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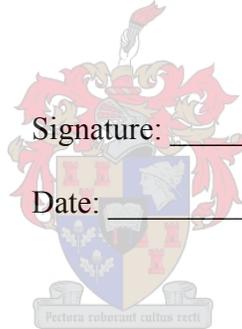
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DECLARATION

I, the undersigned do hereby declare that the work contained in this dissertation is my own original work and that I have not previously in its entirety or in part submitted it at any university for a degree.

Signature: _____

Date: _____



SUMMARY

In the world of sports, rugby was one of the last sports to shed its amateur status and fully embrace a professional era. This change has been accompanied by as many setbacks as successes, as each member country of the International Rugby Board had to deal with problems particular to their context.

The South African context proved unique as it had to contend with a change in the governmental and social orders with the abolition of apartheid as well as with a change in value system with the adoption of a professional code. The acceptance of a new social order, one based on non-racialism has had an important influence of the development of the rugby union game in South Africa.

The route advocated by government through which the South African rugby authorities have been advised to follow regarding the inclusion of all races in the game, that of transformation and its attendant issues of quota systems and merit with bias has increased the complexity of the transition of South African rugby from an amateur to a professional code. This route now has to take into account the influences of commercialism and its armour bearers, namely the media, television and sponsors.

This thesis provides an overview of how these forces have interacted within South African rugby over the last nine years. The origin of professionalism in rugby, the tenuous relationship between rugby and transformation and the tensions between rugby, commercialism, the media and politics are all examined. The effect that professionalism has had on players regarding the physical demands of rugby has also been examined.

An undeniable fact of this whole process is that the game has changed from the one played ten years ago and it would appear that with the continued influence of commercialism it will continue to change. To judge whether the change has been good or not depends entirely on the individual. However, what cannot be ignored is that the game has grown faster and encourages the development of skills all around.

Opsomming

In die sportwêreld was rugby een van die laaste sportsoorte wat van sy amateurstatus ontslae geraak het om die professionele era te betree. Hierdie verandering het tot net soveel terugslae as suksesse gelei. Elke lidland van die Internasionale Rugbyraad moes met eiesoortige probleme worstel.

In Suid-Afrika, was hierdie konteks uniek en het gepaard gegaan met a 'n belangrike bewindsverandering, veranderinge in die sosiale orde na die afskaffing van apartheid, asook 'n verandering in die waardesisteen met die aanvaarding van 'n professionele kode. Die aanvaarding van 'n nuwe orde onder die vaandel van nie-rassigheid sou belangrike implikasies vir die spel in Suid-Afrika inhou.

Die roete wat die regering vir die Suid-Afrikaanse rugbybase uitgestippel het van inklusiwiteit, transformasie, kwotas en meriete met subjektiwiteit, het die oorgang na professionaliteit gekompliseer. Die roete moes ook rekening hou met die eise van kommersialisering soos byvoorbeeld die medie, televisie en borge.

Hierdie verhandeling verskaf 'n oorsig van hoe hierdie kragte op Suid-Afrikaanse rugby die afgelope nege jaar ingewerk het. Die oorsprong van professionalisme in rugby, die problematiese verhouding tussen rugby en transformasie, en die spanninge tussen rugby, kommersialisme, die media en die politiek word onder die loep geneem. Eweneens word die fisiese eise aan spelers ook ondersoek.

'n Onbetwisbare feit van die hele proses is dat die aard van die spel die afgelope tien jaar verander het en met die volgehoue invloed van kommersialisme sal dit aanhou om te verander. Om te oordeel of dit noodwendig ten goede of kwade was, bevat individuele subjektiewe elemente. Maar dit kan nie ontken word nie dat die spel gegroei het en dat die vaardigheidsvlakke verhoog is nie.

Acknowledgements

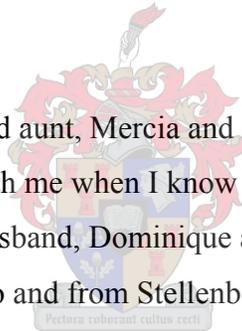
I would like to thank Prof. Albert Grundlingh, my study leader, for mentoring me and encouraging me. Thank you for always being available and for pushing me beyond what I thought was possible.

To Mrs. Corinne Harmsen, the departmental officer, thank you for your encouragement, support and assistance not just over the last year, but also for the entire time that I have been with the department.

To Dr. Louis Luyt, Nick Mallett, Joel Stranksy and Joe van Niekerk, thank you for your time and your insights into the game. Your insights provided me with perspectives I would not have gained otherwise.

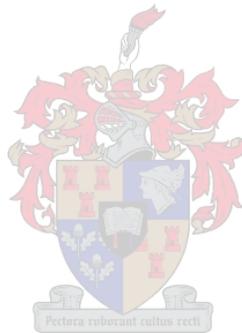
To my family: my grandmother and aunt, Mercia and Adrienne Williams, thank you for the times you watched matches with me when I know you would rather have been busy elsewhere. To my sister and her husband, Dominique and Timothy Smith, thank you for your support and for ferrying me to and from Stellenbosch.

To my Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ, thank you for the opportunities you provided me with this year and for carrying me up to this point.



DEDICATION

This thesis is dedicated to my parents for the seeds they planted in my life. To my mother, Elizabeth Bolligelo, thank you for introducing me to Jesus and for cultivating that relationship. It proved a truly divine comfort. To my father, Desmond Bolligelo, thank you for cultivating my love of sport. More specifically, thank you for the time you took to explain the game of rugby to me, without which this thesis would never have come into being. Thank you both for the legacy you have left me.



Chapter 1:

Introduction

1.1. Problem Statement

Rugby means a lot to me. It has created opportunities that would not otherwise have existed. It has built bridges, it has opened doors...it has taken me to places that as a child I had only dreamt of. And it taught me everything about victory and defeat, triumph and humiliation.¹

– Danie Gerber

Rugby is often described as the ‘beautiful game’ or ‘the game they play in heaven’.² During its long history, it has attained an aura and adherence that at times appears to be revered in the way one does with a religion. As the quote above states, it becomes something more than a game; it becomes a life-teacher, companion and something very special to those who participate in it. The roots of this wonderful game have, however been debated.

According to popular legend, the game of rugby owed its conception to a young schoolboy by the name of William Webb Ellis, who one day while playing soccer, picked up the ball and began to run with it. This version of events remained ingrained as truth for most of the twentieth century. Historians have since discovered that there is no specific date or time that one can place the inception of rugby as a game.

The Romans, it has been found, had already been playing a game similar to rugby known as *harpastum*. It was employed as a means of keeping soldiers battle-ready during periods of inactivity.³ *Harpastum* is, however, a Greek word meaning ‘to snatch’, and the game initially involved two sets of players who attempted be the first to carry the ball over the

¹ Danie Gerber, former Springbok centre in, Schoeman, C: [Danie Gerber: Maestro of the Midfield](#), p.184.

² www.heavensgame.com

³ S. Smith: [The Union Game: A rugby history](#), p.14.

goal-lines marked at both ends of the playing field. As *harpastum* is a Greek word, it has been concluded that the Romans may in fact have appropriated the game from the Greeks, as is visible from what is known about their culture. A number of high-spirited ball games with decidedly violent and anarchic natures began to emerge in Britain over time, all of which can assert antecedent of the game of rugby.

The early parts of the nineteenth century saw the variations of the game being played in public schools in England. There were no standardized rules at this point and the game allowed every player to run with the ball in hand and the gain of possession was permitted through collaring, hacking over, charging and any other method deemed necessary by the player.⁴ Hacking describes the use of the toe to either kick the shins of the opposition or trip them up. As a result of its rough and tough nature, the game developed the impression of being a truly masculine sport, which appealed to the middle class male who was mostly involved with it.

The mid-1820's saw Dr. Thomas Arnold, headmaster of Rugby School in Rugby, although not an avid fan of the game of rugby, used rugby in conjunction with religion as a means of rectifying the problem of ill-discipline prevalent at the school at the time. The combination of sport and religion gave rise to the development of the concept of 'muscular Christianity'. The school gained much success through this and many of the former pupils took this ideal wherever they went. Those who became Christian missionaries invariably took this along with them as well, hence the development of connection between rugby, religion and its exclusive masculine domain.⁵

The Webb Ellis myth materialized in 1876 four years after his death. It came about when a former pupil of Rugby School, solicitor and antiquarian Matthew Bloxam wrote to his *alma mater's* magazine claiming to have discovered this when the change occurred in the game from a kicking game to a handling game. He placed the cause of the change on

⁴S. Smith: The Union Game: A rugby history. 1999. p.17.

⁵S. Smith: The Union Game: A rugby history. 1999. p.18.

Webb Ellis, based on second-hand knowledge.⁶ No one ever refuted his assertion and that is how the myth came into being. The middle class gentlemen who were in charge of the game at the time adopted the myth and utilized it as a means of retaining their power by enforcing their value system through the amateur code (evidenced by the split in 1895 which is discussed in more detail in chapter 2).

Throughout the twentieth century, rugby proudly maintained its amateur status and looked with disdain on sports which paid its participants. In early 1995, a few short months before the game went officially professional, Dudley Wood, then-Secretary of the English Rugby Football Union (RFU) stated in a television production about the game that 'rugby is a sport for pleasure, played in an individual's spare time and not for financial reward'.⁷ This contradicted the actual events as players, especially international players, were required to spend more time on rugby than on their actual jobs. The 1970's saw increasing instances of *boot money* and other clandestine payments which gave rise to the term *shamateurism*. The southern hemisphere and South Africa in particular was miles ahead in the *shamateur* stakes. The player transfer market in South Africa was already well-established by the 1980's.⁸

Although players were being paid to play, the fact that it was being done illicitly began to rankle. Will Carling, former captain of the English national team, although not in favour of professionalism as such, did want more honesty in the game. It was the hypocrisy which they faced daily that brought the most dissatisfaction.

The decision to adopt professionalism, although made under the threat from Kerry Packer's The World Rugby Championship and Rupert Murdoch's Super League proposed ventures did play a significant role in forcing the International Rugby Board (IRB) to reconsider its stance on payment for play in rugby union.

⁶ S. Smith: The Union Game: A rugby history, p.20.

⁷ C. Davies: 'Professionalism in rugby: Good for the players but bad for the sport?' Published at: http://www.heavensgame.com/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=78&Itemid=51 Accessed: 08 March 2005.

⁸ G. Teichmann and E. Griffiths: For the Record: Gary Teichmann, p.77.

1.2. Literature Review

1.2.1. The History of Rugby

Literature on the history of rugby and especially on the history of South African rugby is plentiful. Sean Smith's work is particularly insightful with regards to the development of the game within the United Kingdom, South Africa, New Zealand, Australia and France.⁹ The United Kingdom is focused on as it is the country of birth of the game of rugby union as it is known today. It is also where the most important developments in the game occurred, namely the 1895 split which gave rise to the creation of Rugby League. Smith also examines and highlights the influence that the British class structure had on the game.

Australia, South Africa and New Zealand are examined as different responses to an adopted game. All three were colonies of Great Britain and in all three countries, rugby was utilized as a means of unifying the settlers to the new country. In both South Africa and New Zealand, rugby became a useful tool for politics in order to promote political ideology. In New Zealand success on the rugby field was used to lure new settlers to the colony; in South Africa it was used as a means of perpetuating the ideology of white supremacy.

Australia, although a colony of Great Britain, saw a more focused approach to the financial aspect of the union game than the prior two. France was the first country outside of Britain's colonies to adopt the game. It is also currently the best rugby playing country outside of the old colonies.

Pierre Dine's work provides an insightful look at the development of rugby football in France.¹⁰ It covers the history of rugby football and examines the notions of 'French flair' and 'champagne rugby' that the rest of the world associates with France within a

⁹ S. Smith: The Union Game: A Rugby History. BBC Worldwide Ltd, London, 1999.

¹⁰ P. Dine: French Rugby Football: A Cultural History. Berg, 2001.

historical context. He also provides an interesting perspective on the influence of professionalism on these notions.

Regarding the history of rugby in South Africa, the majority of the works available deal exclusively with the history of white rugby, which is to be expected as a legacy of *apartheid*. Works in this genre include contributions by Danie Craven¹¹, Paul Dobson¹² and Chris Greyvenstein¹³. Histories on the various provincial unions abound with works by FA Engelbrecht¹⁴, CO Medworth¹⁵ and W. Muller¹⁶.

The lack of literature regarding the history of black rugby in South Africa is slowly being addressed, although few works exist. One of the earliest works on this subject was published in 1981 by J. Peires¹⁷ and A. Odendaal¹⁸.

Abdurahman Booley¹⁹ contributed with a history of black rugby in the Western and Eastern Cape. The most recent contribution stems from a MA thesis from the University of Fort Hare.²⁰

A feature of more recent writing on rugby in South Africa is that academics have moved beyond the anecdotal and have tried to insert and assess the sport in a wider cultural and socio-political context. In line with this recent movement, J. Nauright and TJJ Chandler

¹¹ D. Craven: Die groot rugby gesin van die Maties utigegee ter viering van die 100-jarige bestaan van die rugbyvoetbalklub. G&S, 1980 and Springbok annals: international tours to and from South Africa 1891-1958. Mimosa, 1960.

¹² P. Dobson: Rugby in South Africa: A History, 1861-1988. South African Rugby Board, 1989.

¹³ C. Greyvenstein: Springbok Saga: 100 years of Springbok Rugby. Nelson, 1992.

¹⁴ F.A. Engelbrecht: Die geskiedenis van die Noord-Transvaalse rugbyskeidsregtersvereniging, 1938-1983. Unisa, 1985.

¹⁵ C.O. Medworth: The history of Natal rugby. Timmins, 1964.

¹⁶ W. Muller: 'n Eeu van OP Rugby = A century of EP rugby. Nasionale Media, 1988.

¹⁷ J. Peires: Facta non verba: towards a history of black rugby. University of the Witwatersrand, 1981.

¹⁸ A. Odendaal: 'The thing that is not round – the untold history of black rugby in South Africa' in A. Grundlingh; A. Odendaal and B. Spies: Beyond the Tryline: Rugby and South African Society. Ravan Press, 1995.

¹⁹ A. Booley: Forgotten Heroes: a history of black rugby, 1882-1992. Manie Booley, 1998.

²⁰ P.M. Nongogo: Origins of and development of black rugby in East London since the late nineteenth century and its response to South African sport unification: a study of selected clubs, unpublished MA thesis, University of Fort Hare, 2004.

have published compilations examining rugby within the gender and economic contexts.²¹

The topic of race and masculinity has also seen a number of contributions, namely by J. Nauright and D. Black²² and A. Grundlingh²³.

The influence of the 1995 World Cup win on South African society has also been examined by A. Grundlingh²⁴ and J. Maingard²⁵ in which they unpack the hype that surrounded the 1995 World Cup. A general response to the current state of rugby in South Africa is bafflement. The general public saw the 'magic' that was the 1995 cup win and for the most part cannot understand why rugby has made such slow progress and suffered such severe defeats within a short space of winning this prestigious tournament.

What both articles reflect, although through different emphases, is that the dream that was the World Cup win was built on faulty foundations, so that when difficulties struck, there was nothing solid to hold the dream together.

The subject of professionalism is one which is sorely lacking in information in South Africa. The United Kingdom and New Zealand have already published articles examining the effect of professionalism on rugby in those respective countries. Examples of these include a history of the professionalization of the New Zealand Rugby Union by PD Owen and CR Weatherston²⁶, Adrian Smith examined the impact that professionalism has had on the dynamic between rugby clubs and the English Rugby

²¹ J. Nauright and T.J.L. Chandler: Making Men: Rugby and Masculine Identity. London, 1996 and Making the Rugby World: Race, Gender, Commerce. London, 1999.

²² J. Nauright and D. Black: 'Hitting them where it hurts: Springbok - All Black rugby, Masculine National Identity and Counter-hegemonic struggle, 1959-1992' in Wilcox, R (ed): Sport in the Global Village. Fitness Information Technology, 1994.

²³ A. Grundlingh: 'Playing for power? Rugby, Afrikaner nationalism and masculinity in South Africa, c.1900-1970' in The International Journal of the History of Sport, Vol.11, no.3, 1994.

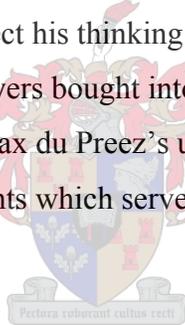
²⁴ A. Grundlingh: 'From redemption to recidivism?: Rugby and change in South Africa during the 1995 World Cup and its aftermath' in Sporting Traditions, Vol.14, no.2, 1998.

²⁵ J. Maingard: 'Imagining the South African nation: representation of identity in the Rugby World Cup 1995' in the Theater Journal, 49, 1997.

²⁶ P.D. Owen and C.R. Weatherston: 'Professionalization of New Zealand Rugby Union: Historical Background, Structural Changes and Competitive Balance' in the University of Otago Economics Discussion Papers No.0214, December 2002.

Football Union (RFU)²⁷ and Peter Williams' contribution examined the RFU's fight against professionalism²⁸. The impact of injuries on players has also been examined in different countries. In New Zealand, KL Quarrie (et.al) examined the risk factors for injury in rugby union²⁹. A Bathgate (et al)' examined the rate of injury amongst elite Australian rugby union players³⁰ and NJ Henderson's 'Impact of Professionalism on Injuries in Rugby'³¹ has provided insights into areas of professionalism that many did not consider during the amateur era. This thesis attempts to provide an overview of the impact of professionalism in its first nine years of existence in South Africa and in so doing assist in addressing the lack of information presently in South Africa.

Player perspectives on professionalism and amateurism were provided mainly by autobiographies and biographies. R. Clayton and C. Greyvenstein³² and T. Partridge's³³ biographies on Dr. Danie Craven provide perceptive reflections on South African rugby's most influential promoter. They reflect his thinking and help one gain a measure of understanding into why so many players bought into the amateur ethos so unreservedly. Louis Luyt's autobiography³⁴ and Max du Preez's unauthorized biography³⁵ provide contrasting versions of the same events which serves to stimulate debate and further investigation.



As a matter of interest, Sarfu's former CEO, Edward Griffiths, who functioned in that role from 1994 to early 1996 provided a number of biographies on contemporary players.

²⁷ A. Smith: 'Civil War in England: The Clubs, the RFU and the Impact of Professionalism on Rugby Union, 1995-99'. 20002.

²⁸ P. Williams: 'Battle Lines on Three Fronts: The RFU and the Lost War Against Professionalism' in the International Journal of the History of Sport, Vol.19, no.2, December 2004.

²⁹ K.L. Quarrie et al: 'The New Zealand Rugby Injury and Performance Project. A Prospective Cohort Study of the Risk Factors for Injury in Rugby Union Football', in the British Journal of Sports Medicine, 2001, 35.

³⁰ A. Bathgate et al: 'A Prospective Study of Injuries to Elite Australian Rugby Union Players' in the British Journal of Sports Medicine, 2002, 36.

³¹ N.J. Henderson: 'Impact of Professionalism on Injuries in Rugby' in the British Journal of Sports Medicine, 2000, 34.

³²R. Clayton and C. Greyvenstein: The Craven Tapes: Doc Tells All. Human & Rosseau (Pty) Ltd, 1995.

³³ T. Partridge: A Life in Rugby. Signa Press, 1991.

³⁴ L. Luyt: Walking Proud: The Louis Luyt Autobiography. Don Nelson:, 2003.

³⁵ M. Du Preez: Louis Luyt: Unauthorised. Zebra Press, 2001.

