

# Global Processes and the Rugby Union World Cup

*Brett Hutchins*

Department of Human Movement Studies  
The University of Queensland  
Brisbane, Australia

## **Abstract**

This article attempts to come to terms with the dynamic processes constituting globalisation by contextualising it within cultural, institutional and historical sporting practice. In this case, it is rugby union, and the staging of the Rugby World Cup every four years, that serves as the vehicle to unravel and establish how globalisation is shaping and reshaping sport. Developmental processes analysed primarily through the 1987, 1991 and 1995 Rugby World Cups include the pivotal role of the media and the continuing development of communications technology in the televisual transmission of rugby to expanding audiences, the demise of rugby union amateurism, the intersection of international rugby interests and those of transnational media corporations, and the interrelationships between the national and global within rugby's commercial practice.

It's important to be global. The world is going to be global.

David DeVoe, Chief Financial Officer of News Corporation<sup>1</sup>

When the chief financial officer of Rupert Murdoch's News Corporation, a multinational media conglomerate that in 1996 recorded approximately US\$10 billion in sales, starts talking about being 'global', it appears the rest of us who consume the media are condemned to listen.<sup>2</sup> It is hardly surprising then that 'global babble' is highly fashionable among politicians, intellectuals and media figures. Popular discourse on ecological degradation, human rights, and transnational corporate affairs confronts us with catch phrases and terms such as 'think globally, act locally', 'global warming', 'global village', 'global community', 'global markets', 'global economy' and 'global telecommunications'. Such diverse usage hints at the unwieldy and eclectic connotations and meanings of globalisation. In much of this discussion we find out little of the specific challenges and processes presented by globalisation, let alone what globalisation means in any unified sense, or in any particular institutional context.

This article attempts to come to terms with the dynamic processes constituting globalisation by contextualising it within cultural, institutional and historical sporting practice. In this case, it is rugby union, and the staging of the Rugby World Cup every four years, that serves as the vehicle to unravel and establish how globalisation is shaping and re-shaping sport. International sport, such as

rugby union, is a particularly useful vehicle in this instance as 'it is the extent and rapidity of sport's installation in its various forms across the globe that commends it as the subject of a sustained interrogations of . . . globalisation'.<sup>3</sup>

Developmental processes analysed primarily through the 1957, 1991 and 1995 Rugby World Cups include the pivotal role of the media and the continuing development of communications technology in the televisual transmission of rugby to expanding audiences. the demise of rugby union amateurism. the intersection of international rugby interests and those of transnational media corporations and the interrelationships between the national and global within rugby's commercial practice.

### **Aligning the Analytical Fragments of Global Processes**

Globalisation is a long-term process. Wolf locates the global diffusion of developing capitalist processes as beginning around the year 1400.<sup>4</sup> Selected sporting analyses discuss the possible advent of globalisation during the late 1800s.<sup>5</sup> Correspondingly, the structured diffusion of English sporting forms, rugby prominent among these, occurred around the globe in the last three decades of the nineteenth century.<sup>6</sup>

Despite the lengthy gestation of global processes detailed above, serious discussion and debate on globalisation in sport began only in the last few years.<sup>7</sup> Globalisation has, however, been developing as a theoretical and historical concept within wider intellectual circles for much longer. Examples of theories and arguments from which 'globalism has emerged are extensive. These include dependency and development research, world-systems theory, international relations theory, epochal historicisation, civilisational analysis, cultural imperialism, cultural hegemony, colonialism and post-colonial theory, and more recently, the modernisation and Americanisation arguments.<sup>8</sup>

Given the diffuse body of work from which globalisation has emerged, it is not surprising that gaining widespread agreement on a definition is difficult. Definitions offered usually emphasise some form of spatial and temporal compression and growth in the interdependence of worldwide relations.<sup>9</sup> For the purposes of this article, globalisation is defined as: 'broadening the framework of political, economic [social and cultural] and other activities [including sport] beyond the boundaries of the nation state'.<sup>10</sup> The scope of this definition is intended to be generally inclusive. Such generality acknowledges the argument that globalisation remains an *emergent* process: 'we have not yet achieved "globality"'.<sup>11</sup> That globalisation is emergent implies that the specific features of global processes are not immediately or necessarily obvious. Indeed, there is a case to be made that the evidential basis of globalisation, what is actually 'going on', is lacking.<sup>12</sup> It is from this standpoint that this study begins.

