



CISM INTERNATIONAL SYMPOSIUM
PRETORIA - SOUTH AFRICA
1996

HOW DE SPRINGBOKS WON THE WORLD CUP RUGBY

Mr MORNE du PLESSIS (South Afr)

Here is the actual transcript of the team talk before the Australian game

The Australian team has been through that moment. Whatever happens on the 25th they have a position to which they can fall back. They already have their defining moment; victory in the 1991 Rugby World Cup. We do not have that escape; and so our desire must be greater. Their motivation can never be the same. Their hunger can never be as great as ours. Their past success is their greatest weakness and our decisive advantage. That is what we must exploit. We must want this success more than they. It has come down something as complex as that.

Seize the moment for greatness. So that the future generations of South Africans may know that this was the finest hour in the long and distinguished annals of South African rugby. That when our hour of judgement came, we were not found wanting.

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There is a defining moment in each person's life when the true measure of who he is tested. For ever after he will be judged and, more importantly, he will judge himself, on the basis of how he answered that moment of truth.

That moment in our lives has arrived. In the ninety minutes against Australia our moment of truth will arrive. We can no more escape our moment of destiny that we can recapture the moment that has just passed.

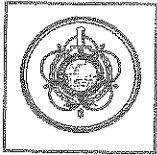
Nor should we wish to escape that judgement. Everything we have done in our lives, perhaps by choice, perhaps by forces that we do not understand, leads to this conclusion. This has been our destiny; that we will play Australia at Newlands in the opening match of Rugby World Cup 1995, in our home country. Whatever happens in the rest of this tournament will hinge on the outcome of this game. More importantly, whatever else may occur in our lives, we will be defined by what happens at Newlands, May the 25th, 1995. And that is our unique privilege. We have the opportunity once in our lives absolutely to define who we are.

We often spoke of destiny - sometimes I think we won this cup because we were destined to do so. There seems no other reason why Bennazi, the French loose forward

Tape: Bennazi - France - Durban

a man mountain travelling at full pace ball in hand, wet field, is stopped 2 inches.

I became manager of this team by accident and not by design. I still feel some guilt because of this fact that Jannie Engelbrecht lost out to me in having this wonderful experience. It serves no purpose to dwell



on this issue here.

Sensing the turmoil I found myself in being put in the deep end like this, the company IBM came forward and offered to assist me a "management strategy"

Initially I was somewhat sceptical about the process and its relevance to my situation but the process undoubtable assisted me in being able to focus productively on the issues that in the end were of importance to my management role.

From a brainstorming session at which a mindmap was created, key objective and focus areas were identified.

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Objectives and related focus areas

1. Faultless, logistical preparation to the cup to be measured by 15 May 1995

Focus Areas: Ensure that:

- Players have kit for both leisure and playing;
- Collection of information on games and opponents games for utilisation of the coaching staff; - **discussion**
- Team free time is sufficient and effectively utilised; - **golf picture, tape of team playing golf**
- Players allowances are paid from SARFU;
- Efficient team movement from hotels and via busses;
- Food in on time and according to specifications; - **story**
- Security is adequate and effective; - **story**
- Staff are in place and clearly briefed;
- Technical facilities are in place and adequate.

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2. Well organised/well funded trust for the team

Focus Areas: ensure that

- Trust has an established/accepted code;
- The trust is established for the team;
- Sponsors, both officials and unofficial marketing agents are clear as to their expectations and contracts.

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3. Support of the nation

Focus Areas: ensure that:

- A spokesman is appointed;
- Perceptions of the non-playing supporters are managed;
- Contact is made with the black public.

A winning team always encourages support - but this support was different. I suppose it started here -



Mandela receiving cap

This genuine relationship grew and he became the bridge of support for the rest of the nation. This was probably one of the greatest moments for me during the tournament.

In trying to analyze Mandela's effect on the team, I am reminded to Tennyson's Sir Gallahad " *My strength is the strength of ten because my heart is pure*"

The man's strength is the strength of millions.

The team was prepared to identify with all people of this country.

From here we drew up a risk profile.

| Risks | Probability | Impact | Risk |
|---|-------------|--------|-------|
| Injuries and health to players | 89% | h | h |
| Accommodation and travel logistic breakdown | 50% | h | h |
| Not raising R2-million for the trust | 0% | h | |
| Team discipline breakdown on and off the field | 50% | h | h |
| Wrong selection of the team | 50% | h | h |
| Cumbersome large infrastructure 12 | 100% | m | m - h |
| Incorrect selection of 15 players for each game | 30% | m | m - h |
| Overlap of duties between coach and manager | 70% | m - l | m |
| Press liaison breakdown | 40% | m | m |
| Poor supporters relations | 30% | m | m |
| Management health risks | 20% | h | l - m |
| Security of the team | 10% | h | l |
| Drug test failure | 5% | h | l |

4. Team mentally prepared for the World Cup

Focus Areas: ensure that:

- Religious beliefs are addressed; - **Tape:** Religion
- Motivation "one on one" is addressed; **Slide:** Honour code
- Conflict is addressed and conducted;
- Team discipline and off the field is addressed. - **Tape:** Canada - Dalton crying

One of the cornerstones of our success was discipline. Succeeded - comparatively few penalties, in fact only 6 against us in the first match against Australia and relatively few in the final.