Besides producing Naas Botha's biography³⁶, he also produced one for Joost van der Westhuizen³⁷ and co-authored Gary Teichmann's autobiography³⁸, to name but a few.

Despite the abundance of such literature, an analytical approach to the influence of professionalism in South Africa is still required. Further areas of research will be suggested at the conclusion of this work.

1.2. Methodology

Both primary and secondary sources were utilized for the purposes of this thesis. The autobiographies and biographies proved insightful in giving the player's perspective on events and on the game and its development.

Newspaper articles were useful in ascertaining the timeline for events as well as providing insights into public opinion. The lack of sources dealing directly with this topic proved to be problematic, but interesting at the same time. What has become clear is that the adoption of a professional code not only affected rugby in terms of player loyalty and growth of the game, it also affected the areas of economics and medicine and contributed to the growth and development of the field of sports science within rugby.

Personal interviews were also conducted to gain more insight into certain areas. Subjects were chosen for their participation in certain events, most notably during the 'rugby war' of 1995 which resulted in the eventual adoption of open professionalism.

Louis Luyt, as president of Sarfu at the time played a vital role in moving rugby union into the professional era. He is well-known for having almost professionalized South African rugby while still maintaining the amateur code. His contribution to the SANZAR/Newscorp deal signed the death knell for amateurism in rugby union. He also

³⁶ E. Griffiths: Naas: Die Amptelike Biografie. Leo Uitgewers, 1989.

³⁷ E. Griffiths: Joost: Vir Liefde en Geld. CAB, 1998.

³⁸ E. Griffiths: Naas: Die Amptelike Biografie. Leo Uitgewers, 1989.

provided an amateur player's perspective on rugby in the light of having forced professionalism.

Nick Mallett only played rugby as an amateur but he coached in both eras as well. This provides a unique perspective, especially with regards to the question of player loyalty and payment.

Joel Stransky was a member of the 1995 Springbok team to sign the first professional contracts. He also played club rugby in England during the time the United Kingdom experienced the consequences of adopting a professional game without having the proper structures in place to manage it appropriately.

Johann (Joe) van Niekerk is one of the younger players who have only known professional rugby. This brings a different perspective to the question of loyalty raised so many times in defense of amateurism.

The oral sources assisted by providing different perspectives to the information gained from other sources.



The professional game is now in its tenth year of existence. To date, there is a noticeable lack of literature in South Africa regarding the influence that professionalism has had on the development of rugby in the country. This thesis aims to broadly examine this issue by discussing the origin of the professional era with as far as possible, specific reference to the situation in South Africa. The South African context will further be explored by examining the tensions between professionalism and transformation, which is a current issue of concern. The tensions between commercialism, the media, politics and rugby will be discussed as well. Finally the influence that professionalism has had on the players themselves will also be examined.

Chapter 2:

The Beginning of the Professional Era

‘To me, playing rugby, our rugby, for money, is like paying a woman for sex. It is prostitution...when a player is paid to play then he isn’t playing for the love of the game anymore’. – Danie Craven³⁹

For most of its history, rugby union has had an ambiguous relationship with money. Money was good for the club but not for its most important commodity, the player. It was in fact the issue of payment for play within rugby union which in the United Kingdom caused the most important rift in the game’s history. It was in 1895 when Yorkshire players requested reimbursement for play due to the amount of work time they had to miss as a result of their commitment to rugby.⁴⁰ The stance of ‘no payment for play’ by the ruling middle class administrators had the Yorkshire clubs forming a group of their own and starting what is today known as rugby league.

Although the games followed different paths of development with rugby league changing to the extent that it played with two less players and has no scrums, the most defining feature separating the two codes was the aspect of payment for play. Up until 1995, rugby league players were comparatively wealthier than union players due to the embargo on the payment of union players.⁴¹ However, union players in general were involved in professional positions outside of rugby which meant that many were not destitute as a result of not being paid to play. Despite the very strong verbal denunciation of payment for play in rugby union, over the years situations developed whereby players, particularly since the 1970’s, were paid clandestinely which gave rise to the term *shamateurism*.

³⁹ R. Clayton and C. Greyvenstein: The Craven Tapes: Doc Tells All, p. 142.

⁴⁰ S. Smith: The Union Game: A rugby history, p. 31.

⁴¹ R. Louw and J. Cameron-Dow: Rob Louw: For the love of the game, p. 207.

Amateur rules were given lipservice by administrators tainting the integrity of rugby union. It caused much dissatisfaction amongst players, which began to peak during the 1990's.⁴² The dissatisfaction among players caused by *shamateurism* created an environment ripe for revolution, which is what the World Rugby Championship (advanced by Ross Turnbull under the auspices of Kerry Packer)⁴³ unintentionally caused. Fear of losing players to this consortium forced union administrators and eventually the International Rugby Board (IRB) to re-evaluate their stance on amateurism and eventually abolish amateurism in favour of professionalism at all levels on the 27th of August 1995.⁴⁴

Thus, whether implicitly or explicitly, money has always played an important role in rugby and it is precisely this indistinct relationship that needs to be scrutinized when examining the beginning of professionalism in rugby union.

2.1 Shamateurism

The term *shamateurism* coined to describe the absurdity of the attitude of rugby officials toward payment for play was very apt. It came to be a sham of amateurism. The lengths that officials went to justify certain behaviours and undertakings and vilify others were bizarre. For example, Dr. Craven went to immense lengths to distinguish between a 'rebel' tour and an 'unofficial' tour. A rebel tour was defined as a tour in which players are paid to play while an unofficial tour was defined as a tour undertaken by teams without permission from either their unions or the IRB.⁴⁵ The fact that both kinds of tours broke international regulations was forgotten in the scramble to ensure that rugby union's *amateur* status was not tarnished.

⁴² Interview: Joel Stransky – Monday, 11 April 2005

⁴³ Ross Turnbull is a former Australian Test prop as well as the former chairman of the New South Wales Rugby Football Union. Kerry Packer is an Australian businessman, who made a significant contribution to the professionalization of cricket in the 1970's and whose broadcasting company, Publishing and Broadcasting Ltd (PBL) held the sole broadcasting rights for free-to-air and pay-per-view broadcasting of Australian Rugby League matches. It was the battle for broadcasting rights for this league which initiated the subsequent rugby war.

⁴⁴ P. Fitzsimons: *The Rugby War*, p. 319.

⁴⁵ T. Partridge: *A Life in Rugby*, p. 114.

Rob Andrew has noted in his autobiography that in terms of professionalism, South Africa was far ahead of England.⁴⁶ He recounts that on his visit to South Africa in 1994, he was surprised by the treatment South African players received from their administrators in terms of compensation and care. Gary Teichmann in his autobiography takes this one step further by alleging that South Africa had already been semi-professional since the 1986 Cavaliers tour, which he describes as an ‘expensively persuaded’ tour.⁴⁷ He mentions an internal transfer market which was both active and very healthy as well as strike threats by the Springboks as usual during the 1980’s. The inducement in the transfer market was not necessarily direct payment, but payment in the forms of houses, jobs, cars and monthly reimbursements.

Players thus found themselves in a situation where they were preached a sermon of amateurism, shamed into towing the line where they did not and yet money was being passed their way despite the regulations against it. The state of rugby union at this point was that payment was acceptable as long as it was not for actually playing rugby.⁴⁸



2.2. Early Rumblings of Professionalism

The irony in union’s eventual acceptance of professionalism is that the catalyst for the change emanated out of rugby league. In 1995, rugby union was only the most popular sport in a few countries such as South Africa and France. In other influential rugby playing countries such as England, Australia and New Zealand, rugby union was beaten into second place by rugby league.

In Australia, rugby league was by far the more popular sport and had become a lucrative commercial product with Kerry Packer holding exclusive broadcast rights for the Australian Rugby League.⁴⁹ Rumours of a rival league operated by NewsCorp, which is

⁴⁶ R. Andrew: *A Game and a Half – An Autobiography*, p. 154.

⁴⁷ G. Teichmann and E. Griffiths: *For The Record: Gary Teichmann*, p. 76.

⁴⁸ Interview: Nick Mallett – Tuesday, 26 April 2005

⁴⁹ P. Fitzsimons: *The Rugby War*, p. 2.

owned by Rupert Murdoch, surfaced in the Australian media on the 31st of March 1995.⁵⁰ Some of league's most prominent players had reportedly signed for the new Super League. It was Packer's choice of legal counsel in this matter which produced an opening for the rugby world championship idea to take root and flourish.⁵¹

As much as Packer's decision to fight Murdoch's foray into Rugby League created a chance for the idea of rugby union to go professional, what has to be considered is the particular context at the time. In rugby union, movements towards professionalism were already being contemplated in early 1995 by the media.⁵²

In early February 1995, reports had already surfaced of the New Zealand Rugby Union (NZRU) considering professionalising rugby union.⁵³ According to this report, the NZRU wanted to raise the issue of professionalising rugby at the forthcoming meeting of the IRB, which was to occur in August that year. Eddie Tonks, chairperson of the NZRU, proposed the formation of a professional structure similar to that of New Zealand Cricket. Players would be contracted on the basis of their performance on a classification correspondent to their test experience and test status.

There were mixed reactions to this suggestion. Most notably, David Campese, the Australian wing who was reported to have been the first millionaire rugby player, who spoke out against professionalism.⁵⁴ Campese's objection to professionalism stemmed from his belief that it (professionalism) would create three super-powers in world rugby. He believed that players would move to the countries which had the most money in rugby (at that time), namely England, France and South Africa. According to him, the best

⁵⁰ P. Fitzsimons: *The Rugby War*, p. 1.

⁵¹ When the news of Murdoch's Super League competition hit the media, Packer approached the law firm, Wentworth Associates, for legal advice. One of the lawyers appointed to the case, Geoff Levy, was a rugby union fan and after hearing about the Murdoch saga, formulated the initial proposal for the World Rugby Championship. He then approached Ross Turnbull for assistance in improving the structure and making it viable. P. Fitzsimons: *The Rugby War*, pp. 5-8.

⁵² 'Rugby Wêreldbeker - 1995', in *Die Burger*, 15 February 1995, p. 18.

⁵³ 'Kiwi's Bepleit Beroepspeel', in *Die Burger*, 01 February 1995, p. 16

⁵⁴ 'Rugby Wêreldbeker-1995', in *Die Burger*, 15 February 1995, p. 18

Australian and New Zealand players would flock to these countries and leave their own countries seriously weakened in player strength.

Other international players, such as Rob Andrew and Will Carling also spoke out against professionalism. Both Carling and Andrew interestingly enough echoed traditional views in their opposition to professionalism. Carling was just not interested in professionalism but felt that the laws needed to be relaxed in terms of players earning money outside of the game from personal appearances, writing and broadcasting.⁵⁵

Andrew on the other hand draws a clear distinction between *professionalism* and *payment for play*. He viewed professionalism as the collaborator of commercialism, which was seen as a threat to the character of the game. He felt that by accepting a professional code, union rugby would be 'selling its independence to the dictates of commercialism'.⁵⁶ However, he saw payment for play as just recognition for the time and commitment invested by the player into the game. Accordingly, a player is thus not motivated by greed, which is a fear repeated persistently by the older guard of rugby players in maintaining the amateur ethos.

Following on the heels of the NZRU to request full professionalism, the Australian Rugby Union (ARU) announced a strategy to financially compensate their players for their commitment to the game within the parameters allowed by the IRB.⁵⁷ Under the auspices of Wallaby Promotions and Marketing, players would be granted opportunities to earn money through the company which had no relation to their on-field activities. It is interesting to note the silence of South African players in this debate. Until the news of the Rugby World Championship broke in South Africa in July 1995, it appeared as though the debate regarding the move to professionalism was conducted only by the Australians and New Zealanders.

⁵⁵ D. Norrie: *Will Carling: The Authorised Biography*, p. 106.

⁵⁶ R. Andrew: *A Game and a Half – An Autobiography*, p. 155.

⁵⁷ 'Geld Kan Inrol Vir Aussies', in *Die Burger*, 18 February 1995, p. 18.

It was in this milieu that the Murdoch/Packer saga erupted. Murdoch's controversial Super League tournament had not only Packer (who was the sole broadcaster of league in Australia at the time) worried but Australian and New Zealand rugby union administrators as well. The Murdoch camp had not only invaded league territory but had also made incursions into union terrain. Australian and New Zealand rugby administrators, including ARU Chairman Leo Williams and NZRU deputy chairman Rob Fisher met secretly to discuss possible measures to counter the Murdoch raids.⁵⁸ This was held on the 8th April 1995. The conclusion reached was that any international competition organised to combat the Super League threat would need to have South Africa involved. Four days later, Australia's biggest unions, New South Wales and Queensland announced that they were no longer to be amateur, laying the groundwork for the birth of professionalism.⁵⁹

2.3. How League Came to Influence the Union Game

The Packer camp's attempt to derail the Murdoch raid was to devise the first completely professional rugby union competition.⁶⁰ The competition involved forming three conferences consisting of ten teams each which would run simultaneously, producing world champions at both provincial and international level annually. This would provide a total of three-hundred-and-fifty-two top grade games.

The projected television airtime the competition was supposed to give was seven-hundred-and-four hours.⁶¹ Players were to be paid on a three-tiered system where the top tier accounted for the best international players and then provincial and then club. Player salaries were to be comparable to that of most other professional codes, which would enable players to finally acknowledge themselves professional rugby players. Only a small number of players (900) were required for the competition, with most being

⁵⁸ P. Fitzsimons: The Rugby War, p. 15.

⁵⁹ P. Fitzsimons: The Rugby War, p. 19.

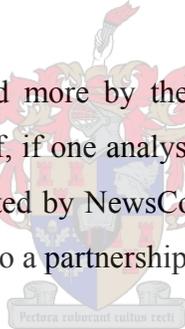
⁶⁰ P. Fitzsimons: The Rugby War, p. 21.

⁶¹ P. Fitzsimons: The Rugby War, p. 45

recruited from South Africa as they had the larger pool of players to choose from.⁶² Player acceptance of the proposal was mostly positive, with most players signing without having read the contract.⁶³

Initially it seemed as though the concept would in fact be launched. By the end of July, all the Springboks (with the exception of Chester Williams), the majority of the senior French, Australian and New Zealand players had also signed.⁶⁴ Although they struggled to recruit the top international players in the British home unions, they made great inroads with the provincial players in the southern hemisphere. Where the organisers of the Rugby World Championship failed was by approaching the players directly and excluding the unions. It was felt that the union devotion to the amateur code would make them unwilling to give proper thought to the concept and so felt that they needed to have bargaining power, namely through the players.⁶⁵

Union administrators felt threatened more by the manner in which the proposal was conducted than by the proposal itself, if one analyses their actions. They initially banded together to contest the threat presented by NewsCorp's Super League, yet it is precisely with the menace that they entered into a partnership.



It required approximately five weeks in between bringing South Africa on board to the signing of the agreement between South Africa, New Zealand, Australia and NewsCorp.⁶⁶ The agreement was to form another defining moment in the history of rugby union. For the first time, an agreement was entered into between countries to create a professional competition in rugby.⁶⁷ SANZAR (South Africa, New Zealand and Australia Rugby) was formed as a result to administer this competition, comprising of

⁶² P. Fitzsimons: The Rugby War, p. 141.

⁶³ G. Teichmann and E. Griffiths: For The Record: Gary Teichmann, p. 78. This is echoed by Joost van der Westhuizen in E. Griffiths: Joost: Vir Liefde en Geld, p.112. Players trusted the agents implicitly (blindly?) because of who they were. In van der Westhuizen's case, his agent was his national captain François Pienaar and Teichmann's case it was a former Springbok and former Natal teammate, Guy Kebble, who he greatly admired.

⁶⁴ P. Fitzsimons: The Rugby War, p. 186.

⁶⁵ P. Fitzsimons: The Rugby War, p. 20.

⁶⁶ P. Fitzsimons: The Rugby War, p. 93.

⁶⁷ P. Fitzsimons: The Rugby War, p. 98.

one club competition (the Super 12) and one international competition (the Tri-Nations). The formation of this group sounded the deathknell for amateurism in rugby union. The announcement by the IRB in August of that year was in essence, a mere formality.

Thus, the change in players outlooks towards rugby, from pastime to exhibition acted as the catalyst for the shift in their attitudes towards professionalism.⁶⁸ As the game progressed over the years, players were required to spend more time with rugby than with their actual employment. The greater demands placed on them created the need for greater security. This need for greater security clashed severely with the proud amateur ethos, creating a climate of discontent. The league media moguls, Kerry Packer and Rupert Murdoch, were thus instrumental in changing the union game because there already existed a desire for change. The role they played was to force rugby administrators to acknowledge the power held by players and to compensate them accordingly.

2.4. Rugby in the Professional Era – For Love or Money?

The most common objection held by the older guard of rugby players, such as Danie Craven, to professionalism was that it would change the ‘gentleman’ code of rugby.⁶⁹ The idealization of rugby has been in existence since before the split of 1895 in the United Kingdom. It was the glue that bound players and administrators to the amateur code. This idealization so pervaded the sport that spectators and media alike bought into it wholeheartedly. It is this stronghold belief in the moral superiority of the union game that needs to be examined alongside developments in the professional era.

It has been said that ‘[h]istory is not merely what happened: it is what happened in the context of what might have happened,’⁷⁰ and it is with this perspective in mind that the professionalization of rugby union should be considered.

⁶⁸ P.D. Howe: ‘Professionalism, Commercialism and the Rugby Club: The Case of Pontypridd RFC’ in Chandler, J.L.; Nauright, J (eds). Making the Rugby World: Race, Gender, Commerce, p. 165.

⁶⁹ T. Partridge: A Life in Rugby, p. 108.

⁷⁰ A. Smith: ‘Sport, Counterfactual History and Rugby’s Twin Codes’ in The International Journal of the History of Sport, Vol.21, No.1 (January 2004), p. 97 quotes Hugh Trevor-Roper.

The professionalization of rugby union has on occasion been likened to a revolution. It required a total change in thinking, playing and administering.⁷¹ Being paid to play placed more physical demands on the player, as he was now an employee of the game and was drawing a salary. Winning, although always important in any sport, acquired more importance with the pressure of commercialization and television playing an ever bigger role. The game changed; rules were amended to allow for a more television-friendly product. It became faster, harder, more physically challenging. Administering the game became a profession and not merely a beneficent act by a former player. It is within this context that one has to consider the extent to which rugby has developed over the last nine years (from 1995 until 2004).

Danie Craven viewed money in rugby as a ‘cancer that will kill rugby’.⁷² He believed that the old values of loyalty and enjoying the game would fall by the wayside with the introduction of money. Gary Teichmann refers to money as a cancer in relation to player reaction with the World Rugby Championship (WRC) deal.⁷³ The Springbok team had been the first South African team to sign. At the time, unity among players was the gospel preached. Springboks, Wallabies and All Blacks had all chosen to sign letters of intent with the WRC. All three teams realised that rugby had reached a crossroads; they had to decide which way they wanted it to move. The letters of intent just stated that if the WRC were able to acquire a certain amount of money by a specific date then the agreement would be binding.⁷⁴ According to Teichmann, at this point all players wanted was honesty in the game.⁷⁵ They wanted to be recognised as professionals and they wanted open payment, not covert payment.

Joel Stransky echoes this sentiment when he relates the mood of the Springboks during this period. Feelings of euphoria were still high, but the reality of the demands of the changing game, the need to support themselves and the desire for transparency regarding

⁷¹ Interview: Joel Stransky – Monday, 11 April 2005.

⁷² T. Partridge: *A Life in Rugby*, p. 107.