It is the lack of evidence for many so called globalising processes and flows that contributes to the considerable fragmentation within globalisation literature. Within this literature, global processes take on a discursive character that see features shift, often markedly, from one institutional context to the next. For example, it is far from likely that notions of 'globalisation' have uniform features in Western and non-western societies, or in football codes as disparate as Australian Rules football and international rugby union. At this early stage of evidential ferment, we must identify globalisation processes within particular institutional settings, in this case the setting of the rugby union World Cup tournaments. It is in this setting that an evidential basis for the 'real' emergence of globalisation will be constructed.

Evidence presented is largely drawn from Australian and New Zealand source material. The choice of these countries is well supported. Firstly, theories and studies of globalisation are often drawn from politically and economically powerful North Atlantic rim countries: 'global rarely means universal'.<sup>13</sup> Contrastingly, as peripheral, ex-colonial, import cultures, Australia and New Zealand are worthy of examination.<sup>14</sup> Secondly, Australia, and to a lesser extent, New Zealand, have played a definite role in globalising sport.<sup>15</sup> Finally, as winners of the first two World Cups in 1991 and 1987 respectively, Australia and New Zealand obviously command considerable influence within the development of the World Cup and rugby's global relations.

## **Globalisation and History**

*Seeking to understand our own times as history in the making.*<sup>1 6</sup>

The historicisation of globalisation is a contentious exercise as globalisation remains an emergent process. Simultaneously, it is historical in its origins and contemporary in its emergence. It is inevitable then that to properly incorporate this process into history requires an unavoidable overlap in representation of the past and present. To propose such an overlap in writing history goes against those historians who believe we must limit our study only to the past.<sup>17</sup> Drawing from sources focussing on theories and ideas of history, it is argued that such a viewpoint has important methodological shortcomings in the study of globalisation processes. First, in mediating between the past and the present, contemporary historians are unavoidably 'present-minded' in constructing historical discourse.<sup>18</sup> If it were not so, how would it be possible for us to interpret current historical discourse? Second, as historians comment on the past from the present, it does not seem possible to eliminate any conscious or subconscious inferences or statements on, or of, the present from historical texts.<sup>19</sup> Third, if we limit our understanding and use of history to the past, it is difficult to realise the presence and role of history in shaping people's everyday lives and consciousness.<sup>20</sup> As

described by E. H. Carr, history possesses a 'conditional validity which serves both as a guide to action and a key to our understanding of how things happen'.<sup>21</sup> Fourth, to argue for a periodic separation or rupture between the past and present is highly contentious when faced with the possibility that time itself is not necessarily chronological, in other words, sequential, measurable or universal.<sup>22</sup>

To contextualise the emergence of globalisation in historical practice, it is essential to view the past and present as constituting what we understand to be history. Global processes cannot only be a product of the past as they are deeply and inextricably embedded within a multiplicity of existing and evolving social sites. A degree of temporal fluidity is required then to adequately synthesise the origins of globalisation in our past, their continuing emergence in our present and their significance and role in our future. It is highly unlikely that this synthesis will be flawless. An attempt must be made. however, if we are to satisfactorily contextualise the emergence of globality within the historical process.<sup>23</sup>

A feature of the intersection between history and globality has been debate over whether globalisation is a result of a modern, postmodern, or global age. Such an argument is difficult to unravel and is certainly beyond the scope of this essay. Instead, there is great merit in constructing 'a dialogue among changing intellectual influences'.<sup>24</sup> Such interaction between competing intellectual discourses allows for reflexive and critical insights. and complements the understanding of globalisation both as a developmental process and an analytical framework.

### **Balancing and Blending**

According to Cunningham and Jacka, the globalisation project is neither dystopian nor utopian in scope.<sup>25</sup> It is not about teleological trajectories producing an inevitable homogenisation of culture (sporting or otherwise) or a new cosmopolitan globalism. Sites of local, regional and national resistance can, do and will continue to emerge.<sup>26</sup> In other words, it is not proposed that in the face of global flows localised and traditional rugby cultures are about to disappear without trace. Globalisation is better conceived as the intersection of innumerable power relationships played out in, through and between the local, national and the global across the interdependent terrains of culture, social life, politics, economics, and the media.<sup>27</sup> These intersections produce 'balances and blends' 'between homogeneity and heterogeneity. integration and disintegration, and unity and diversity'.<sup>28</sup>