5. Final team selection 30 players on 29 April 1995



Focus Areas: ensure that:

- The team best selected; - **One team, One country**
- Medical/drug tests are performed.

Before I conclude as to why we were successful in winning the World Cup, let me say that my experience during the World Cup has confirmed to me that the human nature either expressed individually or in groups is a fluid system.

Human behaviour is complex - value systems ebb and flow, concentration and energy levels wax and wane, performance capacities increase and decrease. There are no permanent traits of types. Most often erratic and often unpredictable laws and processes of chaos/order prevail. I cannot claim that a single variable caused or did not cause the desired effect. The single bounce of the ball, the slight speed of a player, the extra force in one single scrum - these isolated and often insignificant events after make the difference. Having said that, my recent experience has rejuvenated my view on good old fashioned values of faith, discipline and teamwork.

An example of the ebb and flow of values is evident in the current player revolt we are witnessing, which could enter into new rounds shortly. For awhile, during the World Cup, the focus was on order and sacrifice and the team coming first. Conformity was the norm. The pendulum has now swung to a total focus on the individual.

This pendulum swing has an internal logic - the excesses in each direction set in motion the need for the other. Too much freedom produces anarchy and chaos. Without reason become stifling and oppressive.

James Small story

Major league baseball was beset with a bitter battle between players and owners. The public sympathy lay very strongly with the players at first.

Both player and owners are now learning that the fans insist they must now put first greater good of the game. Otherwise attendance will continue to slide - television is turned to other channels - the nation's youth support other heroes.

Also the base of our success was meticulous, thorough, sometimes ruthless preparation. Physical condition and understanding of our game plan, in particular defence patterns.

We also had a team ready to respond to challenges, adverse conditions and shifting strategies of the coach. We had good team communication systems, they trusted each other and management, they were open and resilient.

In short, a very happy team. **Picture**

I believe in this team there was a very high degree of integrity or level of conduct - an absence of deviousness, whispers, rumours or backbiting. Our code of conduct led to the high standard of selfdiscipline. We paid particular attention to detail, respect for time appointments and dress code. I really believe this had the desired effect on the field (minimum penalties).

If this team achieved something special, I do believe this was achieved on a spiritual or mystical level.

This team was able to find new levels of inspiration not yet experienced. This inspiration came from a nation yearning for togetherness - hungry for victory that would be for a short while the focus of the great new nation. We were at last - if only for a short while - One team, One nation.



After 6 months of hard work and meticulous planning it was no surprise to me that the South African team reached a physical and mental peak during the World Cup of 1995.

What surprised me somewhat (mildly) was that this peak was in fact good enough to win the World Cup.

Very briefly I want to go back to Australia's victory in the World Cup of 1991 - beating England at Twickenham. In his book "The winning way" the legendary coach Bob Dwyer writes in fascinating detail about Australia's success. Broadly summarised he puts forward a few contributing factors to Australia's success.

These broadly summarised are:

1. Australia developed a new style of play - principally by forcing the opposition to react to your style of play in a predictable way. This was done largely by committing, time after time if necessary, the opposition defence - and this meant the attackers were to run at the defenders rather than away from them as in the past.
2. The second key to Australia's success - way superior scientific training and preparation.
3. The third element was to develop an attitude of humility in his players. Our own experience with the Australian players was that they are exactly this. His reasoning was that this attitude served players better in the crunch moments or moments of pressure.
4. I also believe the Australian were ahead of the field when it came to the analytical appraisal of the opposition's strengths and weaknesses - this was another of Dwyer's talents.

He concludes in his book - and this is why I raise the 1991 World Cup here - that in the next four years after 1991 other countries would probably catch up with Australia if not improve on their own methods (which they did) and the team that won the 1995 World Cup would be the team that produced something special.

The purpose of this journey though some of the glorious moments of the World Cup and some of the background or changeroom stories is to end up being able to pinpoint some of the reasons for our success. If you find something of value to be learnt from these experiences I would be proud... at least share with me this magical experience.

What do we know about this experience that is more obvious? We know now that we had a coach of extraordinary quality, a man who believes implicitly and with refreshing simplicity that what you put by way of physical preparation you eventually get out. A hard taskmaster who refuses any pandering of the players. A man capable of implementing stoic discipline but at the same time encourages creativity. A coach who will do anything for his players and is thereby able to solicit almost fanatical loyalty from his players.

We know we had a leader/captain of exceptional qualities - an extraordinary human being. A man for South Africa today not carrying scars from the past. Refreshingly open and charismatic. His greatest quality as regard his Springbok success was probably a very shrewd rugby brain. His tactical team talks were brilliant and he is able to verbalise and convert Kitch's plans into action.

If he has any weakness it was the occasional lapse into quietness or low moods I think understandably brought about the enormous pressures brought to bear on a captain of the national team. The occasional mood swings would have a masked effect on the rest of the team - a measure of his great influence on the team.

What then do I say about this often much criticised team (before the World Cup). This was the quote that often used to lift the spirits of the team. Great delight that I read it again to the team after we had won at a dinner at which another famous American was present - Andrew Young.

In the end this was the team that was able to answer their moment of truth - or as it turned out many



moments of truth.

The basis of our team philosophy or team talks before the all important first game against Australia was based on two elements which probably become the basis for the underlying culture of the team. These elements were asking the team to answer their moment of truth or their defining moment - the other was the insatiable hunger to succeed.