⁷³ G. Teichmann and E. Griffiths: *For The Record: Gary Teichmann*, p. 84.

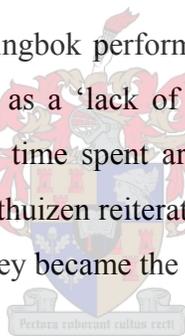
⁷⁴ P. Fitzsimons: *The Rugby War*, p. 66.

⁷⁵ G. Teichmann and E. Griffiths: *For The Record: Gary Teichmann*, p. 77.

payment was what influenced most players to sign. As it was a letter of intent, it was not legally binding. Players felt that they now had the means to bargain with administrators.⁷⁶

This is where the contention that ‘money brings evil’ commences. It was essential to the WRC that they have the Springboks’ commitment to the project as they were the World Champions.⁷⁷ All players who signed were sworn to secrecy, echoing amateur rugby’s covert payments. However, players had to stand united and fight for the best interests of them all. The Springboks were offered a better deal by SARFU and retracted their commitment to the WRC. This caused dismay not only to the Australian and New Zealand players who had signed, but also to the South African provincial players who had signed. Teichmann mentions that there was tremendous discord between provincial players and their Springbok team mates as they felt that they had been betrayed.⁷⁸

It is interesting to note that the Springbok performances of 1996 and 1997 were below par. In fact, Teichmann refers to it as a ‘lack of performance’ and lays the blame on money issues.⁷⁹ He asserts that the time spent arguing over monetary issues took the focus off playing. Joost van der Westhuizen reiterates this when he says *ordentlikheid het verdamp* – nice manners fled as money became the primary objective.⁸⁰



In this instance, money did bring about division within rugby. But as one player put it, “you play the game for the love of it anyway, just as Tom Cruise goes out on stage or in a movie and acts because he loves doing that...And I think that if you run out onto a field and put your body on the line week in and week out...you deserve to be paid”.⁸¹

It was not only the division that money would bring that had the old guard loathing professionalism, but also the fear of drug abuse that it could allow to enter.⁸² It was

⁷⁶ Interview: Joel Stransky – Monday, 11 April 2005.

⁷⁷ P. Fitzsimons: *The Rugby War*, p. 83.

⁷⁸ G. Teichmann and E. Griffiths: *For The Record: Gary Teichmann*, p. 82.

⁷⁹ G. Teichmann and E. Griffiths: *For The Record: Gary Teichmann*, p. 84.

⁸⁰ E. Griffiths: Joost: *Vir Liefde en Geld*, p.1 11.

⁸¹ Interview: Joel Stransky – Monday, 11 April 2005.

⁸² T. Partridge: *A Life in Rugby*, p. 109.

feared that the pressure imposed by professionalism on players to perform would propel them into using illegal substances in order to perform. It has been acknowledged that the pressure of professionalism has created an environment in which drug abuse could enter, but that is applicable to any professional sport and not exclusive to rugby.

It has been suggested that the mentoring of young players by older or former players be addressed as a solution to this problem.⁸³ In addition, the IRB have instituted strict rules governing the testing of players which has helped keep the sport relatively clean,⁸⁴ in contrast with the Olympic Games which has had countless doping scandals. It is interesting to observe that at the 2003 Rugby World Cup held in Australia, that not a single player tested positive for illegal substances (this was out of 204 tests performed at the tournament).⁸⁵

A third and more important objection to professionalism by the older guard was the idea that playing rugby for money cheapened the game.⁸⁶ This theory was advanced during the 1895 split, as an attempt to prevent players from switching codes.⁸⁷ This idea filtered through and became part of the very fabric of the game. It influenced players globally who played the sport. It became a value in the sport which all adhered to and very few questioned. It was seen as a slight on the very character of a player if there were even rumours that he had accepted money to play the game.

Rugby came to be a game played for love and not for money, which was understandable if one had outside sources of income to sustain one's self. It thus developed into an elitist game, separating the wealthy from the working class.

⁸³ Interview: Nick Mallett – Tuesday, 26 April 2005.

⁸⁴ Interview: Joe van Niekerk – Friday, 12 May 2005.

⁸⁵ 'Bigger Than Ever', in *SA Rugby*, April 2005, p. 43.

⁸⁶ T. Partridge: *A Life in Rugby*, p. 109.

⁸⁷ T. Collins: "'Noa Mutton, Noa Laaiking": The Origins of Payment for Play in Rugby Football, 1877-86', in *The International Journal of the History of Sport*, Vol.21, No.1, p. 33.

2.5. The business of Professional Rugby in South Africa

Professional rugby in South Africa has, since the 1995 rugby world cup, followed a winding road that has had more ‘downs’ than ‘ups’. After the world cup, the first serious competition won by a South African team (the Springboks) was the 1998 Tri-Nations tournament. There was a third place finish at the 1999 World Cup (where New Zealand were beaten into fourth place), but for most of the relatively short history of the Tri-Nations and Super 12 competitions, South Africa has not performed at the level expected (demanded) by their supporters. In fact, a South African team has yet to win the Super 12 (from 2006 it will be the Super 14) and one has to question why this is so. An answer to this could be found in the change that the administrative structure has undergone.

The adoption of a professional code necessitated changes in the administrative structure as well.⁸⁸ Sarfu’s concession to this was to form SA Rugby (Pty) Ltd. SA Rugby was to be the business end of SARFU and to operate the professional side of South African rugby. Prior to the formation of SA Rugby, one of the first professional concerns that SARFU encountered was the RWC threat. A week after the world cup final, François Pienaar caused a mammoth furore when he led twelve of his fellow Transvaal team mates (who were also Springboks) in protest action for payment.⁸⁹

These players requested written contracts with the Transvaal Rugby Union (TRFU) including provision of a medical aid scheme, pension fund, achievement incentives and marginal increases in monthly salary.⁹⁰ In the light of what had happened to Max Brito (the winger from Côte d’Ivoire who suffered paralysis during that world cup), players were wanting security which Max Brito at the time, unfortunately, did not have. Initially, the TRFU fired the players. Rumours that the Springbok team had signed with the RWC

⁸⁸ L. Luyt: *Walking Proud: The Louis Luyt Autobiography*, p. 227.

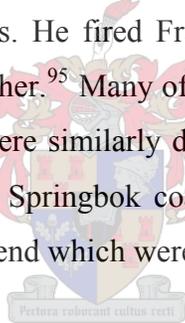
⁸⁹ ‘*Bok Captain Leads Vaal Pay Walkout*’, in the *Cape Times*, 04 July 1995, p. 1.

⁹⁰ ‘*Luyt Sacks Rebel Boks*’, in the *Cape Times*, 06 July 1995, p. 1.

eventually had Louis Luyt, then-president of SARFU offering contracts to the team matching the contracts offered by the RWC.⁹¹

This was not considered to be the best option by some⁹² and until early 2004, SARFU still had problems regarding contracts.⁹³ An underlying cause to this can be found in the high turnover in national coaches experienced by SARFU (bearing in mind that rugby union, as a professional sport is a business and should thus be run along business values). The 1996 season saw the team bid Kitch Christie, world cup winning coach, goodbye. Official reasons stated poor health (he had suffered and eventually died of cancer) but there were speculations that Christie was removed due to differing agendas with the ruling bureaucrats.⁹⁴

André Markgraaff was appointed coach in his place in July 1996 and immediately made an impact for all the wrong reasons. He fired François Pienaar as captain, eventually dropping him from the squad altogether.⁹⁵ Many of the other Springboks who had signed three year contracts with SARFU were similarly dropped. Despite winning 8 out of the 13 matches during his residence as Springbok coach, he was eventually fired in early 1997 for racist remarks made to a friend which were made public.⁹⁶



Markgraaff was followed by Carel du Plessis, whose record reads rather more dimly than what it actually looks (8 games played, 3 wins, 5 losses) and who was dismissed only a few months after his appointment. Nick Mallett then took over the reigns and he lasted until August 2000. He had commented in the media about the high ticket prices and had offended the administrators. The official reason posted for his dismissal, however, was lack of performance (he had failed to win the 1999 world cup).

⁹¹ F. Pienaar: *Rainbow Warrior*, p. 208.

⁹² E. Griffiths: *Joost: Vir Liefde en Geld*, p. 113. Here Edward Griffiths, who was CEO of SARFU at the time, explains the situation and his reaction to it. He had apparently suggested monthly salaries along structured lines.

⁹³ M. Keohane: *Springbok Rugby Uncovered*, p. 117.

⁹⁴ F. Pienaar: *Rainbow Warrior*, p. 222.

⁹⁵ F. Pienaar: *Rainbow Warrior*, p. 11.

⁹⁶ 'Springbok Rugby Hall of Fame at: www.genslin.us/bokke accessed: 11 August 2005.

Harry Viljoen followed Mallet, but he became the first coach to resign as a direct result of public and media pressure. Rudolph Straeuli was then appointed after him, but his lack of performance at the 2003 world cup coupled with the controversy and embarrassment of 'Kamp Staalraad'⁹⁷ saw him relieved of his duties. Jake White was appointed his successor and his performance until November 2004 recorded 9 wins and 4 losses, including winning the 2004 Tri-Nations.⁹⁸

Each coach brought his own ideas to the team, but Harry Viljoen was the first coach to introduce a business attitude to the Springboks.⁹⁹ He encouraged the players to view their team as a business and their contribution as a contribution to the business. It was an approach that many were unfamiliar with but most were willing to adapt and accept. Unfortunately, the change in approach to playing did not translate into winning on the field and Viljoen eventually resigned.

The high turnover in national coaches translated into high player turnover.¹⁰⁰ Each coach selected the players he preferred. This led to quite a number of players being contracted, while others, who were contracted, simply were not selected.¹⁰¹

Yet, because they were contracted to SARFU, they were paid salaries. A document outlining the structure of payment for Springbok players was leaked to the press in early 2004. In it, it detailed the amount of money paid to players. It was calculated that Springbok players made more money than principal surgeons.¹⁰² It reported that Bobby Skinstad, for example, was paid R928 500 but only played in one international match.

Granted, salaries in professional sports do tend to be more astronomical than standard professions such as medicine, law and accountancy. What was shocking about this report

⁹⁷ Kamp Staalraad was a boot-camp organized by Rudolf Straeuli which was intended to build team spirit amongst the players going to the 2003 World Cup. It was run by a private security company. Video footage was leaked to the press revealing how the players were humiliated by the guards running the exercises, which caused the players and Straeuli huge embarrassment without gaining the desired effect of merging the players into a cohesive unit.

⁹⁸ 'The Demise of Boks' Guts and Glory', in *The Star*, 06 August 2003, p. 20.

⁹⁹ M. Keohane: *Springbok Rugby Uncovered*, p. 21.

¹⁰⁰ M. Keohane: *Springbok Rugby Uncovered*, p. 103.

¹⁰¹ M. Keohane: *Springbok Rugby Uncovered*, p. 111.

¹⁰² 'Top Rugby Players Score In Money Game', in *This Day*, 02 March 2004, p. 2.

was the fact that a *business* was paying salaries to members of staff who were not working. Had the Springbok team performed better, this may not have caused the furore it did. However at this time, players were paid to play, no excellence was demanded.¹⁰³ The team did not play well which translated into public consternation, hence the reaction to it.

The administrative structures in South African rugby still leave much to be desired. As coaches and captains have changed, so have SARFU presidents. Louis Luyt and Silas Nkununu were both relieved of their duties as president of SARFU over a period of five years. It is believed that SARFU lacks visionary leadership and that is what many hope the new president, Brian van Rooyen will bring to the game. In fact, van Rooyen even said at his appointment that if the Springbok team is not successful, it is not the coach that should be fired but they, the administrators.¹⁰⁴

At the moment, SARFU consists of fourteen unions. Of these fourteen provinces, at least nine are on the verge of bankruptcy.¹⁰⁵ This places great stress on SARFU funds as a large portion of that money is paid to unions who are in financially dire straits. The unions have trouble making money due to poor performances and the poaching of their best players by the bigger unions, thus leaving rugby in a catch-22 situation. The business of rugby in South Africa is still unfortunately being run along the same structures it was during the amateur era.

Although it is not all doom-and-gloom in South African rugby, there is still much that can be learnt. One change that needs to occur is a mental change towards professional rugby from administrators, to players to spectators. Clive Woodward, coach of the England rugby team that won the 2003 world cup believes that by applying principles from the business world to professional sport can make a positive contribution.¹⁰⁶

¹⁰³ M. Keohane: *Springbok Rugby Uncovered*, p. 117.

¹⁰⁴ 'Van Rooyen Stamps His Authority on SA Rugby' published on the web by IOL on 05 Decemeber 2003. www.iol.col.za/general/news/newsprint.php?art, 06 March 2005.

¹⁰⁵ 'How Ridiculous! A Professional SA Rugby Set-Up', in the *Saturday Star*, 21 February 2004, p. 31.

¹⁰⁶ 'Afrigter Se Relas Oor Lang Pad Na Rugby-Glorie Boei', in *Die Burger*, 08 November 2004, p. 13.

The advent of professionalism has necessitated a change in mentality within rugby, from the top administrator down to the spectator. Although professional rugby is now a business, it does not mean that players have to play either for money or for the love of the game. It, however, does mean that players now get paid to do something that they love and it means that administrators have to be paid for the services they render. It also means that there is now more pressure on both groups to deliver.

The old fears of rugby changing for the worse under professionalism appear to be founded on fears that middle class administrators would lose their positions within the rugby hierarchy. Professionalism has not cheapened rugby, although it has changed the game somewhat. It has to be acknowledged that at the beginning, money did bring evil. Personal integrity was questioned and at certain points, ransomed. But ten years along, the game of rugby has become more accessible to more audiences globally. In South Africa, it has contributed accessibility to all races.

The most important change that professionalism has contributed to the union game is the reinstatement of honesty. In reaction to the IRB's decision to adopt a professional code, Dr. Louis Luyt, then-president of Sarfu stated that 'we are all telling the truth for the first time in many years – and that is a healthy start for players and administrators alike'.¹⁰⁷ Whatever integrity the union game had lost under *shamateurism* has, under the new code, created an opportunity for it to be regained. The growth of the game globally over the first ten years of professionalism can attest to this. Such a consideration can only be beneficial to the development of rugby over time.

¹⁰⁷ 'Rugby's Revolution', in the Cape Times, 28 August 1995, p. 1.

Chapter 3:

The Tensions Between Transformation and Professionalism

But...less than seven years after, South Africa does not look like a winner anymore...Sarfu manages rugby from one crisis to the next and graphs showing the Springboks' performance are falling like the Rand. The aura of greatness and the pride accompanying it has fallen away, absorbed by the totalitarianism of South African sport where rugby is not managed by rugby people and where being politically correct is more important than winning.¹⁰⁸

This statement may seem to offer a rather dark and disillusioned view of rugby in South Africa, but what it in fact does do is illustrate the close relationship that rugby has had with politics since its inception. In the case of rugby in South Africa, it has had to contend with the influence of internal power struggles and the exercise of power from its national government.

Much has been made of the South African government and more specifically its sports ministry's involvement in rugby. Rugby and politics, in one form or another, have been interconnected from the inception of the sport. It is this tenuous relationship and the influence of professionalism on it which will be discussed in this chapter. This chapter does not purport to provide a full exposition of the complexities of sport and politics during this period, but it focuses more narrowly on the way in which professionalism impinged on politics.

3.1. Rugby as a Political Tool

One of the first cases of political involvement in rugby can be traced to the split which occurred in 1895. Rugby had its origins in schools in middle class England. The game then gained in popularity amongst the working class as well.¹⁰⁹ Games gradually

¹⁰⁸ J. Volschenk: Struggle Rugby: A Sport in Crisis, p. 10.

¹⁰⁹ S. Smith: The Union Game: A rugby history, p. 30.

increased in frequency and competitions between clubs from different areas increased in regularity. The majority of the working class players worked a six-day week and the increased frequency of games caused them to lose time at work, which resulted in loss of income.¹¹⁰ In 1895, players from Yorkshire requested payment for the income they were losing due to playing. This request was denied by the ruling middle class and the concept of playing rugby for the love of the game and not for monetary gain was formally implemented and lasted a century.¹¹¹ In this instance, rugby was used as a means of separating classes (as those Yorkshire clubs broke away and formed their own league) and thus advanced the cause of the middle class.

The idea of playing rugby for the love of it and not for financial reasons was not entirely new at this point. What the request of the Yorkshire clubs did was to activate the processes which would make that idea a law. With imperial expansion, colonizers took this ideal to the new world and propagated it there. It is interesting to note, how the game developed in the two countries which were to become the world's best teams, namely New Zealand and South Africa.

Two influences that have to be taken into account when pursuing this exploration is the geographical terrain of the particular countries and the people sent to colonize them.



Conditions in New Zealand during the early years of colonization were to a great extent, harsh. The majority of settlers in New Zealand were working class. There was a strong emphasis placed on physical strength and male bonding during this time.¹¹²

A potentially dangerous situation arose as heavy drinking steadily became associated with the game. In order to diffuse the danger, a strict code was imposed on the game, which aimed to encourage the growth of pioneer values in a controlled setting.¹¹³ The development of the railway network assisted in the spread of rugby and rugby, in its turn, assisted in uniting communities. It gained in popularity as it allowed desk-bound

¹¹⁰ T. Collins: " 'Noa Mutton, Noa Laaking': The Origins of Payment of Play in Rugby Football, 1877-86", in *The International Journal of the History of Sport*, Vol.21, No.1, p. 33.

¹¹¹ S. Smith: *The Union Game: A rugby history*, p. 31.

¹¹² S. Smith: *The Union Game: A Rugby History*, p. 102.

¹¹³ S. Smith: *The Union Game: A Rugby History*, p. 103.

workers the opportunity for physical exercise at the conclusion of a working week and the relative ease with which it could be played. All that was required was enough people to compile two teams and a piece of rugby ground. The Saturday culture of rugby in New Zealand developed out of this as town and country assembled using rugby as the main attraction.

The shaping of New Zealand's national identity came increasingly under the influence of rugby and war.¹¹⁴ Rugby's influence became prominent with the first representative team to tour Britain and Australia in 1888.¹¹⁵ They were known as the 'Natives' and played a total of 107 games. They consisted of a team of 26 and out of that 26, 21 were either Maori or part-Maori.¹¹⁶ The success attained by this team overseas had a positive effect on how New Zealanders viewed themselves. Politicians acknowledged the importance of rugby to the electorate and launched attempts to utilize it in their campaigns.

One such campaign occurred in 1905 under the direction of the then-prime minister, Richard Seddon.¹¹⁷ The tour by New Zealand of Britain that year had become known as the 'Originals' tour. The 'Originals' tour was so successful, that Seddon used their success as an advertisement to entice immigration to New Zealand.



The influence of war came into prominence with the Anglo-Boer war of 1899-1902. This influence is, however, only strongly connected to the settler (or white settler) view of New Zealand's national identity. Although Britain recruited the New Zealand army, they excluded the Maori soldiers as they understood the war to be an exclusively white man's war.¹¹⁸

Racial politics in rugby in New Zealand was almost always problematic with relation to South Africa, with New Zealand initially conceding to South Africa's race

¹¹⁴ S. Smith: The Union Game: A Rugby History, p. 105.

¹¹⁵ S. Smith: The Union Game: A Rugby History, p. 103.

¹¹⁶ S. Smith: The Union Game: A Rugby History, p104. These players all came from the Te Aute College which was established as an imperial attempt to impose the European educational and social system on the indigenous inhabitants.