Permeating the emergence of globality is uncertainty over the sovereignty of the nation-state. As Eric Hobsbawm explains, national communities, many of which are multi-ethnic and multi-communal, must coexist and intertwine with intra- and supra-national political, economic, cultural and social technologies and ideological practices.<sup>29</sup> It is necessary that as we gauge the rise of the 'borderless

global economy', we 'move away from social change conceived as the internal development of societies to focusing on change as the outcome of struggles between the members of a figuration of interdependent and competing nation-states'.<sup>30</sup> These struggles impact to differing degrees on the interrelated terrains of culture, social life, politics, the media and economics. While economics and the media provide the primary focus of this study, it is not possible to isolate these from other social relations. For example, the media and economics are inescapably subject to social practice and cultural coding.<sup>31</sup> Nevertheless, the main concern is the role of multinational media and television broadcasters, sponsors, advertisers and the World Cup organising body, as they seek to utilise the Rugby World Cup as a cultural product to open up and maintain international rugby markets and audiences.

### **The Rugby World Cup: Global Re-configuration**

The initiation and ongoing staging of the Rugby Union World Cup represents a formal re-configuring of rugby's economic and cultural politics. This re-configuration is characterised as being part of a globalisation process that has taken world rugby from international amateur sporting competition to professionalised global sporting commodity. The form and content of rugby's administrative and cultural politics have shifted from sporting values and practices that once supported, sustained and reinforced amateurism to those that have established a new ascendant hegemonic order in the structuring and practice of rugby through which professionalism and commercialism have come to dominate. McKay, Miller, Lawrence and Rowe point out the ascension of professionalism in rugby is part of a larger global sporting process where ever encroaching corporate values have eroded the grass-roots organisational basis of amateur sports over recent decades.<sup>32</sup> The ascendant order is that of 'global corporate cultural capitalism'.<sup>33</sup>

Rugby is now part of a 'global flow' that 'concerns cultural commodities that move within a market framework'.<sup>34</sup> A major material and symbolic confirmation that rugby is part of this globalisation process is the Rugby World Cup – an increasingly commodified cultural event sold through capitalist media and corporate structures to advertisers, sponsors and viewers worldwide. It seems almost paradoxical that the long-held rival nationalisms between states inherent in international rugby competition have been packaged and sold within a single tournament to extend rugby's global audiences. In turn, rugby has integrated within a global mass consumption culture.<sup>35</sup> This has largely occurred through two interdependent central characteristics that see sport actively contributing to globalisation processes:<sup>36</sup>

1. The development and continuing growth of increasingly commodified global sporting competitions that serve as media events, such as the Olympics, Soccer World Cup, World Athletics Championships, and the Rugby World Cup. transmitted to audiences across ever expanding global communications technology and;

2. The sports industry's global marketing and media strategies. The Rugby World Cup transnational marketing aims to attract new players and viewers to the game globally, and to establish rugby's global media and sporting image. These strategies are implemented through international management, marketing and advertising agencies.

These two characteristics have been made possible by the interdependent transnational processes of economic internationalisation and the spread of market relations, and the development and diffusion of global communication technologies.<sup>37</sup> These technologies have resulted in intensified cross border dissemination of media outputs. It is these processes unfolding within a global media marketplace that have increasingly influenced sporting forms and national sporting cultures.

### **1987: A Commercialised and Commoditised Amateur World Cup**

Herman and McChesney state that a key feature of globalisation processes is the 'spread and intensification of commercialization'.<sup>38</sup> Rugby's development in 1987 is consistent with such a case as the staging of the inaugural World Cup in Australia and New Zealand was the most expensive commercialised *amateur* sporting event ever staged to that point.<sup>39</sup> Television, sponsors, advertisers and merchandisers underwrote a tournament that had estimated expenses of US\$2.3 million, and reported a profit of A\$3.4 million.<sup>40</sup> The considerable ideological tension within commercialised and commoditised amateurism is obvious. On the one hand, the International Rugby Board's (IRB) adherence to amateur practice ensured players could not be paid (at least openly) for competing in the 1987 World Cup, thereby supposedly providing 'a powerful medium to demonstrate the strength of this [amateur] conviction' in the face of professionalism and commercialism in wider sporting practice.<sup>41</sup> On the other hand, the IRB voluntarily accepted money from commercial entities such as television networks, corporate sponsors and advertisers who contributed to making the 1987 World Cup a moderate financial success.

