



MOANA
PASIFIKA

MOANA PASIFIKA CLUB HISTORY



2020

The Moana movement is born

Moana Pasifika was born in 2020, formed for a one-off match against the Māori All Blacks in December of that year.

They were coached by All Blacks legend and the first New Zealand-born Samoan to captain the country, Fa'alogo Tana Umaga.

The team were made up of players of Fijian, Samoan and Tongan descent including those with international experience.

Michael Alaalatoa led the team in a thrilling and tight contest which saw Moana Pasifika leading 9-7 at halftime. Alamanda Motuga and Dwayne Polataivao scored a try each while Josh Ioane was on kicking duties.

Although Moana Pasifika lost 21-28, it was a promising sign of great things to come as this one game propelled into a movement.



2021

Super Rugby spot confirmed

In April 2021, Moana Pasifika were granted a conditional licence and then in July 2021 an unconditional licence by New Zealand Rugby to join the Super Rugby competition for 2022.

Then in September 2021 Auckland's Mt Smart, now called Go Media Stadium was confirmed as Moana Pasifika's new home ground for their inaugural season.

All Blacks legend Aaron Mauger was announced as the team's first head coach. The seed had been planted and the vision for Moana to be a team for the people, whose pride and impact would be felt across the Pacific was officially launched.



2022

Welcome to Super Rugby

In 2022, Moana Pasifika's debut campaign didn't come without its challenges with their first match delayed twice due to a Covid-19 outbreak in the team.

Captained by Wallabies great Sekope Kepu, the team finally got their chance to play their first game against the Crusaders on March 4th 2022.

Solomone Funaki scored the club's first ever try in that match and just weeks later, the team claimed its first every victory, stunning the Hurricanes 24-19 at Mt Smart stadium.

Talented back, Danny Toala scored a try in the fifth minute of golden-point extra time to win the game against the Hurricanes. The team also beat the Brumbies in their final game of the season 32-22, finishing up in 12th place.



2023

Samoan Homecoming

In 2023, Moana Pasifika played the first ever Super Rugby game in Apia, Samoa on April 14.

The historic match saw hometown hero Miracle Failagi score two tries in front of loved ones, highlighting his debut season in which he took the competition by storm and became the first player to be signed in Super Rugby straight from a Samoan club.

Moana Pasifika lost 40-28 but it was a memorable game for the joy it brought to the small pacific nation.

The club continued to have teething challenges, finishing in 12th place again at the end of the season but they were determined to keep growing on field and making an impact off it.



2024

New beginnings and Moana to the Kingdom

The 2024 season brought new beginnings with Fa'alogo Tana Umaga joining the team as their new head coach. Super Rugby championship winning coach Tom Coventry and Welsh rugby legend Stephen Jones were other additions to the coaching team. The club moved their training base to North Harbour Stadium in Auckland's Albany where they were scheduled to play their first match of the season against the Melbourne Rebels. But due to the pitch having to be resurfaced after a summer concert, they moved the game to FMG Stadium in Waikato.

2024 also saw Moana Pasifika take their first home game to Whangarei where they played the Reds. The passionate fans in the Kingdom of Tonga also got to witness their first Super Rugby game when Moana Pasifika hosted the Highlanders at Teufaiva Stadium.

Over 10,000 people turned out in heavy rain as the Highlanders won 28-17.

Julian Savea's signing was a big talking point leading up to the season. Sione Havili Talitui captained the team for majority of the year with James Lay ruled out with injury. He had a standout campaign taking out Moana Man of the Year while Lotu Inisi also stamped his mark as one of the competitions most devastating loose forwards.

Moana Pasifika won four games in 2024, defeating the Fijian Drua for the first time in Super Round in Melbourne. They then went on to beat the Western Force, Reds and Waratahs.

They still missed out on playoff contention but finished in an improved 11th spot.



2025

The Ardie Effect and history

2025 was where Moana Pasifika emphasised they were here to stay. All Black superstar and World Rugby Player of the Year Ardie Savea signed with Moana Pasifika in July 2024. It was touted as the biggest transfer in Super Rugby history with Savea switching from the Hurricanes to honour his Samoan heritage.

Moana Pasifika finally had a place to call home at North Harbour Stadium, and won four out of five home games there against the Hurricanes, Waratahs, Fijian Drua and Blues. They also took two games to Pukekohe's Navigation Homes Stadium for the first time.

It was a season that saw them attract fans from around the globe including Europe and South Africa. The club also achieved record numbers in home game attendance and social media engagement.

Their 45-29 win over the Crusaders on March 29 was a huge talking point, showing that a new era of Moana rugby was here and the public was starting to take notice. It was the most points scored away against the Crusaders this century.

Savea's impact continued as Moana Pasifika recorded a win over the Blues at home thanks to his turnover in the final moments.

2025 saw rising stars emerge including Semisi Tupou Ta'eiloa, Patrick Pellegrini and the continuation of Miracle Faiilagi's dominance.

Savea received the inaugural Super Rugby Player of the Year Award and Moana Pasifika won six games, finishing in 7th place and narrowly missing out on a playoff spot.