¹¹⁷ S. Smith: The Union Game: A Rugby History, p. 107.

¹¹⁸ S. Smith: The Union Game: A Rugby History, p. 105.

politics.¹¹⁹ One of the first such incidents occurred shortly after the Anglo-Boer war. The New Zealand Expeditionary Force entered the British Empire Championship for the King's Cup. They lost their first game of the tournament to Australia but fought back to beat England at the final at Twickenham. They were invited to play a series against South Africa on their way home, but were requested to exclude all 'coloureds' from the team. The vice-captain at the time was Ranji Wilson. He was a good player but he had an English father and West Indian mother. He was thus left behind on the ship.¹²⁰

The effects of the segregation system in South Africa were not only felt there, but also boiled over in New Zealand. The 1981 Springbok tour of New Zealand witnessed mass demonstrations and the infamous flour bombing at the third and final test at Eden Park.¹²¹ This particular tour nearly caused a civil war in New Zealand as people demonstrated against the Springbok tour in an effort to force the South African government to change the apartheid system.

The rivalry between South Africa and New Zealand at this time had assumed tremendous proportions. New Zealand, a rugby-mad country, was divided between their love for the game and the subsequent desire to see who was the best team and their social consciousness, playing a team that knowingly was not representative of their country and allowed such social injustices to occur. The situation did not reach a stage of war, but it did contribute to South Africa being isolated by the international sporting community.

As in the case of New Zealand, rugby was first introduced to South Africa by British colonists. It was used as a means of connecting British settlers to each other who were new to the country and until the Anglo-Boer war, was only played by the British.¹²² The Afrikaners were introduced to rugby during the war and with the rise of Afrikaner nationalism; it was then utilized as a device in developing national pride amongst them in South Africa. In the wake of the South African team's overseas successes of the 1940's and 1950's, it was employed in bridging the gap between English and

¹¹⁹ S. Smith: *The Union Game: A Rugby History*, p. 108.

¹²⁰ S. Smith: *The Union Game: A Rugby History*, p. 109.

¹²¹ P. Dobson: *Rugby's Greatest Rivalry: South Africa vs. New Zealand*, p. 169.

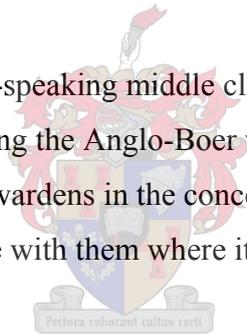
¹²² S. Smith: *The Union Game: A Rugby History*, p. 111.

Afrikaans-speaking South Africans. It became highly politicised with the adoption of the separate development social programme advanced by the government and is today, still billed as a means for nation building.¹²³

In South Africa, rugby has from its first introduction there had a close relationship to politics. Initially as mentioned, it functioned to unify and bond English settlers in South Africa together. It was played mainly at private schools and old boys clubs and was closely aligned to concepts of British civilization, culture and imperialism.¹²⁴

The attitude towards Afrikaners from British colonialists during the late nineteenth century was not positive. They regarded them as second class citizens with not much difference between them and the black natives. It is ironic that the Anglo-Boer war, the war that cultivated animosity between the two groups, inadvertently led to the spread of rugby amongst Afrikaners.

Being a primarily white, English-speaking middle class game, rugby was first introduced to the Afrikaners during the Anglo-Boer war.¹²⁵ Boer prisoners were taught the game by their British wardens in the concentration camps. Once they were released, they then took the game with them where it gained in popularity.



A theory advanced for the relative ease with which rugby spread amongst Afrikaners is due to the determining of rugby as the 'most masculine of games and one that best demonstrated the vigour of a nation'.¹²⁶ The Afrikaner *volk* or nation was one based on very strong patriarchal lines. The aggression and physicality which was exhibited through rugby could therefore be seen as rather appealing to them. With the rise of Afrikaner nationalism and eventual power gain of the National Party in 1948, rugby became closely linked with Afrikaner concepts of masculinity and society.¹²⁷

The successes achieved by the Springbok team in the international arena then contributed to the game being interwoven with the success of white South Africa as a

¹²³ E. Griffiths: One Team, One Country, p. 201.

¹²⁴ S. Smith: The Union Game: A Rugby History, p. 111.

¹²⁵ S. Smith: The Union Game: A Rugby History, p. 112.

¹²⁶ J. Naughton: Sport, Cultures and Identities in South Africa, p. 77.

¹²⁷ S. Smith: The Union Game: A Rugby History, p. 114.

whole.¹²⁸ From the 1960's, the fact that the victories achieved by the Springboks were over opponents who promoted racial integration assisted in reaffirming white South Africa's racial policies and beliefs of white supremacy.

'The notion that race might actually be a consideration in South African team selection is not a new one – it is as old as Springbok teams. Once upon a time, the quota was 100 percent white – never 100 percent of the best rugby players in South Africa.'¹²⁹

Political motivation for team selection is thus not new. At the height of Afrikaner nationalism, the Afrikaner Broederbond played an influential role in team selections. A large number of positions on the South African Rugby Board were held by members of this society. Many Springbok coaches and players were appointed due to their affiliation with this society.¹³⁰

The Anglo-Boer war had left white South Africa divided along language lines.¹³¹ The Boers (or Afrikaners) had come off second best and the bitter feelings towards the English and even the English speakers in South Africa took years to overcome. During the 1931/1932 series between South Africa and England, anti-British feeling came to the fore from many fans. The captain of the Springboks at the time was Stephen Fry, who was English. People wanted an Afrikaner as captain and a popular slogan that emerged at this time was '*Jy speel nie 'n Engelsman teen 'n Engelsman nie. Jy speel 'n Boer teen 'n Engelsman*'.¹³²

The *Broederbond* influence in team selection, which did not yield good results occurred in 1969/1970.¹³³ Tommy Bedford, an English speaker, was supposed to be captain of the Springboks during that season. However, the *Broederbond* influence came to the fore and he was not selected. Dawie de Villiers, a reported member of the *Broederbond*, was selected. In this case, the best man or men were not selected for the team and the team suffered their first series loss to New Zealand. As international

¹²⁸ J. Naughton: *Sport, Cultures and Identities in South Africa*, p. 77.

¹²⁹ 'Bok Transformation Is Crucial to the Future of South African Rugby', in the *Saturday Star*, 30 October 2004, p. 34.

¹³⁰ K. Clayton and C. Greyvenstein: *The Craven Tapes*, p. 134.

¹³¹ K. Clayton and C. Greyvenstein: *The Craven Tapes*, p. 130.

¹³² K. Clayton and C. Greyvenstein: *The Craven Tapes*, p. 131.

¹³³ S. Smith: *The Union Game: A Rugby History*, p. 140.

pressure increased on the South African government to change its segregation policy, so did the preference for Afrikaner players take precedence over selection on merit.¹³⁴

The early eighties saw the government briefly change its view on racial segregation in team sports when they allowed for Errol Tobias, the first coloured (or black) Springbok for the 1981 tour of New Zealand, to be selected.¹³⁵ Many can question whether Tobias' selection was based on merit or skin colour, but what one cannot debate was his performance on the field and as one New Zealand commentator said, 'that's not a great black rugby player, that player's all gold'.¹³⁶

International political pressure saw South Africa isolated from international competition for the better part of the 1980's and early 1990's. There was the illegal Cavaliers tour of 1986. The tour was initially supposed to be a series with New Zealand touring South Africa. Due to political pressure enforced by a New Zealand court order, the tour was cancelled. Rugby bosses in South Africa, however, realised that without the international competition, spectator interest in rugby had dropped significantly.

The Cavaliers tour was then organised. To date, there is still much speculation as to how much the players were paid to participate, and to date all players deny being paid to play. Regardless, the tour went through and accomplished what rugby bosses had hoped it would. Spectator interest had risen tremendously and the Transvaal Rugby Union, which had been experiencing serious financial difficulties, found itself debt-free and with R15 million in the bank by the end of 1987.¹³⁷

Political influence again came into play in South African rugby when the South African Rugby Board bid to host the 1995 Rugby World Cup. It was only awarded to South Africa on the understanding that its racially separatist order would be abolished. In 1992, the South African Rugby Board (the SARB, which was the official umbrella organization representing rugby interests in South Africa as well as representing white players), South African Rugby Football Federation (the coloured

¹³⁴ K. Clayton and C. Greyvenstein: *The Craven Tapes*, p. 133.

¹³⁵ S. Smith: *The Union Game: A Rugby History*, p. 150.

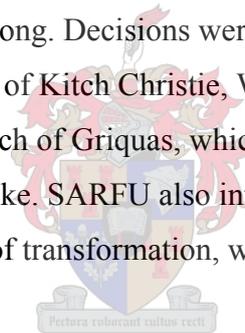
¹³⁶ S. Smith: *The Union Game: A Rugby History*, p. 151.

¹³⁷ P. Dobson: *Rugby's Greatest Rivalry: South Africa vs. New Zealand*, p. 184.

organisation affiliated to the SARB) and South African Coloured Federation (not affiliated to the SARB) merged to form the South African Rugby Football Union (SARFU), a non-racial, all-inclusive governing body.¹³⁸

The first open general elections held in 1994 predicated a new South Africa built on the principle of non-racialism, using affirmative action as a tool to correct the imbalances created by apartheid.¹³⁹ The team selected to represent South Africa at the World Cup included Chester Williams, a coloured player from Western Province. The slogan that the team played under was 'One Team, One Country'. With Nelson Mandela, the then-president of South Africa urging all South Africans to support the Springboks, the Springbok team once again became a tool to unite divided South Africans. This time they were used to bridge both race and language divides.¹⁴⁰

The euphoria and unity experienced by the entire country when the Springboks won the World Cup did not last very long. Decisions were made by SARFU that were not popular, such as the replacement of Kitch Christie, World Cup winning coach with André Markgraaff, unknown coach of Griquas, which led to much disgruntlement amongst the public and media alike. SARFU also introduced a quota system for rugby teams in 1996 under the banner of transformation, which is still a bone of contention today.



3.2. Transformation in South African Rugby

Until there is both equal opportunity and fair distribution of training, resources and advancement of all players, transformation will be necessary to counter the hundreds of years of injustice....it is not a miracle remedy and will not eliminate racial discrimination. It can only ensure that everyone has a fair chance, which currently, is not the case.¹⁴¹

As seen, the interaction between rugby and politics has often been very close. The arrival of open professionalism has, however, added an extra dimension to the complexities facing South African rugby.

¹³⁸ A. Booley: *Forgotten Heroes: A History of Black Rugby 1882-1992*, p. 40.

¹³⁹ 'Net Swartes Die Africans in Rugby', in *Die Beeld*, 19 January 2005, p. 10.

¹⁴⁰ E. Griffiths: *One Team, One Country: The Greatest Year of Springbok Rugby*, p. 61.

¹⁴¹ 'Transformation: For and Against', in *Natal Witness*, 30 October 2004, p. 6.

Rugby Union accepted open professionalism just a year after South Africa held its first democratic elections.¹⁴² South African rugby officials thus had to face the daunting task of a changing game at the same time as they were facing a change in government and society. Ideas of racial separation in society and in sports had to be addressed and imbalances of the past corrected. This section examines the tenuous relationship between transformation and rugby with its accompanying political influences.

Transformation is defined as being the action or instance of transforming something or somebody. To *transform* is to change the appearance or character completely. Thus, transformation in rugby is meant to be a complete alteration of the appearance or character of South African rugby. In that context then rugby has to become more representative of the South African country which should include race, class and gender. However, it is the race issue which has become most contentious.

The 1995 World Cup squad was seen to be a step in the right direction with the inclusion of Chester Williams. To further promote the inclusion of black players in South African teams, affirmative action in the guise of a quota system was implemented. It was expected that by the 1999 World Cup, South Africa would be able to field a more representative team than in 1995. However, no specific number was stated and by 1999, only four black players played in that World Cup.¹⁴³ The goal was clearly articulated, but no clear guidelines were set out by Sarfu to meet this challenge appropriately.

In terms of more representation, that aim was achieved. Nevertheless, there was unhappiness regarding that small number of black players. There was not much improvement in the squad for the 2003 World Cup. Only one black player was fielded in a game against the stronger opposition, i.e. England and New Zealand.¹⁴⁴ This raises the obvious question of why after eight years of emphasising transformation and the implementation of quota systems, was there still only one black player fielded

¹⁴² 'Rugby's Revolution', in the *Cape Times*, 28 August 1995.

¹⁴³ 'Sarfu Called to Answer Questions on Transformation', in *The Star*, 14 March 2002, p. 28.

¹⁴⁴ 'Blacks Got Raw Deal – Loubscher', in the *Daily News*, 02 December 2003, p. 1.

by the Springbok team. An answer to that question can be found in examining interpretations of the concept of *transformation*.

What has become apparent is that there is no clear definition from government or from Sarfu's administration with regards to transformation.¹⁴⁵ There also appears to be a misunderstanding by coaches regarding the terms *transformation* and *development*. The terms appear to be used interchangeably and if there is no definite explanation for these terms, one can question how coaches are supposed to know and implement the system.

One reading of transformation in the context of South African rugby defines it as the provision of opportunity.¹⁴⁶ This reading views transformation as the provision of opportunities to play and prove themselves for players disadvantaged by the previous regime. What has emerged, however, is that in general, white coaches did not have enough confidence in black players.

During the apartheid regime, the white government propagated the ideals of separate development. Rugby, seen as a noble sport, was popular at white schools and facilities were made available at these schools to train future rugby players. At coloured and black schools, there were fewer facilities. The government also propagated the belief that blacks were just not interested in rugby and that soccer was more their game. This was, however, false as rugby was rather popular among blacks until the 1960's and in the Eastern Cape and Western Cape in particular, there were strong rugby teams at the time.¹⁴⁷

The announcement that South Africa would host the 1995 World Cup led Sarfu into some frenetic activity in promoting the game of rugby. But what has since been discovered was that poor organization had led to a number of disasters regarding development in non-traditional rugby playing areas.¹⁴⁸

¹⁴⁵ 'Rugby-kykers is Lankal Kleurblind', in *Die Beeld*, 25 November 2004, p.20.

¹⁴⁶ M. Keohane: *Springbok Rugby Uncovered*, p.49.

¹⁴⁷ A. Booley: *Forgotten Heroes: A History of Black Rugby 1882-1992*, p.13.

¹⁴⁸ A. Grundlingh: 'The New Politics of Rugby', in A. Grundlingh; A. Odendaal and B. Spies: *Beyond the Tryline: Rugby and South African Society*, p. 6.

These sentiments were echoed by Mark Keohane when he blamed the poor success rate of Sarfu's development programmes on the lack of proper implementation with coaches and lack of communication.¹⁴⁹ According to him, Sarfu was not effectively communicating their ideas to the coaches. Coaches were thus unable to effectively implement Sarfu's ideals.

Another problem associated with this was the inherent, almost unconscious racism by coaches. One of the manifestations of this was the equating of black and being disadvantaged; another was the stereotyping of black players. Black players were generally felt to be fast and hence only used on the wing. They were not really seen as being able to play in other positions.¹⁵⁰

From 1996 onwards, the Springbok team has suffered some of the worst defeats in its history. In fact, the Springboks have only been able to win the Tri-Nations series twice (once in 1998 under Nick Mallett and again in 2004 under Jake White). The influence of professionalism and commercialism raises the question of how below par performances will affect the game and how Sarfu and government will respond to that.

Government's reaction was clearly spelled out by President Thabo Mbeki at a parliamentary address in 2001 when he said that the South African public should prepare themselves for losses as the Springbok team endures the transformation process.¹⁵¹ Sarfu reiterated this view, but then contradicted themselves with their Vision 2003 statement.¹⁵² In that statement, Sarfu committed itself to excellence and success, yet this begs to question how one can commit oneself to such concepts and ask your supporters to expect losses for the time being. What this view also does is implicitly enforce the belief that black players are not as good as white players and hence the Springbok team will lose. However, Jannie Engelbrecht warns that 'by not pursuing victory, Sarfu is estranging rugby from its supporters'.¹⁵³

¹⁴⁹ M. Keohane: Springbok Rugby Uncovered, p.50.

¹⁵⁰ M. Keohane: Springbok Rugby Uncovered, p.53.

¹⁵¹ J. Volschenk: Struggle Rugby: A Sport in Crisis, p.18.

¹⁵² J. Volschenk: Struggle Rugby: A Sport in Crisis, p. 21.

¹⁵³ J. Volschenk: Struggle Rugby: A Sport in Crisis, p.43.

This is further reiterated by Peter van der Merwe, former South African cricket captain and former convenor of the South African cricket selection committee. He says that ‘people want to identify with winners. They don’t pay to see losers. Ultimately, the monies from sponsors and advertisers could leak dry.’¹⁵⁴ This has to be taken into account in the light of the Newscorp deal signed by Sarfu in 1995. SANZAR’s agreement there is highly dependant on commercial value, hence the need for spectators. They need spectators at the grounds and they need viewers to tune in and watch on television. Without that support, the agreement will fall through. Sarfu thus have to always have to have the best team on the field.

Ollie Le Roux, former Springbok and current Cheetahs player, commented on this in an article published in ‘Die Burger’.¹⁵⁵ He questions how one can change something completely and yet at the same time build a winning culture. He gives a player’s perspective on the quota system and says that it plays team members off against one another. It implicitly says that there is no space in a team for both a white and black player. Only one of the two can remain.

According to Johan Volschenk, an experienced South African rugby writer, Sarfu’s problem lies in the fact that decisions are not being made by rugby experts as most of the high positions in Sarfu are no longer held by these people. He says that ‘there is no one in rugby’s top management who have themselves been through the mill, and to whom players can look up with respect...having a thorough knowledge of the game, the application of that knowledge on the rugby field – not forgetting the knowledge required to make decisions, directly and indirectly, affecting players’.¹⁵⁶ As a result, the current leaders lack vision and insight.¹⁵⁷ Rugby is a business like any other and as such it is vital that the people who run it have the knowledge specific for their industry.

Another problem facing South African rugby is political party influence in the game. Amongst others, the ANC Youth League has been very vocal in its disapproval with the slow manner in which transformation is taking place. In fact, there have been calls

¹⁵⁴ J. Volschenk: *Struggle Rugby: A Sport in Crisis*, p.54.

¹⁵⁵ ‘Transformasie in Rugby’, in *Die Burger*, 02 July 2004.

¹⁵⁶ J. Volschenk: *Struggle Rugby: A Sport in Crisis*, p.40.

¹⁵⁷ J. Volschenk: *Struggle Rugby: A Sport in Crisis*, p.11.

for the international community to reinstate boycotts against South Africa unless the transformation process is speeded up.¹⁵⁸ One aspect of professionalism that apparently was not taken into account was the fact that legal contracts such as the Newscorp deal would make instituting boycotts more complex than before.

The implementation of affirmative action has also raised some questions.¹⁵⁹ In some quarters it is believed that government is playing a dangerous game by not being clearer on its definition of transformation. Brian van Rooyen, incumbent president of Sarfu, has been quoted as saying that transformation will be complete when 15 black players take the field for South Africa with the full support of spectators.¹⁶⁰ This statement could be interpreted as the completion of transformation being determined by the public acceptance of the team regardless of its racial composition. Yet, when this occurred, government stepped in and demanded more black representation, sending mixed signals regarding the understanding of transformation.

