

# Canada brings home historic bronze medal in women's rugby sevens

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By Israel Fehr

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RIO DE JANEIRO – "O Canada" rang out at Deodoro Stadium on Monday night, filling the Canadian women's rugby team with pride and a sense of accomplishment.

The singing of the national anthem didn't come during the medal presentation, but an hour earlier during a stoppage in play with 90 seconds left in the bronze-medal game. The Canadian fans in the stands, about a hundred or so, made sure the 12 women who poured their hearts out on the field over the last three days would hear 'O Canada' in Rio.

When the clock hit 0:00 Ghislaine Landry booted the ball where the singing fans were now cheering and bronze in the inaugural women's rugby sevens Olympic tournament belonged to Canada, having beaten Great Britain 33-10. The players rushed to midfield and celebrated a moment many didn't think possible when they began playing the sport.

"I feel like a superhero and I know all 11 of my teammates feel that way too," said captain Jen Kish. "What a freaking historic moment for us. Now I know what our Canadian women's soccer team felt like when they got bronze (at London 2012)."

It was fitting that Landry had the last touch, as she lived up to her billing as one of the top scorers in the world with 18 points from two tries and four conversions. Karen Paquin, Bianca Farella, and Kelly Russell had the other tries for Canada as they stepped up and played up to their high standard.

"There's a lot of games over this tournament that we didn't play the rugby that we are capable of," said Landry. "We're pretty disappointed with that, but [the bronze game was] a performance that we can be proud of and it's good rugby."

Canada was sloppy in their quarterfinal win over [France](#) and the eventual gold-medal winner [Australia](#) outclassed them in the semifinals. If that wasn't enough to motivate them with a medal on the line, the 22-0 loss to Great Britain, their greatest rival on the World Series tour, in the final group stage game, was especially bothersome to team and they were out for revenge.

"We wanted to come out and perform the way we know we can," said head coach John Tait. "If we performed at our best, then for Great Britain to beat us, we would have to see a Great Britain that we've never seen before."

That's the kind of belief the team plays with. It starts with Tait, who says he's not the easiest person to work under, then Kish and everyone else follows the example of their leaders. Their bond is strong because the path to Rio was not easy for anyone.

Ashley Steacy, who wasn't sure she could play in these Olympics as she dealt with multiple knee injuries this year, blew kisses to the crowd as she was substituted in the second half with the result in hand.

"I was so proud. All of these girls put in so much work and for them to get on the field and play in an Olympic medal game was just fabulous," said Steacy.

After the game Kish found her father Steve, who wasn't sure he'd be here either as he battled cancer, and they shared a long, tear-filled embrace.

"When the whistle went I just cried like a baby. I was so overwhelmed," said Kish. "I had no idea I would react like that, but it just shows how much passion we have for this game and for each other. It's a dream come true."

As a whole the team made incredible sacrifices to get here, including all moving to Langford, B.C., on Vancouver Island to centralize their training and make this happen. For some that meant leaving family and friends behind. As they finally come home with an Olympic bronze medal around their necks, there's not even a question that it was all worth it.

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