All Blacks training

The All Blacks paid a visit to the University of Glamorgan’s top-of-the-range Sport Park ahead of their autumn international match against Wales, with manager Darren Shand praising the high standard of the facilities.

World Cup winners New Zealand went on to beat Wales 33-10 in the Millennium Stadium clash, but manager Shand believes the key to their success is down to the hours of hard work put in by Captain Richie McCaw and co.

Speaking exclusively to *The Phoenix*, Shand – who took over the role as All Black manager in 2004 - said: “We are constantly trying to improve, that’s part of the All Blacks history and legacy.

“You can never have the perfect game, and that is what pushes us on, trying to reach that high benchmark that we have set ourselves.

“We strive to constantly improve, and that can only be achieved by training hard.”

It’s not the first time New Zealand have used the University’s facilities, returning two years on from their last clash with Wales, the world’s number one side took advantage of the indoor facilities to practice their line-out drills.

Though the training session did come at a cost, with Fly-Half Dan Carter picking up an Achilles injury during the 20 minute drill, meaning he missed out on the chance to face the Grand Slam winners. Despite this, Shand was full of praise for the Glamorgan Sport Park facilities, and in particular the 3G all-weather pitch.

“The sports hall and high performance areas here at Glamorgan are great. We’ve had some bad weather, but a lot of work has obviously gone into these pitches with regards to drainage and so on, so that has made a big difference for us.

“The 3G pitches here are great for us because they are as close as we are going to get to the perfect surface. We don’t mind making the short drive down here from Cardiff when we have facilities such as these available to us.”

During the All Blacks visit to Wales, team Media Manager, Joe Locke, also dropped by to chat to Journalism students where he discussed the importance of a strong relationship between the players, media and the public.

Talking of the guest lecture held by Locke, a spokesman from the University’s public affairs and communication team, said: “We’ve hosted the All Blacks for their training through the week, and today’s session was a tremendous bonus for our journalism students.

“The University tries to prepare our students for a career by giving them an insight into the media as it really is, both through work placements and discussion with the experts who do these demanding jobs in the real world.

“Joe’s insight as the lead media handler for the World Cup winners has given the students a great window into the finely balanced relationship between journalists and the communications professionals whose job it is to work with them.”