It is the lack of clarity from government that is confusing spectators and not the racial composition of the team.¹⁶¹ Spectators are no longer worried about the colour of the player, but rather about the colour of his jersey. One can take for example the acceptance of Bryan Habana by the Blue Bulls (former Northern Transvaal) supporters - a group of supporters stereotyped as the most conservative and hence most racist group in South Africa. Most of them are from Pretoria (now known as Tshwane) and are very proud to be Afrikaans. Yet, these very people one would have expected to reject a player not from their race ranks have welcomed him with open arms.

A trend that has become more and more visible over the last five years or so is the definite separation between blacks and coloureds. In a review of Chester Williams' biography, Xolile Mtshazo says that 'it is now opportune for Williams to become one of us'.¹⁶² During the apartheid era, blacks and coloureds were separated and coloureds treated in general better than blacks. What Mtshazo appears to resent here is

¹⁵⁸ 'Wêreldrugby Sal SA Nie Sommer Los, Sê Aussie Blad', in *Die Burger*, 02 April 1998.

¹⁵⁹ 'Rugby-kykers Is Lankal Kleurblind', in *Die Beeld*, 25 November 2004, p.20.

¹⁶⁰ 'Weet Iemand Wat Transformasie Is?', in *Die Beeld*, 09 February 2005, p.12.

¹⁶¹ 'Rugby-kykers Is Lankal Kleurblind', in *Die Beeld*, 25 November 2004, p.20.

¹⁶² 'Chester Williams and the Colour of Money', in the *Sowetan Sunday World*, 03 November 2002, p.18.

Williams' use of the term "black" to describe himself. He ridicules him (Williams) for not having spoken out about the discrimination he experienced while a Springbok and labels him a mercenary.

Such a trend poses a threat not only to the development of rugby in South Africa but to the country in general as it refuses to admit similarities and rather focuses on and enforces differences between people. An attitude such as this could impede the nation building process.

Politics and rugby, as has been shown, have a long and intricate history. One can at times not divide the one from the other. The addition of professionalism to the equation, with its attendant complexities and loyalties to commercialism add an extra dimension of complication to the equation. Whereas politics prior to 1995 used rugby to advance its agenda, post-1995 attaches more difficulty.

Prior to 1995, it was national pride and provincial pride that drove the spectators to games. Player reimbursement was not something the fans concerned themselves with. Today, those three forces are intricately linked as professionalism is dependant on commercialism which is dependant on spectators. Politics now has to take this into account when dealing with rugby and what seems to be forgotten at times is the fact that rugby is a game.

As Jannie Engelbrecht said, 'the best thing about sport is winning. If winning is not the object anymore, the foundations of the sport are being broken and demolished. Therefore nothing should be done to undermine the spirit and culture of winning in sport'.¹⁶³ In the evolution of the relationship between rugby and politics, this is the next step. It is not all doom and gloom for South African rugby, but it would be beneficial to bear this new aspect to the relationship between rugby and politics in mind with regards to the further development of the game.

¹⁶³ J. Volschenk: Struggle Rugby: A Sport in Crisis, p.42.

Chapter 4:

Tensions between Commercialism, the Media, Politics and Rugby

Over the last century, the function that sport has performed in society has changed dramatically. It is no longer confined only to the realm of recreation, but with the attachment of nationhood and national pride, it has assumed almost religion-like status. It is often regarded as a ‘shaper and enforcer’ of the values believed to be critical to the continuation of a society.¹⁶⁴ Sport is often viewed as a vehicle through which character development can occur through hard work, perseverance and teamwork – values which are viewed as beneficial to society, which are in turn linked to the core values of society.¹⁶⁵

If one considers the public reaction to certain sports, and more specifically the case of rugby in South Africa, this assertion holds true. The manner in which rugby was used as a tool to perpetuate a political ideal during the apartheid era bears this out.¹⁶⁶

However, sport and rugby in particular, does not function in a vacuum. There are constant outside pressures which influence and impact on it; influences such as the media, commercialism and politics. These forces have always been a part of rugby, if not always overtly perceived. Each has exerted its own unique influence on the game, yet all three have at times intersected and influenced each other, affecting the game in various ways.

The introduction of open professionalism has added a new dynamic to these relationships. As Malcolm, Sheard and White put it, ‘...the changing network of relationships which ‘open’ rugby has entailed and the deep-seated and widely differing beliefs about what, specifically, constitutes ‘the good of the game’, has

¹⁶⁴ S.J. Hoffman: ‘*Sport as Religion*’ in S.J. Hoffman (ed.): Sport and Religion, p.5.

¹⁶⁵ S.J. Hoffman: ‘*Sport as Religion*’ in S.J. Hoffman (ed.): Sport and Religion, p.6.

¹⁶⁶ This issue is discussed at length in chapter 2.

meant that brokering agreements has been extremely difficult.’¹⁶⁷ It is within this complex milieu that the change in dynamics between rugby, commercialism, the media and politics will be explored in this section.

4.1. The Relationship between Rugby, the Media, Commercialism and Politics

The dawn of professionalism in Rugby Union has caused much consternation within the rugby world not only because of the colossal paradigm shift it necessitated, but also due to the logistical problems it presented. Amateur structures needed to be adapted and transformed in order to fit in with the new ideal of professionalism.

In addition, it was necessary for attitudes towards professionalism to change as well. In dealing with this aspect, it is crucial to understand what concepts of *professionalism* and *commercialism* mean within the new context in which rugby finds itself.

Howe, in his article examining the influence of professionalism and commercialism on the rugby club, defines *professionalism* as the change in attitude of club officials towards players who want to be financially rewarded for their time and commitment as the clubs benefit from it. *Commercialism* is defined as being particularly concerned with the transformation of the ‘club habitus’ in order to finance these shifts in attitude.¹⁶⁸

One of the most significant ideas engendered in these definitions is the concept of change. Club officials’ attitudes towards players had to change, that is, they now had to give open financial recognition to players, acknowledging the sacrifices players had to make in playing for their club.

¹⁶⁷ D. Malcolm; K. Sheard and A. White: ‘The Changing Structure and Culture of English Rugby Union Football’, in *Culture, Sport and Society*, Vol.3, no.3, 2000. p, 85.

¹⁶⁸ P.D. Howe: ‘Professionalism, Commercialism and the Rugby Club: The Case of Pontypridd RFC’, in T.J.L. Chandler and J. Nauright (eds.): *Making the Rugby World: Race, Gender and Commerce*, p.160.

Contained within this change was in actual fact a change in attitude towards money. Administrators and club officials had to cease seeing payment for play as something bad and harmful to rugby as well as begin to see rugby as a business and no longer a hobby. Players too were required to change their attitudes towards the game. As they were now being paid to play, they had to start treating the club and the game as a business and begin to behave accordingly. The media and the public had to change their attitude in the same manner in which the previously mentioned groups had to change. This is particularly important to bear in mind when one looks at the salaries earned by players and the public and media reactions to this.¹⁶⁹

The role of the media and more specifically the televisual media too has come to play a more dominant role. Smith states that the popularity of television transformed rugby into ‘a whole new cultural form’ as a result of its far-reaching marketing possibilities.¹⁷⁰ Television has contributed greatly to the growth in popularity of rugby worldwide, if one were to take into account commercial results of the world cup championships.

The 1987 tournament hosted by Australia generated an income of Aus\$800 000, the 1991 tournament held in United Kingdom and France netted an income of £3 million, the 1995 tournament hosted by South Africa - £30 million and the 1999 tournament again hosted by Australia – R870 million.¹⁷¹ These figures included the ever-increasing revenue earned through sponsorships, viewerships and ground attendance.

This success has translated into not only greater exposure for the game but for players as well. It has brought the players closer to the public and in conjunction with the print media, has heightened public awareness of significant issues affecting rugby - in the South African context with the specific relation to political involvement in rugby. The relationship between the player and the media has resulted in the player becoming iconic. Privacy becomes an issue as certain sections of the media do not always respect this. There is also the tendency by certain sections of the media to

¹⁶⁹ This is discussed further in chapter 4.

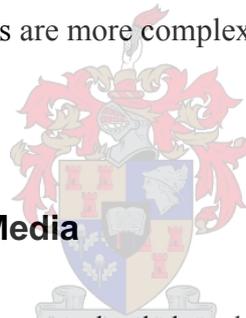
¹⁷⁰ A. Smith: ‘Civil War in England: The Clubs, the RFU and the Impact of Professionalism on Rugby Union, 1995-99’, 2002. p, 153.

¹⁷¹ M. Keohane: ‘Luyt’s World Cup is Rugby’s Golden Egg’. Published at: www.iol.co.za/general/news/newsprint.php?art_id.html on 02 June 2000. Accessed: 22 March 2005.

break down the icons they make just as easily as they made them, which results in a rather distrustful relationship between the two parties.

Political involvement in rugby in South Africa did not begin with the advent of professionalism. Political involvement in rugby has been evident for most of the twentieth century.¹⁷² What has changed with the arrival of the professional era is the manner in which the involvement is now conducted. The media has now become the arena in which issues are ‘discussed’. In an attempt to enforce transformation in South African sport, the government has established a ‘Parliamentary Portfolio Committee for Sport’ to oversee the transformation of sport in South Africa.¹⁷³ The commercial aspect of the professionalisation of rugby has affected the consequences of political involvement to some extent; that is that rugby now has to take both commercial commitments as well as political commitments into account.¹⁷⁴

The links between these pressures are more complex and will be discussed separately in the course of this chapter.



4.2. The Influence of the Media

Once in a while something happens to break through the barricades of race, class and culture that history has erected between South Africans. Like the sun through heavy over cast, it provides a tantalizing glimpse of the harmony of wills that, at some level, we all long for. Typically, it produces extravagant displays of intimacy between strangers, joy, even tears. Nelson Mandela’s donning of the green and gold at the final of the 1995 Rugby World Cup was one such unifying moment...like revolutionary zeal and the first dizzying access of romantic love, such moments inevitably pass. But they should remain with us as an ideal. Amid all the inherited conflicts that beset our society, it is salutary to remember that we are all citizens of one country and one world.¹⁷⁵

When discussing the media one has to always bear in mind that the term ‘media’ is very broad and covers a vast area. As such, it does not perform a single function neither does it perform its function in isolation.

¹⁷² This is discussed at length in chapter 2.

¹⁷³ C. Schoeman: ‘*Politics in Rugby – Here to Stay*’, in *SA Rugby News*, March 2005, p.10.

¹⁷⁴ This is discussed in the previous chapter.

¹⁷⁵ ‘*The Vuvuzela Nation*’, in the weekly *Mail and Guardian*, 27 May 2004, p.32.

The above was written in response to South Africa winning the bid to host the 2010 Soccer World Cup. The euphoric scenes which erupted at the announcement were reminiscent of the scenes experienced when the Springboks won the World Cup. The media plays an important role in conveying ideas and at times influencing thoughts and reactions of the general public. Maingard asserts that in the age of mass electronic media and specifically with the increased utilization of television enforces a perception of ‘simultaneous participation in national community, where viewers imagine themselves as members of the nation whose representatives are displayed on screen’.¹⁷⁶

She stresses the importance that television played in creating a South African national identity through the imaging of the opening and closing ceremonies at this World Cup. Television here not only functions as a medium through which the game could be broadcast, but also as a medium through which a young democracy attempted to generate support for a national sports team by creating a sense of a national past that all members of that community could relate and adhere to.

Maingard’s assertion and the quote at the beginning of this section demonstrate one of the many functions performed by the media. In these two cases, the media is used as a tool to generate a sense of community, unity and nationhood from its recipients. At the same time, as a reporter of news events, the media is expected to be impartial and independent when covering the news.

Media reactions to the professionalisation of rugby in general tended to support the status quo. Media support for the amateur ethos was evident as early as 1886.¹⁷⁷ The dominant fear expressed by the media with regards to the payment of players was the loss of control of the game from the middle class to the working class. They feared that the increasing number of working class players entering the game would undermine the ‘gentlemen’ control of the game. Professionalism here is described as a

¹⁷⁶ J. Maingard: ‘Imag(in)ing the South African Nation: Representations of Identity in the Rugby World Cup 1995’, in the *Theatre Journal*, 49.1., p15.

¹⁷⁷ T. Collins: “ ‘Noa Mutton, Noa Laaking:’ The Origins of Payment of Play in Rugby Football, 1877-86”, in *The International Journal of the History of Sport*, Vol.12, no.1, p.44.

hydra, which is comparable to other negative associations to professionalism which continued and at times still appears to this day.¹⁷⁸

Reactions to the Packer threat were interesting as the general attitude echoed the above-mentioned attitude by supporting the establishment and not the rebels. What was unanimous was the belief that money in rugby would change the game forever.¹⁷⁹ The most prominent fear at the time exhibited by members of the print media regarded the change that Rupert Murdoch's Super League would bring.

As Super League was a Rugby League concern, the fear was that league would steal all the best union players leading to the ultimate demise of the union game. What they did recognize and acknowledge was the importance the support of the players to the success of any venture in rugby.

The media has proved to be a more than adequate means of connecting the players to the fans. However, what has arisen out of this is an almost inexplicable desire by the media to, at a whim; vilify the very players they idolize. Examples of this phenomenon are Will Carling and Naas Botha. In his biography, Will Carling states that 'I have never given the press what they want, and I'm not sure that I want to...I can't trust them. I know at some point they will criticize me, probably quite rightly, and that will hurt me. And I will have to push them away again'.¹⁸⁰ To say that media pressure on Carling was intense during his tenure as captain of England would be an understatement.

For the early part of his career, media opinion of him was largely positive. The damage occurred after the England/Wales game in Cardiff in 1993 when England beat Wales at home for the first time in a number of years.¹⁸¹ Carling and the rest of the England team including the management failed to attend the post-match press conference. This incensed press and public alike as Carling became the first England captain not to be readily available to the media.

¹⁷⁸ 'Pride and Passion is Still Alive in Amateur Rugby', in *The Star*, 11 August 2004, p.14. The writer propagates the idealized amateur ethos.

¹⁷⁹ 'Big Money May Change Rugby Forever', in the *Cape Times*, 11 April 1995, p.23.

¹⁸⁰ D. Norrie: *Will Carling: The Authorised Biography*, p.130.

¹⁸¹ D. Norrie: *Will Carling: The Authorised Biography*, p.131.

Differing reasons for this breach of etiquette abound, but Carling maintains that it was done in protest to excessive media interference perceived by the players.¹⁸² The game against Scotland prior to the Wales game had garnered them coverage that they were unhappy about. However, in retrospect it appears that their feelings were not articulated clearly enough and that resulted in a decline in the relationship particularly between Carling and the media.

The South African media are in general not as harsh or invasive as the British media. However, Naas Botha is one South African player who had to bear the brunt of media vilification when he chose to accept an opportunity to play for the American Gridiron Football team, the Dallas Cowboys.¹⁸³ His decision was seen as a betrayal of the union amateur code because he would be paid to play. At the time of his decision, he was heralded as the best fly-half in the country and had played an important role in the Northern Transvaal's Currie Cup successes until that point. He says however that with South Africa's isolation from international rugby, there were not many opportunities to test oneself and that his decision to move was not based entirely on the financial aspects of the opportunity, but also on the fact that it was a new challenge.

Reports in the media only focused on the financial aspect and on his return to South Africa, one columnist sarcastically noted 'Naas Botha has come back home...to the Blue Bulls who otherwise face a thumping by Western Province. That's the way to fight professionalism – make sure the amateur game pays better'.¹⁸⁴ Relations between Botha and the media did not sour as badly as that of Carling and Botha is now a commentator for the South African pay channel, M-NET.

The early 1990's saw significant changes in attitude from journalists towards players. Initially, journalists were generous to players, buying them dinner or drinks in exchange for interviews due to the limitations which amateurism placed on players.¹⁸⁵ Due to the restrictions of amateurism, the nature of the meetings was also less formal

¹⁸² P. Williams: 'Battle Lines on Three Fronts: The RFU and the Lost War Against Professionalism', in *The International Journal of the History of Sport*, Vol.19, No.2, December 2004, p.123.

¹⁸³ E. Griffiths: *Naas – Die Amptelike Biografie*, p.124.

¹⁸⁴ E. Griffiths: *Naas – Die Amptelike Biografie*, p.128.

¹⁸⁵ D. Norrie: *Will Carling: The Authorised Biography*, p. 135.

than now. However, by the early 1990's, this had changed. Journalists began to treat players like professional sportsmen, yet they were not. This caused much dismay among players.

Despite the dismay caused by this change in the relationship, players did learn to manage the media to their advantage. Situations have arisen where players and management have had differences and players had gone to the media first in order to gain support.¹⁸⁶

In South Africa, most daily newspapers are regional. This *regionality* or *provincialism* has tended to influence the manner in which national tours are covered. Writers who tour with the team will tend to focus on those players they know well.¹⁸⁷ The result is that what is intended to be an unbiased report becomes embroiled in provincial loyalties, raising the question of the standard of rugby writing in South Africa.

4.3. 'I Believe the Public Backs Our Brands'¹⁸⁸

The Influence of Commercialism – Rugby as a Business

The arrival of open professionalism has not only necessitated paradigm shifts and dynamics changes, but has also brought about a change in language and references within the game as well. Rugby is no longer seen only as a game, but as a product that has to be sold.

Players are no longer just players, but are now acknowledged as valuable assets. They are now described as 'talented, skilled, Michelangelo-sculpted, highly mobile logos, able to accomplish marketable feats while spreading the gospel according to the highest bidder'.¹⁸⁹ This emphasizes most ardently the change rugby has undergone: it is no longer 'just a game'. It is now a business and has to be managed accordingly.

¹⁸⁶ M. Keohane: *Springbok Rugby Uncovered*, p.110.

¹⁸⁷ M. Keohane: *Springbok Rugby Uncovered*, p.154.

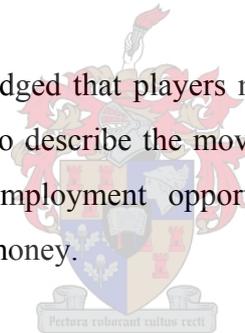
¹⁸⁸ Rob Wagner, CEO of the professional arm of Western Province Rugby in 'Schalk is more valuable than Skinstad', *The Cape Times*, 03 December 2004, p.27.

¹⁸⁹ 'The Colours of Money', in *Leadership SA*, 31 July 2001, p.54.

At present, Sarfu has SA Rugby (Pty) Ltd. to manage the professional arm of the game.¹⁹⁰ By the end of the financial year for 2000, rugby as a business was worth R400 million. This figure included areas such as broadcasting rights, national and provincial sponsorships, sales of season tickets and suites at stadiums, merchandise and gate takings.¹⁹¹ The Springbok emblem itself has become a success in terms of merchandise sales.¹⁹² It sold 30 times more than its cricketing counterpart and has exceeded popular brands such as Orlando Pirates and Kaizer Chiefs.

The popularity of rugby has created countless investment opportunities for companies to generate awareness of their brand and profit through advertising and marketing of rugby teams.¹⁹³ This input from investors in rugby has also brought change. As players are the assets of clubs, they are thus also commodities which can be bought and sold.¹⁹⁴ This has in turn influenced player mobility and also raised questions of player loyalty.

However, it has to be acknowledged that players moved around during the amateur era, only the terminology used to describe the movement differed.¹⁹⁵ Players moved under inducement of better employment opportunities, homes and cars. With professionalism it is openly for money.



Although sports sponsorship has traditionally been seen as a liability, with the sponsor taking all the risks with no guarantees as returns are dependant on the team's performance, one such collaboration has proven remarkably successful: Fedsure's sponsorship of the Stormers Super 12 team. Their marketing campaign for the 2000 season won them 'Marketing Organization of the Year' from the Institute of Marketing Management and they were finalists in the category 'Best Large Budget Sponsorship' at the Raptor Awards.¹⁹⁶

¹⁹⁰ This is discussed in chapter 1.

