

	Winners	Runners-up	Host
1954	Great Britain	France	(France)
1957	Australia*	GB	(Australia)
1960	GB*	Australia	(England)
1968	Australia	France	(Australia/N Zealand)

1970	Australia	GB	(England)
1972	GB	Australia	(France)
1975**	Australia*	England	(Worldwide)
1977**	Australia	GB	(Australia/N Zealand)

1985-88	Australia	N Zealand	(Worldwide)
1989-92	Australia	GB	(Worldwide)
1995	Australia	England	(GB)
2000	Australia	N Zealand	(UK/France)

* Denotes no final played ** Known as World Series