¹⁹¹ 'The Colours of Money', in *Leadership SA*, 31 July 2001, p.54.

¹⁹² 'Bok Rugby Logo Shows That Money is the Real Score', in the *Sunday Times*, 20 April, 2003. p.5.

¹⁹³ J. Simpson and B. Dore: *Marketing in South Africa: Cases and Concepts*, p.27.

¹⁹⁴ D. Malcolm; K. Sheard and A. White: "The Changing Structure and Culture of English Rugby Union Football", in *Culture, Sport and Society*, Vol.3, no.3, 2000. p. 70.

¹⁹⁵ Interview: Joel Stransky, 11 April 2005.

¹⁹⁶ J. Simpson and B.Dore: *Marketing in South Africa: Cases and Concepts*, p. 26.

The objective of their marketing campaigns aimed to increase brand awareness of both the Stormers brand and Fedsure brand and in so doing generate funding for the team. Although the campaign started locally, the success of the Stormers team on the field helped the brands achieve national status in a relatively short space of time. The campaign did not restrict itself to just rugby, but also branched out into merchandising, such as Stormers branded clothing, biltong and cola, to name but a few.¹⁹⁷

Strategic partnerships with different forms of media were developed which garnered further exposure. Local radio stations such as KFM and Cape Talk Radio were involved in taking the team to the public.¹⁹⁸ The consequence of this type of commercialism served to further highlight the potential goldmine rugby could be outside of a sport. The success of such a venture is largely dependant on the credibility created by the players themselves. At the same time, credit is also conferred to the fact that the Stormers entity is run along business principles, further emphasizing the pervasive influence of commercialism.¹⁹⁹

Fedsure and the Stormers are not the only rugby entities in South Africa to enter into partnerships with the media. From 2001, SA Rugby began to form such strategic partnerships with Supersport and the Independent Group.²⁰⁰ Keohane discusses these partnerships in his book *Springbok Rugby Uncovered*. The Supersport/SA Rugby partnership was one based on mutuality.²⁰¹ Supersport, as the sole broadcaster of rugby games (they own the broadcasting rights to the Tri-Nations, Super 12, Currie Cup and Vodacom Cup competitions) needed the exclusive access to the Springbok team that SA Rugby could grant. SA Rugby needed Supersport to be as supportive of the team as possible, as they played a vital role in influencing public acceptance of the team. The partnership with the Independent Group was intended to perform the same function as the Supersport alliance, only with the print media.

¹⁹⁷ J. Simpson and B. Dore: *Marketing in South Africa: Cases and Concepts*, p. 30.

¹⁹⁸ J. Simpson and B. Dore: *Marketing in South Africa: Cases and Concepts*, p. 33.

¹⁹⁹ J. Simpson and B. Dore: *Marketing in South Africa: Cases and Concepts*, p. 36.

²⁰⁰ M. Keohane: *Springbok Rugby Uncovered*, p. 162.

²⁰¹ M. Keohane: *Springbok Rugby Uncovered*, p. 158.

Criticism, both constructive and otherwise, of the Springbok team and coach in particular became more muted with these partnerships. Players and coaches alike were sensitive to criticism and the intention behind these partnerships was to be as accommodating to the team as possible while still being as analytical as possible.²⁰²

Keohane states that as a result of these partnerships, there is no such thing as a 'free or independent media voice' in South Africa and that 'media partnerships are stronger than independent voices'.²⁰³ Granted, one has to take into account that it is one version of the state of affairs in Springbok rugby, but on the other hand, it does raise questions as to the autonomy of the media in South Africa and of the quality of commentary and analysis of the game available to the public.

Another consequence of increased commercialism is that players have now become public property.²⁰⁴ Increased media exposure has impacted on player privacy. At the same time as their privacy has been affected, the media exposure has become an extra source of income for players through sponsorships and endorsements.

Jonny Wilkinson of England and New Zealand's Jonah Lomu are two international players who have become the face of professionalism in rugby union.²⁰⁵ This is largely due to the way that they have captured not only media interest but also public interest with their style of play. Wilkinson captured attention for his accuracy at kicking, Lomu for his sheer size and manner of running over opponents.

In South Africa, players too have learnt to use their status for commercial gain. Bob Skinstad is one of the players who utilized the media coverage he received quite effectively. He was good-looking, attracting plenty of female fans while playing for Western Province and the Stormers. His flair on the field had the local Cape Town media singing his praises. During the 2000/2001 season, he appeared in an American Swiss advertising campaign and after being sidelined from rugby for a time due to injury, he became a correspondent for the glamour television series *Top Billing*.

²⁰² M. Keohane: *Springbok Rugby Uncovered*, p. 153.

²⁰³ M. Keohane: *Springbok Rugby Uncovered*, pp. 153 and 159.

²⁰⁴ D. Norrie: *Will Carling: The Authorised Biography*, p. 109.

²⁰⁵ S. Smith: *The Union Game: A Rugby History*, p. 268.

One of the most significant developments in South African rugby with open professionalism was the establishment of a trade union for players. SARPA (the South African Rugby Players Association) was founded as a means of protecting professional rugby players in South Africa.²⁰⁶ The establishment of a players' union demonstrates the power that players have and acknowledgement of that power. Grievances that players have can now be addressed through proper, professional channels.

Protest action taken by players is now also more formalized if one takes for example the Springbok protest action in a game against the Pacific Islanders in 2004, prior to the start of the Tri-Nations. Players wore white armbands to protest the treatment they received from SA Rugby. SA Rugby handed out letters to players two weeks prior to their departure for Australia which denoted compulsory off-field activities. This caused much discontentment as only two players were contracted at the time, John Smit and Marius Joubert, while the rest were paid with performances bonuses as they were not contracted. Players did state that they would be willing to attend the functions if they were paid retainers as the current form of remuneration only covered on-field activities.²⁰⁷

Another example of formalized action occurred when certain senior players protested Rudolf Straueli's continued tenure as coach of the Springboks. Players threatened to leave South African rugby if Straueli remained as coach of the Springboks. Amongst the grievances listed against him was the fact that he handled Springbok contracts still very amateurishly and that he was unprofessional as he refused to deal with players' agents. Ironically enough, no mention is made of the infamous *Kamp Staaldraad* or the high player turnover under his tenure.²⁰⁸

²⁰⁶ 'SA Rugby Players May Be Forced to Strike', in *The Sunday Tribune*, 11 July 2004. p, 2.

²⁰⁷ 'Show Us the Money, Say Players', in *The Sunday Independent*, 18 July 2004. p, 24.

²⁰⁸ 'Top Players Will Quit If Straueli Stays', in the *Cape Times*, 03 December 2003, p.1.

4.4. Politics and the Business of Rugby:

What is often overlooked is that rugby...particularly because of the game's historical associations with the old order, is more subjected to public trials of political correctness than some sports. Rugby cannot hide behind the perceived multiracial past of a game like soccer in South Africa or the liberal façade that cricket has erected so effectively.²⁰⁹

Due to the success of the 'One Team, One Country' campaign of the 1995 Rugby World Cup, rugby in South Africa has been burdened with many expectations with very little understanding of the new context in which it finds itself. It is expected to unify the nation by representing all people (read races) of the nation. On the other hand, it is still too often associated with the old order and not truly given an opportunity to be seen in its new light. The added pressure of professionalism further compounds this situation.

It is not only South Africa that has experienced problems in adapting to a professional code. Professionalism in England, although following a different route of development, did not escape the burden of expectation nor the accompanying problems. Clubs were not prepared for the change and needed cash to finance them quickly. Ownership of clubs changed. The new owners were millionaires who were not as steeped in rugby tradition which influenced the way they ran their clubs.²¹⁰ Money poured into the clubs and salaries soared. However, exorbitant salaries did not guarantee success and within three years, many premier league clubs had to close their doors due to bankruptcy.

As a business, Sarfu and SA Rugby (Pty) Ltd. are required to conduct themselves along business lines. However, the biggest criticism raised against them is the fact that they are unprofessional.²¹¹ Currently, Sarfu has the largest pool of professional players out of the SANZAR group, which translates into South African rugby receiving a larger piece of the Newscorp contract, but it also means that resources are

²⁰⁹ A. Grundlingh: 'From Redemption to Recidivism? Rugby and Change in South Africa During the 1995 Rugby World Cup and its Aftermath', in *Sporting Traditions*, Vol.14, no.2, May 1998, p.84.

²¹⁰ A. Smith: 'Civil War in England: The Clubs, the RFU and the Impact of Professionalism on Rugby Union, 1995-99', p. 158.

²¹¹ 'How Ridiculous! A Professional SA Rugby Set Up', in *The Saturday Star*, 21 February, 2004, p. 31.

stretched more than the other two countries. Sarfu consists of 14 unions which forms the decision-making body. What has been discovered is that out of the fourteen unions, nine are bankrupt, one breaks even and only four are successful.²¹²

Prior to his departure as CEO of SA Rugby, Rian Oberholzer had initiated a research team to find the best way forward for SA Rugby.²¹³ The recommendations arising out of this investigation suggested a seven team elite competition. This would effectively halve the number of professional players in the country but at the same time intensify the competitiveness of the contests. The existing fourteen unions would serve as shareholders in the new teams (or brands). They would also be responsible for an expanded amateur provincial competition, which would improve the club structure in the country.

The present structure of rugby in South Africa reinforces inequalities within rugby directly as a result of the unequal financial situations of the different unions. This places unnecessary financial stress on Sarfu who has to support the ineffective unions. At this point in time, the four main unions, that is Western Province, the Sharks, the Lions and the Blue Bulls turnover in excess of R100 million per year, with the Cheetahs R20 million, Border R11, 3 million and Boland R6, 7 million. This report was however not officially published by Sarfu. It was leaked to the media.²¹⁴

Due to their high revenue, the four main unions in South Africa are able to spend more money on player salaries. The Sharks spend R22 million, Western Province R21 million, the Lions R19 million and the Bulls R13 million. The unequal contests between these unions and those who are under financial pressure does not make for good rugby, which results in a decrease in spectators at these matches and a decrease in viewership. This in turn affects Sarfu's finances and their ability to perform their duties. South Africa thus far has been fortunate in that it has had the numbers to continue despite this inequality.

²¹² 'SA Rugby Players May Be Forced to Strike', in *The Sunday Tribune*, 11 July 2004, p. 2.

²¹³ 'How Ridiculous! A Professional SA Rugby Set Up', in *The Saturday Star*, 21 February, 2004, p. 31.

²¹⁴ 'How ridiculous! A professional rugby set-up', in *The Saturday Star*, 21 February 2004, p. 31.

The advent of professionalism has also led to the demise of club rugby. Currently there is no literature examining the effect that professionalism has had on club rugby. Louis Luyt, Nick Mallett and Joel Stransky agree that one of the contributing factors to the decline of club rugby is the fact that Springbok players are not able to play for their clubs any longer.²¹⁵ The demands of professional rugby do not allow players the time to play club rugby. Players are also targeted at younger ages and are absorbed into the professional scene almost immediately out of high school. They thus bypass the club stage of development which is another contributing factor to the demise of club rugby.

André Markgraaff, former Springbok coach and vice-president of Sarfu, lays the blame for the demise of club rugby at the door of professionalism. He believes that everyone wants to be involved at the highest levels, where the money is and no one is prepared to be involved at an amateur level, which has a negative effect on the quality of players, coaches and administrators evolving out of these ranks, hence weakening the pool out of which good players, coaches and administrators can be selected from.²¹⁶

Another suggested factor is the fact that talent scouts do not patronise club matches as often as they used to. The demise of club rugby is a situation that requires further investigation as it directly affects the development of the professional game, but its consequences will only be visible after a period of time.

At national level, Sarfu's business acumen can be questioned if one looks at the high turnover in players and coaches.²¹⁷ The manner in which Springbok as well as personnel contracts are managed emphasizes this.²¹⁸ The payouts received by both Rudolf Straueli and Rian Oberholzer on their departure from Sarfu raised eyebrows. The former received a R2 million settlement with latter R3 million. Since readmission

²¹⁵ Interviews: Joel Stransky – Monday, 11 April 2005 and Nick Mallett – Tuesday, 26 April 2005.

²¹⁶ André Markgraaf quoted in an interview in, 'Wat Verkeerd is Met Suid-Afrikaanse Rugby', *Die Vrye Afrikaan*, 20 January 2006, p. 4.

²¹⁷ 'The Demise of Boks' Guts and Glory', in *The Star*, 06 August 2003, p.20.

²¹⁸ 'Sarfu's Easy Money', in *This Day*, 02 June 2004, p.10.

in 1992, Sarfu have employed eight coaches with only two having had any reasonable success.²¹⁹

Prior to 2004, Springbok contracts were paid regardless of performance. Springbok salaries were published in the newspaper, where it was revealed that they earned more than professionals such as specialists and accountants.²²⁰ What aggravated the furore was the fact that Springbok performances were dismal at best. It prompted one writer to quip ‘Pity the only dividends of that hard work in the past year show up on their bank balances, rather than on the scoreboard.’

It is not only in the realm of management that Sarfu has problems but also with team selection. ‘It is not a privilege for blacks to play rugby, it is their right. They have to get an equal opportunity. It cannot happen again as it did in 2004 that 13 black players go on an international tour with the Springboks, but only five get the chance to play.’²²¹ This statement deals with ownership of the game. During the apartheid era, ownership of the game was placed exclusively in the hands of the dominant white Afrikaner group. This statement reflects a movement to the opposite side of the spectrum.

The dilemma facing Sarfu at present is how to incorporate the new dispensation and still ensure a winning culture. It raises the question of where rectifying past imbalances end and cultivating an attitude of entitlement begin. Playing rugby or at least having access to facilities which can enable one to play rugby should be the right of any person. The difficulty arises when placing certain groups (such as race and gender) as entitled groups.

The understood meaning of representing one’s country is that it is an honour and a privilege that one earns as a result of talent and hard work. Opportunities should be made available for all people who are able to play the game to *be able* to play. Nonetheless, it must also be remembered that rugby is a business. There is more attached to the donning of a rugby jersey in the professional era than pride.

²¹⁹ This is discussed in chapter 1.

²²⁰ ‘Top Players Score in Money Game’, in *This Day*, 02 March 2004, p.2.

²²¹ Butana Komphela, chairman of the Parliamentary Portfolio Committee for Sport quoted in ‘*Politics in Rugby – Here to stay*’, *SA Rugby News*, March 2005, p.10.

Being a rugby player has become a full-time occupation. As it is a privilege to receive a tertiary education or any means of employment, and it should also be remembered that playing rugby at that level is always a privilege. The involvement of the ANC Youth League in rugby matters also raises the question of Sarfu's level of professionalism. It has to be acknowledged that South Africa's past still greatly influences the game today and politicians and rugby administrators are attempting to address and rectify imbalances. At the same time, it has to be acknowledged that rugby is now a business and therefore the dictates of business interests should be taken into account.

A significant change brought about by professionalism is the increased influence of business principles and commercial interests in rugby. It has been warned that 'excessive commercialism knows the price of everything and the value of nothing and will destroy rugby's special qualities. The danger for any sport comes when the influence of commercial forces reaches a critical mass and rugby union is fast approaching that point'.²²² It has to be agreed that commercialism has changed the way in which certain values in rugby, such as loyalty to a team or jersey, has been viewed as well as that excess in any form will not be good. However, this does not have to mean that commercialism itself will destroy rugby's 'special qualities'. Rather it can give rugby a diverse sphere in which to grow and develop.

This has already been partially accomplished with the dynamics between the media, commercialism and politics in rugby. Each performs a type of balancing act with the other. Although separate entities, when they converge in rugby, they interrelate and interconnect and influence the development of rugby.

²²² Mark Bailey, quoted in A. Smith: 'Civil War in England: The Clubs, the RFU and the Impact of Professionalism on Rugby Union, 1995-99', p. 180.

Chapter 5:

The Impact of Professionalism on The Player

We must strike a balance with our senior players who bring the money to the turnstiles. We have to look at the financial resources...but if we don't look after our players, we won't bring the spectators to the grounds.²²³

Throughout rugby union's history, the player, the most important component of the game, has been largely overlooked in terms of his contribution and importance to the game. Fears of professionalism only stretched to that of loyalty of the players to the game and to the club. Honour and loyalty were what mattered and what many rarely considered was the impact that making rugby a *bona fide* occupation would have on the players themselves: their lifestyles, psyches and even physical well-being.

For the most part, players were only expected to play the game and accept the joy they derived from that to be enough. Their contribution to the game was mostly ignored. In 1995, Ronnie Masson, then-president of the Western Province Rugby Football Union (WPRFU) made this statement in reaction to the strike action launched by the Transvaal Springbok players led by François Pienaar, then captain of Transvaal and the Springboks.²²⁴

This statement was one of the earliest utterings made by an administrator recognising and acknowledging the players' contribution to the game. Without the players, there would be no game and no entertainment. Professionalism has created an environment in which players can be financially rewarded for services they render. However, the effects of this new environment have been far-reaching in several ways.

It has granted players more power and input into the game, technology has assisted in revolutionising coaching techniques and playing skills, the game has become faster and requiring more skill with the attendant rule changes, sports science has developed

²²³ Ronnie Masson, then-president of the Western Province Rugby Football Union quoted in 'Support for Rugby Rebels grows', in the Cape Times, 7 July 1995, p.1.

²²⁴ 'Bok Captain Leads Vaal Pay Walkout', in the Cape Times, 04 July 1995, p.1.

and grown tremendously and come to play a vital role in rugby and even player physiques have changed over time. The aim of this section is to examine the effect of professionalism on the players beyond the financial implications.

5.1. Who Owns Rugby? Player Power in Rugby Union

Ownership of the game is a topic that is always hotly contested. In South Africa, the debate acquired more of a racial slant due to its unique history. In general however, the case of ownership was largely about class and hierarchy. In the United Kingdom, the 1895 split vividly exhibited that ownership of the union game lay with the ruling middle class.²²⁵ Ownership of the game was placed in the hands of administrators. A book published in 1955 by O.L. Owen called *The History of the Rugby Football Union* about the English Football Union consisted mainly of information about the ruling committees.²²⁶ There were only two pictures of players published in the book and that was of the first international teams from England and Scotland in 1871.

This state of affairs continued for most of the twentieth century, with change creeping in slowly and almost imperceptibly with *shamateurism*. The year 1995 proved to be a watershed year not only in terms of the game relinquishing its hold on amateurism but also in terms of players demonstrating the power they held. In May 1995, Will Carling caused a huge uproar through a comment he made while participating in a television interview.²²⁷ Thinking the microphone was off, he commented that ‘if the game is run properly as a professional game, you do not need 57 old farts running rugby’.

Unbeknown to Carling the comment was recorded and broadcast to the public by *The Sun* newspaper. The England Rugby Union (or RFU) was run by a committee of 57 older gentlemen who took umbrage at Carling’s comment. Carling was already rather unpopular with them due to his high media profile and constant pushing for payment for players.

²²⁵ S. Smith: *The Union Game: A rugby history*, p.31.

²²⁶ S. Smith: *The Union Game: A rugby history*, p.91.

²²⁷ S. Smith: *The Union Game: A rugby history*, p.94.

This incident gave the committee a reason to fire him and before Carling could properly apologise for the comment, he was publicly relieved of his duties as captain of the national team less than a month before the World Cup. He was not relieved of his place in the team. Carling was popular with his fellow players and many agreed with his comments. The flexing of muscles by players occurred when none of the players approached to take over the captaincy from Carling would do it. The RFU eventually had to relent on their punishment and accepted a public apology from Carling.²²⁸

Two months later South Africa was to witness a demonstration of player power. In early July, approximately a week after South Africa had won the World Cup, François Pienaar, captain of the successful Springbok and Transvaal teams led his 12 fellow provincial team mates in a strike against the Transvaal Rugby Football Union (TRFU).²²⁹ Amongst their list of grievances they wanted resolved was written contracts with the Transvaal Rugby Union (TRFU), a medical aid scheme, pension fund, achievement incentives and a ‘marginal increase in monthly remuneration’.²³⁰ Support from most sectors of the country was mainly in favour of the striking players, which grew after they were unceremoniously fired by the TRFU chairman Louis Luyt.²³¹ Pienaar claimed that their requests were not about money but about security and in that they were supported by the rest of the Springbok squad and by England and New Zealand’s captains Will Carling and Sean Fitzpatrick.

This action by the leading members of the World Cup winning team occurred more than a month before the IRB officially adopted the professional code and raises questions of its origin. If rugby was an amateur game, then players were not entitled to payment. What motivated the players to embark on such drastic action was the development of competition between Sanzar’s deal with Newscorp and Ross Turnbull’s The World Rugby Championship (TWRC) with Kerry Packer’s corporation PBL. Turnbull had representatives in each rugby playing country

²²⁸ S. Smith: *The Union Game: A rugby history*, p.95.

²²⁹ ‘*Tvl. Rugby Rebels Meet Luyt Today*’, in the *Cape Times*, 05 July 1995, p.1.

²³⁰ ‘*Luyt Sacks Rugby Rebels*’, in the *Cape Times*, 06 July 1995, p.1.

²³¹ ‘*Support for Rugby Rebels grows*’, in the *Cape Times*, 7 July 1995, p.1.

approach players with this concept. François Pienaar acted as an agent in South Africa.²³²

At this point, the entire Springbok team had already signed letters of intent with the TWRC. However, as much as the players were excited about the possibility of being paid to play, there was still much attachment to the old order and traditions of rugby union.²³³ Pienaar recognised this, saw an opportunity for players to gain some sort of leverage over the administration and seized it. Debates as to the integrity of his actions continued but, the net result was that the twenty-eight member Springbok squad were all offered three-year contracts with Sarfu, exhibiting the potential power held by the players in rugby.

This was not the first strike action launched by South African rugby players. Gary Teichmann alleges that South Africa had already been semi-professional since the 1986 Cavaliers tour and that during the 1980's strike threats by the Springboks were usual.²³⁴ Ian McIntosh also mentions a pay strike in Natal in 1993 which he claims negatively affected their performance that season.²³⁵ What separated the 1995 strike action from previous strike actions rested on two events: firstly, it was an actual strike which gained media coverage and secondly, it followed in the wake of the news of a potential rugby competition which would alter the face of rugby union and preceded the IRB's decision to officially endorse professionalism.

This too was not the last time a South African team would threaten strike action. In 2004, the South African Rugby Players Association (Sarpa) threatened strike action a week before leaving to play Australia in the opening Tri-Nations match.²³⁶ The issues requiring resolution with this action were player representation on the boards of SA Rugby and Sarfu, a minimum payment of 20% of the television revenue to the Springbok team and funding for the players' association. As Hennie le Roux, former Springbok and president of Sarpa says:

²³² P. Fitzsimons: 'The Rugby War', p. 133.

²³³ Interview: Joel Stransky – Monday, 11 April 2005

²³⁴ G. Teichmann and E. Griffiths: *For the Record: Gary Teichmann*, p. 77.

²³⁵ I. McIntosh with J. Bishop: *Mac: The Face of Rugby*, p. 87.

²³⁶ 'SA Rugby Players May Be Forced to Strike', in the *Sunday Tribune*, 11 July 2004, p. 2.

There is no need for us to re-invent the wheel here. We just need to look at the other countries which have gone down this road before. There were player strikes in England, France and Australia before the necessary change was made and it might be that we'll have the same here. We have to bang our heads till it hurts enough for people to take notice.

The formation of a players' association in South Africa has done much to protect the rights of players and provide them with assistance. Sarpa has successfully introduced standard players' contracts which gives every professional player in South Africa access to full medical cover, insurance, fair conditions of employment and contributions to a pension fund.²³⁷ What they would still like to achieve is greater involvement of players within the running of rugby in South Africa at both professional and amateur levels. Le Roux feels that union presidents are currently too far removed from happenings at ground level and are thus unable to make the best decisions for rugby. He feels that player input would make a considerable improvement to the situation as players at present feel 'neither able to hear or be heard in the present structure'.²³⁸

The question of ownership of the game of rugby union has not quite been fully answered by professionalism. What professionalism has done, however, is to bring an awareness of the different role players involved with the game. This includes administrators, players, spectators, investors and the media. With regards to players, professionalism has allowed players more freedom to exercise their rights and power and provide them with better opportunities.

As professionalism is still relatively young, there are obviously still many more issues to iron out and improvements can certainly still be made. An issue that has raised some concerns and which is a direct consequence of professionalism is the increased frequency of games and the impact this has on players, which is what will be examined in the next section.

5.2. Increased frequency and intensity of matches

Om die wêreldbeker te wen was groots, om die Drienasiesreeks te wen was spesiaal,

²³⁷ G. Teichmann and E. Griffiths: *For the Record: Gary Teichmann*, p. 230.

²³⁸ 'SA Rugby Players May Be Forced to Strike', in the *Sunday Tribune*, 11 July 2004, p.2.

Maar om die Springboktrui aan te trek, is die beste van alles.²³⁹

A constant refrain during the amateur era against professionalism was the loss of pride in and love of the game. The sentiments expressed here by Joost van der Westhuizen, former Springbok captain and one of the first professional players in South Africa express nothing less than the pride and love representing one's country in a game that one loves. Although professionalism did not damage the love and pride experienced by players when playing the game, it did signal the arrival of pressure of a different kind. Players are now paid to play so the more games that are played, the more money can be earned. It also means that missing a game due to injury would impact on the money earned, which presents a whole different set of problems.

The last ten years have yielded a number of studies examining the concept of injuries within the professional realm of rugby union. A study undertaken in 2000 revealed that the professionalization of rugby union has led to an increase in injuries.²⁴⁰ A study undertaken in Japan revealed that playing resulted in serious structural damage to muscles which were largely dependant on the amount of tackles received and put in by players.²⁴¹

A study undertaken in Australia monitoring injuries to elite rugby union players from 1994 to 2000 revealed a significant increase in the rate of injuries prior to professionalism and after professionalization.²⁴² In this study an injury was defined as one that 'forced a player to either leave the field or miss a subsequent game. It revealed that from 1994 to 2000 there were 143 injuries from 91 matches, giving an overall injury rate of 69 per 1000 player hours of game play. Injury rates prior to professionalism, i.e. 1994-1995, were 47 per 1000 player hours of game play and after professionalism, i.e. 1996-2000, were 74 per 1000 player hours of game play, showing an increased injury rate at higher levels of play in rugby union.

²³⁹ 'To win the world cup was huge, to win the Tri-Nations series was special, but to wear the Springbok jersey is the best of all' – Joost van der Westhuizen, in E. Griffiths: Joost: Vir Liefde en Geld, back page.

²⁴⁰ N.J. Henderson: 'Impact of Professionalism on Injuries in Rugby', in the British Journal of Sports Medicine, 2000, 34: p. 473.

²⁴¹ T. Takarada: 'Evaluation of Muscle Damage After a Rugby Match with Special Reference to Tackle Plays', in the British Journal of Sports Medicine, 2003, 37: pp. 416-419.

²⁴² A. Bathgate et al: 'A Prospective Study of Injuries to Elite Australian Rugby Union Players', in the British Journal of Sports Medicine, 2002, 36: pp. 265-269.

Unfortunately there are currently no such studies available for South Africa. What one journalist has noticed and has commented on is that on any given weekend in South Africa, 6-10 senior contracted players are unable to play in the domestic competition due to injuries which vary from slight niggles to serious trauma.²⁴³ He believes that incentivised contracts breed a culture of hiding injuries in order to make money and that the more injuries sustained, will increase the rate of injuries and hence shorten the duration of international careers.²⁴⁴

A study undertaken in New Zealand found indications that players entering the season with injury placed themselves at higher risk of both missing play and sustaining a higher injury incidence through the subsequent season.²⁴⁵ They found that an early return (before full recovery) placed players who were otherwise fit at risk of further injury. The conclusion reached was thus that players should enter the season injury free in order to reduce the risk of sustaining injuries. Proper rest is the only way to prolong players' careers but in South Africa, top players are contractually bound to compete in a maximum of 30 matches per year.²⁴⁶

In comparison to the amateur era, 30 matches per year may not sound very busy. The New Zealand 'Originals' tour of the United Kingdom, Ireland, France and North America in 1905 yielded an amazing 35 games, of which the 'Originals' won 34 with the loss to Wales still passionately contested today.²⁴⁷ Frik du Preez, in his autobiography, recounts that in the Springboks' 1960/61 tour of the United Kingdom they played 34 games, scored 132 tries and only conceded 25. He also mentions that when New Zealand toured the United Kingdom in 1888, they played a total of 74 games.²⁴⁸ The pattern presented by the amateur era is thus one of players being

²⁴³ C. Ray: 'Burn Out', in SA Sports Illustrated, September 2005, p. 41.

²⁴⁴ C. Ray: 'Burn Out', in SA Sports Illustrated, September 2005, p. 47.

²⁴⁵ K.L. Quarrie et al: 'The New Zealand Rugby Injury and Performance Project. A Prospective Cohort Study of the Risk Factors for Injury in Rugby Union Football', in the British Journal of Sports Medicine, 2001: 35, pp. 157-166.

²⁴⁶ C. Ray: 'Burn Out', in SA Sports Illustrated, September 2005, p. 45.

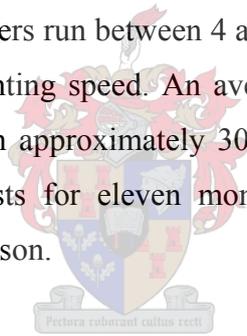
²⁴⁷ P.D. Owen and C.R. Weatherston: 'Professionalization of New Zealand Rugby Union: Historical Background, Structural Changes and Competitive Balance', in the University of Otago Economics Discussion Papers No.0214, December 2002.

²⁴⁸ F. Du Preez and C. Schoeman: Frik: The Autobiography of a Legend, p. 42.

involved with many games, which begs the question: why are injuries increasing if fewer games are being played?

The occurrences of players hiding injuries or minimising injuries in order to keep playing is definitely a contributing factor. It is however not the only reason. During the amateur era, tours lasted about three months, so that games were played in a relatively congested time but players were given longer rest periods. Training also was not as intense; players trained twice a week for an hour and a half and then played a game. Today players train twice a day for five days and then play.²⁴⁹

Players are thus playing more games and have more practice hours. Springbok players do approximately 600 minutes of activity per week which includes training and matches. They are not given enough time to rest, thus insufficient time to recover from niggling injuries which then amplifies into a major injury that could have been avoided.²⁵⁰ At the top level, players run between 4 and 6km per match, most of which is performed at or close to sprinting speed. An average of 10 tackles are made per match, with forwards pushing in approximately 30 scrums and countless rucks and mauls.²⁵¹ The rugby season lasts for eleven months, so players invariably carry niggling injuries into the new season.



The emphasis in rugby has also changed with the advent of professionalism. During the amateur period rugby was to some extent, about relaxation, beers, *braais*, cigarettes and socialising.²⁵² Tours were seen as opportunities to see a new country, experience a new culture and meet new people. Under professionalism, the focus has changed drastically. The added pressure of commercial interests and public expectation has changed the focus. Today the focus is on ice baths, massages, re-hydration and stretching. This change in attitude was captured by Andy Colquhoun when following Rudolph Straueli during the 2002 Tri-Nations series. In an article entitled 'The New Professionals', Colquhoun recounts the changed approach by

²⁴⁹ N. Mallett: 'Check Mate', in *SA Rugby*, April 2005, p. 73.

²⁵⁰ C. Ray: 'Burn Out', in *SA Sports Illustrated*, September 2005, p. 43.

²⁵¹ J. McMillan: 'Rugby: Strategy and Structure', in *the Edward Elgar Companion to the Economics of Sport*, p. 1.

²⁵² C. Ray: 'Burn Out', in *SA Sports Illustrated*, September 2005, p. 47.

Straueli to the tour.²⁵³ Straueli stressed that players were there to do a job and not see the sights.

At present in the southern hemisphere, the oldest players playing international rugby are George Gregan of Australia who is 35, Tana Umaga of New Zealand who is 32, Percy Montgomery of South Africa who is 32 and Os du Randt of South Africa who is 34. The majority of international players are between the ages of 23 and 26. As injuries begin taking their toll on players, there is a real fear that the peak age of an international will not reach beyond 27, creating a possible gap of experience in the game.

A study investigating the relationship between body size and success was conducted in 2001 based on the results of the 1999 Rugby World Cup. The final rankings of that year showed significant parallels with the average mass of squads.²⁵⁴ The study found that teams with taller and heavier players performed better and it discovered significant size differences between players at different levels of competition. Since 1975, they found that the average body mass of elite players has increased to 98, 6kg. Over the last twenty-five years, they found that the body mass of players has increased at double the rate of the average increase over the century as a whole. This trend in physique change mirrors the trend found in other sports.²⁵⁵

The implications of this phenomenon, which Olds refers to as ‘sports Darwinism’, is that the ideal sporting body will become extremely rare as well as becoming more expensive. Wages and rewards will increase and recruitment policies will be modified which can create an environment open to the use of illicit growth stimulants. This will in turn affect injury rates and characteristics which can force change in playing strategies and eventually lead to rule changes.²⁵⁶ Knowledge of trends in body size and shape can alert managers, coaches and selectors to the kinds of physique required

²⁵³ ‘The New Professionals’, in the *Daily News*, 22 July 2002, p. 6.

²⁵⁴ J. Olds: ‘The Evolution of Physique in Male Rugby Union Players in the Twentieth Century’, in the *Journal of Sports Science*, Vol.19, p. 253.

²⁵⁵ J. Olds: ‘The Evolution of Physique in Male Rugby Union Players in the Twentieth Century’, in the *Journal of Sports Science*, Vol.19, p. 257.

²⁵⁶ J. Olds: ‘The Evolution of Physique in Male Rugby Union Players in the Twentieth Century’, in the *Journal of Sports Science*, Vol.19, p. 259.

for future success which could have a positive effect on recruitment, selection and training strategies that can be adapted to suit probable needs.²⁵⁷

It is not only physical injury that players are now concerned with but mental fatigue as well. Rugby demands speed, strength and innovative tactical thought, thus strategies have to change from season to season. John Mitchell, coach of the All Blacks during the 2003 World Cup once said that ‘you can’t live in the past with this game because if you do, it bites you in the backside’.²⁵⁸ This places tremendous pressure on both coach and player, although more pressure on the coach as ultimately he is ‘the only one who will ever be judged on results’.²⁵⁹

Technological advances have also come to play an important role in rugby. The use of television to record games has assisted teams in gaining a better understanding of their opponents. Video analysis utilizing DVD and video has become vital to match preparation.²⁶⁰ It allows for analysis of one’s own team and the opposition. Players are now able to improve their own play and get to know their opposition’s strengths and weaknesses better.

Payment for play has brought a considerable change to the game of rugby. Players now have to consider financial remuneration when facing an injury. The consideration is not only about playing for money and the loss of pride that has for so long been associated with it, but rather the player’s consideration for his well-being in the light of his desire to play the game he loves. This situation is one that needs to be carefully assessed for if it is left unchecked, it could have a negative effect on the growth of rugby. A positive aspect of this is that it has sparked debates searching for possible solutions, which is what will be examined in the following section.

²⁵⁷ J. Olds: ‘The Evolution of Physique in Male Rugby Union Players in the Twentieth Century’, in the Journal of Sports Science, Vol.19. p. 260.

²⁵⁸J. McMillan: ‘Rugby: Strategy and Structure’, in the Edward Elgar Companion to the Economics of Sport. 2005, p. 2.

²⁵⁹ N. Mallett: ‘*Check Mate*’, in SA Rugby, April 2005, p. 70.

²⁶⁰ N. Mallett: ‘*Check Mate*’, in SA Rugby, April 2005, p. 71.

5.3. Debates created by professionalism:

Reform in administration and a global season

Undoubtedly the 1987 Rugby World Cup was the most important watershed in the history of the game. The hidden agenda of professionalism in the southern hemisphere became an open issue while the standards of fitness and performance set by the All Blacks created new benchmarks demanding nothing less than utter dedication to the sport.²⁶¹

The introduction of a competition pitting different countries of the world against one another in an attempt to discover who the best was did more than just hurry in the adoption of a professional code. It alerted corporations to a veritable untapped money market with the marriage between global games and broadcasting rights. Over the last four world cups, due to the exposure from broadcasting, rugby has grown in popularity exponentially. In fact, within the last four years, interest in rugby union in Australia has grown to such an extent that for the first time in rugby union's history in Australia, it is more popular than rugby league.²⁶²

The gains in popularity that rugby has made cannot, however, make administrators complacent. The advent of professionalism has necessitated transformation on a scale unprecedented in rugby union, which administrators have had to adapt to. John McMillan compares this transformation to Russia and China's attempts at reforming from a communist system to a capitalist one.²⁶³ He compares the England and the other home unions' attempts to transform and adapt to professionalism to Russia's attempt to change its old order. Reformists destroyed all mechanisms from the old regime and started afresh, which had the negative effect of sending the economy into decline.

England's rugby union suffered a similar fate, with salaries reaching unprecedented heights without the revenue to sustain it leading many clubs to close their doors, as well as an almost civil war between the leading clubs and the RFU over television

²⁶¹ Stuart Barnes, former Bath and England fly-half quoted in P. Williams: 'Battle Lines on Three Fronts: the RFU and the Lost War against Professionalism', in *The International Journal of the History of Sport*, Vol.19, no.4, p.133.

²⁶² 'Scrumming down for a Bright Future', in the *Sunday Times*, 26 June 2005, p. 15.

²⁶³ J. McMillan: 'Rugby: Strategy and Structure', in *the Edward Elgar Companion to the Economics of Sport*, 2005, p. 5.

revenue.²⁶⁴ McMillan advocates the approach taken by China's reformists who kept certain old mechanisms in place and built new ones around them which resulted in an economic boom.

South Africa has been fortunate having certain professional structures in place. It has not suffered the same fate as the clubs in England. On the other hand, club rugby has all but disintegrated, with national players not having the time to play for their clubs in anymore. There is a general consensus that professionalism has destroyed club rugby.²⁶⁵

At present, the administrative structure in South African rugby is rather bloated. South Africa has approximately 620 professional players, the largest pool of professional players in the world. Along with the large number of players, provincial salaries are also incredibly placing enormous strain on the financial resources available to Sarfu. Sarfu currently consists of fourteen unions, nine of which are bankrupt, one breaks even and only four are financially successful.²⁶⁶ This places even more strain on Sarfu's resources. Money is not only important for paying player salaries, but it also determines the kind of technology one has at one's disposal. Technology provides knowledge which gives the advantage on the field.²⁶⁷ The nine unions that are bankrupt are unable to field competitive teams as they lack the technological assistance that the bigger unions have access to.

In order to make money in rugby, spectators have to be lured to grounds while television audiences have to be lured to watch the games on television. Predictable games will not gain spectator attention, which will be detrimental to health of rugby in South Africa.²⁶⁸

'Obviously to attract live and television audiences and sponsors, the national competition must be competitive, with exciting, close games the norm – not the

²⁶⁴ D. Malcolm et al: 'The Changing Structure and Culture of English Rugby Union Football', in Culture, Sport and Society, Vol.3, no.3, pp. 67-79.

²⁶⁵ In interviews with Joel Stansky, Nick Mallett and Louis Luyt they all agree on this point.

²⁶⁶ 'SA Rugby Players May Be Forced to Strike', in the *Sunday Tribune*, 11 July 2004, p. 2.

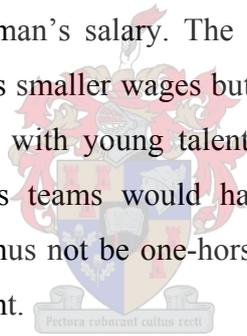
²⁶⁷ N. Mallett: 'Check Mate', in SA Rugby, April 2005, p. 71.

²⁶⁸ J. McMillan: 'Rugby: Strategy and Structure', in the Edward Elgar Companion to the Economics of Sport, 2005, p. 10.

exception'.²⁶⁹ That should be the objective of Sarfu, but unfortunately rugby politics does play a role and more often than not, rugby has had to take a backseat to politics, which is the current situation.

The Currie Cup competition for the 2005 season was changed from the strength versus strength format which was successful over the last two years, to one where all fourteen unions compete against one another.²⁷⁰ Besides the loss of revenue from gate takings that such unequal match-ups can expect, it also has a negative effect on players as it could lead them to develop “bad habits”. Easy games do not encourage players to build their skills or to be more innovative tactically.²⁷¹

A solution that has been offered to this problem is to cut the size of professional clubs by half, making professional rugby a truly elite game.²⁷² The Super 12 franchises would remain and the professional clubs and players contracted to them would then earn a truly professional sportsman’s salary. The rest of the clubs could be semi-professional, paying their players smaller wages but still enabling the club to survive and feed the professional clubs with young talent. Competitions would thus have more of a competitive edge as teams would have access to the same type of equipment and matches would thus not be one-horse races which are boring and are not good for players’ development.



There is a general feeling amongst players in South Africa that they are playing too much rugby. The season begins in February with the Super 12, which is followed by the Vodacom Cup, the Tri – Nations, the Currie Cup and ends in December with the end of year tour to the northern hemisphere. In order to win, the best players have to be played but that cannot occur if players are playing too much rugby.²⁷³ Already the rugby season lasts for eleven months. Players need to get 10 consecutive weeks of rest if they are to be fresh each season.²⁷⁴ According to Rod MacQueen, with so much rugby being played the problem occurs ‘where medical needs come up against the

²⁶⁹ Mike Brewer, former All Black, quoted by J. McMillan: *Rugby Meets Economics*, p. 4.

²⁷⁰ ‘South African Rugby in Turmoil’, in the *Saturday Weekend Argus*, 06 February 2004.

²⁷¹ McMillan, J: *Rugby Meets Economics*, p.7.

²⁷² Interview: Nick Mallett, 26 April 2005.

²⁷³ ‘Scrumming down for a Bright Future’, in the *Sunday Times*, 26 June 2005, p.15.

²⁷⁴ C. Ray: ‘Burn Out’, in *SA Sports Illustrated*, September 2005, p.45.

need to win. This decision should sometimes be taken out of the coach's hands. It's easy to say, but a global season would be beneficial'.²⁷⁵

MacQueen is not the only one in favour of a global season. Nick Mallett has also spoken out in favour of introducing a global season.²⁷⁶ The most influential supporter of the global season is undoubtedly Sanzar (South Africa, New Zealand and Australia Rugby) who have presented the IRB with a proposal for a global season and are awaiting a response.²⁷⁷ A global season would allow all professional rugby players the same amount of rest and would reveal truer results than what have been experienced thus far.

At present, outgoing tours are undertaken at the end of a rigorous season, with players being emotionally, physically and psychologically tired. They are unable to perform at their peak. The teams they face are just beginning their season, so they are fresher, more alert and more energetic. Granted, this does not automatically mean that the fresher teams always win, resulting in short term gains for certain countries. However, the long term effects of such tours need to be taken into consideration. The objective should be to have a healthy and robust team, especially when looking ahead to the World Cup year. As one journalist put it, the real threat to players' prospects does not necessarily come 'from their own limitations or opposition superiority, but from exhaustion (psychological as much as physical) of an almost endless season of intense fixtures'.²⁷⁸

There is much debate surrounding the astronomical salaries earned by professional sportspeople. Regarding Springbok salaries especially, the general feeling by the public and commentators is that they are overpaid and under perform.²⁷⁹

Yet if one were to examine the amount of physical and mental preparation put in before games (that due to the size and body mass of players, every time they tackle or

²⁷⁵ 'Scrumming down for a Bright Future', in *the Sunday Times*, 26 June 2005, p.15

²⁷⁶ Interview: Nick Mallett, 26 April 2005.

²⁷⁷ 'Sweeping Sanzar Changes', in *The Star*, 15 March 2004, p.28.

²⁷⁸ 'The Threat of Extra-Time', in the *Financial Mail*, 03 December 2004, p.75.

²⁷⁹ 'Top rugby players score in money game', in *This Day*, 02 March 2004.

are tackled it is equivalent to being in a car accident at 60km/hour)²⁸⁰ and add the constant pressure from sponsors to perform well in order to place their brands in a positive light and the enormous pressure (and abuse) placed on them by fans and the media, and on top of all this take into account that they only have one solitary month in which to recuperate and then do it all over again, it does raise the question of how humanly possible it is to continue to deliver quality performances at the top level.

The aim of this chapter was to examine the effect that professionalism has had on rugby's most valuable asset: the player. The physique of players has seen definite evolving with players getting bigger, stronger and faster especially over the last twenty-five years or so.

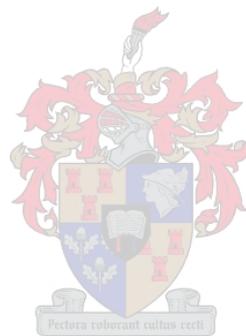
Injuries have also increased dramatically as a combined result of changing physical builds, increased intensity of games and increased frequency of games. The increased frequency of games now gives players shorter time to recuperate, resulting in injuries not being properly healed by the time they go back to action, increasing their chances of sustaining an even worse injury.

Finally, lack of foresight by the administration by organising unequally competitive games does not improve the game of rugby, nor does it improve the stronger of the teams. Although weaker teams benefit by experiencing the thrill of playing at big stadiums such as Loftus Versveld, Newlands and Ellis Park, it is in general detrimental to the stronger as team as it does not encourage them to play to their best and may have the added disadvantage of allowing players to develop bad habits.

In 1995 Ronnie Masson said it was important to look after the players as they were the ones who drew crowds to the grounds. Ten years later the question that has to be asked is have the players been properly cared for? The answer to this is financially yes, but for a long term career and for further developing and growing rugby as a sport, no. Changes have to be made and what is sorely lacking at the moment are leaders with long term vision. The South African public truly desire to see the Springboks back on an equal footing with arch rivals New Zealand and the Tri-

²⁸⁰ C. Ray: 'Burn Out', in SA Sports Illustrated, September 2005, p. 45.

Nations win of 2004 and the performance of that season gives hope that this can one day happen. But the players have to be taken into account and the enormous demands placed on them evaluated accordingly.



Chapter 6:

CONCLUSION

6.1. To infinity and beyond: further areas of investigation

Over the decades, so many young people from all the social classes in all the big rugby playing countries had what should have been their living denied to them just because of a hopeless, pompous doctrine imposed by history and grandees. Those who possess their genius for rugby are blissfully free. They are free to choose rugby, or not to choose rugby. They are free, if they so decide, to maximize their rugby talents, to earn their livings and fulfil their sporting dues. They are lucky in one sense, but in another, they are taking no more than their due.²⁸¹

In general, all debates surrounding professionalism have centred on the issue of payment for players. Under the amateur game, being paid to play the game posed questions regarding one's loyalty to the game and team. The majority of debates surrounding professionalism still tend to centre on payment for play, except that now, specifically regarding international players, the focus is more on whether the players are playing well enough to deserve their high salaries or not.²⁸² This set focus on payment for play tends to obscure the fact that professionalism has raised new questions and unlocked new areas of research that can be explored. A few of these possibilities will be discussed in this section.

6.1.1. The classist nature of rugby union

Class and rugby are two concepts that cannot be separated. Class has played a vital role in the development of rugby and continues to do so under the professional banner. At the beginning of the nineteenth century, the version of rugby played was a game that was

²⁸¹ Stephen Jones, British rugby writer, in: C. Davies: 'Professionalism in rugby: Good for the players but bad for the sport?', published: <http://www.heavensgame.com/index> . Accessed: 08 March 2005.

²⁸² 'Pride and passion alive in amateur rugby', in *The Star*, 11 August 2004.

mainly played at fairs and festivals. Pupils at public schools slowly began to adapt those games to make them more suitable to the limitations of their school grounds. It was in these public schools that the game known today developed. It was also largely due to the public school influence that the middle class came to gain control of the game.

The game had reached a standardised form by the 1870's. Middle class gentlemen were in firm control of the game. It was also at this time that issues of payment arose. The inaugural Yorkshire Cup attracted 'unprecedented and unexpectedly large crowds', indicating a high level of public interest.²⁸³ Public interest was not limited to the middle class players but included a large number of working class players as well. In fact, by the 1870's, working class interest in the game had risen substantially enough to raise concern among the leadership about their power base.

The amateur code or no payment for play was introduced and enforced from the 1880's onwards as a means to exclude the working class from the game.²⁸⁴ Calls for payment for play originated from the working class as they were financially disadvantaged by missing work in order to play rugby. Their increasing calls for payment caused concern among the middle class as they were not negatively affected by missing work. More and more professionalism came to be used as a euphemism for the working class, and hence an evil that needed to be fought at all costs. The media at the time supported this view with one newspaper reporting that 'working – class players paid little heed to amateur conceptions of fair play and working-class spectators provided the cash with which these faults could be indulged'.²⁸⁵

The final split in 1895, which occurred as a result of administrators' refusal to allow payment for play, formed the foundation that the union game was built on and carried through for nearly a century. Middle-class administrators had been searching for a means

²⁸³ T. Collins: "'Noa Mutton, Noa Laaking': The Origins of Payment of Play in Rugby Football, 1877-86", in *The International Journal of the History of Sport*, Vol.21, No.3, p. 34.

²⁸⁴ T. Collins: "'Noa Mutton, Noa Laaking': The Origins of Payment of Play in Rugby Football, 1877-86", in *The International Journal of the History of Sport*, Vol.21, No.3, p. 35.

²⁸⁵ T. Collins: "'Noa Mutton, Noa Laaking': The Origins of Payment of Play in Rugby Football, 1877-86", in *The International Journal of the History of Sport*, Vol.21, No.3, p. 45.

to exclude the working-class from the game due to significant increases in interest from that sector. Their refusal to accede to the requests by the Yorkshire resulted in the clubs from the north splitting away to form their own league. This decision lay the founding stone of amateurism in rugby.²⁸⁶

This belief was carried into the colonies appropriated by Great Britain and into South Africa in particular. Rugby was used as a tool of civilization and played in English-speaking schools at the Cape Colony. Canon George Ogilvy is credited with having introduced rugby to Diocesan College in Cape Town, generally referred to as Bishops. Paul Dobson says that when Ogilvy arrived at Bishops,

...he found a whole lot of boys running wild in the bush, so he decided he would get them to play rugby to work off...some of those wild energies...where there was a large conglomeration of physically active males who were cut off from the debilitating effects of females.²⁸⁷

The Anglo-Boer war ironically led to the spread of the game of rugby among the Afrikaners. At that point, the British had regarded the Afrikaners as little better than the natives and felt that rugby was a game far too civilized for them.²⁸⁸ The Afrikaners eventually absorbed the game into their culture and made it their own. The game of rugby was deemed not to be of interest to black people and therefore no effort was made to develop the game outside of the white race. This notion was incorrect as rugby in the Cape (both Western and Eastern) proved popular among the coloureds and blacks of those areas. This notion still influences thinking within certain circles of South Africa. An area that is still open for investigation is the extent of the development of rugby within these areas.

Another area of interest is that of class consciousness. Nauright and Chandler believe that the professionalization of rugby will not necessarily promote class consciousness but can

²⁸⁶ S. Smith: The Union Game: A Rugby History, p. 13.

²⁸⁷ S. Smith: The Union Game: A Rugby History, p. 110.

²⁸⁸ S. Smith: The Union Game: A Rugby History, p. 112.

maintain class consciousness.²⁸⁹ In South Africa class consciousness was closely linked to race. This raises many questions with regards to government's plans for taking the game to previously disadvantaged areas. The wording itself of such a statement emphasises class links. The constant emphasis on making professional rugby an elite sport deepens the class aspect of the game and its implication for today. It should make an interesting study to see how this conjecture by Nauright and Chandler realises within rugby in South Africa.

6.1.2. Medical implications of Professionalism

Over the last few years countries such as New Zealand, Australia, Britain and even Japan have released studies about injuries in rugby union from the inception of professionalism. A common finding has been that with the advent of professionalism, the rate of injury has increased considerably.

One study in Britain, begun in 1994 prior to professionalism, followed a cohort of players to determine the long-term influence that injuries have on players' health and lifestyles.²⁹⁰ The findings of this study show that the increased exposure the sport has received has increased the competitiveness of the amateur game and as such has increased the rate of injury incidences. This would have long term effects on the health of rugby players and have a negative impact on the game as 25% of the study group retired two or more years after their first serious injury. No such studies were available on South Africa during the research of this thesis. This is a field of study that could benefit the development of rugby in South Africa.

A study conducted by A Bathgate *et al.* on injuries to elite Australian rugby union players from 1994 to 2000 has been to isolate the most injured positions among the forwards and backs. It was discovered that the lock position was the one most injured amongst the

²⁸⁹ J. Nauright and T.J.L. Chandler: 'Conclusion: A Rugby World or Worlds of Rugby?' in: T.J.L. Chandler and J. Naughton (eds): Making the Rugby World: Race, Gender and Commerce, p. 206.

²⁹⁰ A.J. Lee et al: 'Influence of Rugby Injuries on Players' Subsequent Health and Lifestyle: Beginning a Long-Term Follow Up', in the British Journal of Sports Medicine, p. 35.

forwards and the fly-half amongst the backs.²⁹¹ Information such as this assists not only the coaches and technical staff in preparing for games, but in understanding and following the development of the game and its influence on society.

6.1.3. Education and Professional Rugby

During amateur days, because players were not allowed to be paid to play, many chose to study further. It was more the exception than the rule that a player playing for big club like Western Province or Northern Transvaal did not have a tertiary education. What has been noted, most notably by former Springbok wing and manager Jannie Engelbrecht, is the lack of emphasis placed on tertiary education under the professional code.²⁹² He feels that young players today are not being properly prepared to face the real world.

Responses to the concern on the lack of emphasis on tertiary education have been varied. Rugby is considered to be a game in which quick thinking is essential and that pursuing a tertiary education would assist in developing that quick thinking skill. At the same time, it does not mean that by not pursuing a tertiary education the player will lose out on some necessary skills.²⁹³ The hidden danger behind not studying further is the uncertain future it presents the player. It is only at elite rugby level, that is at provincial, Super 12 and international rugby, that players earn salaries comparable to other professional sports. If a player is injured and his career cut short, at elite level there are structures in place to assist him. Joel Stransky has also noted that there is life after rugby if one makes wise decisions.²⁹⁴

A problem that emerges with this is that one cannot predict the long term effects this will have on the economy as a whole when a generation of former rugby players have to enter

²⁹¹ A. Bathgate et al: 'A Prospective Study of Injuries to Elite Australian Rugby Union Players', in the *British Journal of Sports Medicine*, 2002, 36, pp. 265-269.

²⁹² 'Pa van Simon Met Praat Oor Rugby, Harde Werk en Trots', in *Die Matie*, 23 February 2005.

²⁹³ Interviews: Joel Stransky, Nick Mallett and Joe van Niekerk.

²⁹⁴ Interview: Joel Stransky, 11 April 2005.

the employment market and are only equipped to play rugby. Gary Teichmann echoes these concerns when he says that

[M]y paramount concern is for the players who are seduced by the rewards of professionalism, visit the BMW dealership, but are then left unemployable and helpless when their playing days are over. There is an urgent, even desperate need for organizations to be developed that offer timely advice. You sign a professional contract upon leaving school...train 3 or 4 times a day...no time for a university degree, no opportunity for vocational training...some time near your 30th birthday, you will be confronted by life without rugby. Such are the mental demands, you career might not even take you to 30.²⁹⁵

South Africa's situation with having so many professional rugby players means that very few will be in positions to obtain good jobs once their playing careers are over. Investigations into this area could prove very useful when examining the growth and impact of rugby.

The demise of club rugby in South Africa is another area of investigation that has yet to be explored.



6.2. Concluding Remarks

The professionalization of rugby union has meant more than just openly rewarding players for their time commitment and performances on the field. It has shown the positive and negative aspects to dealing with money in the game. It has been seen that administrators' stubbornness to allow open payment created an environment of distrust and ironically brought shame upon the game under the guise of *shamateurism*.

The tensions between transformation and professionalism in South Africa have impacted on political involvement in the game. Whereas during amateur games politicians were able to use rugby as a tool to further specific political agendas, the same cannot be said for today. The demands on rugby made by commercialism, the television, sponsors and the public have complicated matters considerably. That is not to say that it does not

²⁹⁵ G. Teichmann and E. Griffiths: For the Record: Gary Teichmann, p. 229.

occur, but it does, however, imply that consequences will have a far larger ripple effect than before.

This ripple effect is evident in the tenuous relationship between commercialism, the media, rugby and politics. These entities have and do function on their own, but when they meet in sport, especially rugby, the inter-relations and interconnections between the four directly impact on the perceptions and development of the rugby game.

The impact of professionalism on the player has not only impacted on his life, health and psyche, but also opened up new areas of study. The increase in size, strength and physical build of players has contributed to the development of sports science and increased knowledge regarding nutrition, fitness, strength, training techniques and fuelled the desire of both amateur and professional athletes to be more competitive.

It has also opened areas of study that have as yet not been properly examined which would make a significant contribution towards the growth of the game in South Africa.

If one examines fears of the old guard towards amateurism in the light of what is known today, it is easy to dismiss them without really interrogating them. However these fears may have been groundless, the simple truth is that the 'game played in heaven' has definitely changed and in general, one could say that the change has been positive. It is faster, harder, more exciting and growing steadily globally with each passing year; with respect to the number of countries outside of Britain's historical colonial influence and television audience interest from these countries in international competitions such as the Six Nations and Tri-Nations series'. The challenge now is not for the IRB to relax and accept change as it comes. The new changes have provided fresh horizons for exploration.

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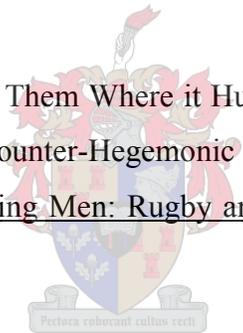
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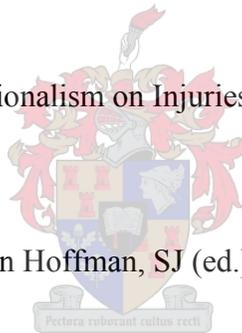
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