Giving rise to such an ideologically fraught media sporting event is the spread of commercialisation within the political economy of global sport. According to Tasker and Wyatt, the decision to stage the 16-team 1987 World Cup

had been the rugby establishment's indirect response to the (only just) failed 1983 launch of a 'rebel' professional World Championship Rugby competition, a concept not dissimilar from Kerry Packer's successful setting up of World Series Cricket in 1978-79.<sup>42</sup> Compromise and negotiation of professional and business practices within rugby also occurred on a number of other fronts. Australian administrators were openly admitting the need to aggressively market their sport in order to compete in the domestic and international marketplace.<sup>43</sup> The IRB agreed to lift allowances for international players in the lead up to the Cup so as to see 'they are not financially disadvantaged for the inordinate amount of time they are these days required to devote to international competition'.<sup>44</sup> Rumours continued to abound over 'boot money' and 'shamateurism' in the sport<sup>45</sup> Furthermore, controversy arose during the Cup following reports that New Zealand players would be banned from the tournament for accepting money to appear in television advertisements for commercial products, thereby contravening rugby's amateur regulations. Rather than ban the players, however, the IRB declared the advertisements a 'grey area'.<sup>46</sup> Ultimately, by officially sanctioning and running the World Cup, the IRB had contributed to the rolling-back of the already contested 'amateur' status of rugby union worldwide. As Albert Grundlingh argues of the 1987 event, the gradual ascension of a 'profit-driven social order'<sup>47</sup> is evident:

rugby union, though officially an amateur game, committed itself to a world where agents and advertisers turn fame into fortunes. Once this occurred, the game, the players, and its administration could never be the same again.<sup>48</sup>

From a financial and organisational viewpoint, the nascent 1987 event proved to be a qualified success. Expected profits from the event were reduced by the company hired to organise the event, West Nally, going bankrupt following alleged mismanagement and the October 1987 world stockmarket crash.<sup>49</sup> Despite this, the Cup produced rugby's first ever million dollar gate, the code was exposed to approximately 300 million television viewers internationally and registered excellent television ratings particularly for the host nations.<sup>50</sup> The co-host of the tournament, the Australian Rugby Union (ARU), certainly saw the value and the further potential in the World Cup concept, declaring it an 'immense success' and appreciating the enormity of 'marketing possibilities' it presented.<sup>51</sup> ARU income for the 1987 Cup year outstripped the previous year by almost A\$1 million, and the year following by over A\$700,000. Indeed, a commercial 'gateway' appears to have opened for the ARU following 1987 with television fee and sponsorship income showing unabated growth into the 1990s.<sup>52</sup>

The inaugural World Cup gave rugby global exposure through marketing and TV coverage. That rugby was consciously integrating itself into a global

sports media, entertainment and commodity market cannot be doubted: 1987 was chosen as the year for the first Cup so as not to clash with other meta-sporting media events, the 1988 Seoul Olympics and the 1990 Italy Soccer World Cup.<sup>53</sup> Developments within global communications technology provided impetus and opportunity for rugby's entry into this market. Worldwide, the numbers of television receivers rose from 192 million in 1965 to 710 million in 1986.<sup>54</sup> The burgeoning global communications market trade had grown from US\$350 million in 1980 to US\$1,600 billion (and growing) by 1986.<sup>55</sup> Rugby integrated into this re-configuring of global media and communication structures and processes. The money and audiences attracted by the 1987 event ensured the future of the World Cup concept, and its graduation to a 'blue-chip' international sporting event. As an editorial in the *Auckland Star* newspaper declared of the 1987 World Cup:

it is clear already that organisers, despite widespread public apprehension, were justified totally in their confidence in an event that is bringing a new and important dimension to international sport.<sup>56</sup>

### **1991: Television and Global Acceleration**

The 1991 World Cup, held in the United Kingdom, Ireland and France, saw rugby affirm its place on the global sporting and media stage. It reached a television audience estimated at 1.75 billion in 103 countries, and produced a surplus of £11.7 million.<sup>57</sup> Such a marked audience increase compared with 1987 can be attributed to a number of interconnected factors including improved tournament organisation and promotion, and a greater knowledge of the event worldwide. However, an instrumental reason for the Cup's audience growth is technological development within the global television industry. The emergence and growth of satellite program distribution during the mid-to-late 1980s and 1990s signalled a shift from a media that addressed largely national and sub-national levels, to a media that had the capability of addressing trans- and cross-national ones.<sup>58</sup> This shift was assisted by the previous two decades which had seen major growth in communications infrastructure internationally, so much so that only the poorest and smallest African and Asian countries were without national television services by the 1990s.<sup>59</sup> A global media event such as the 1991 World Cup was well positioned to utilise the improved distribution capabilities of such technology and the wider access to viewers within a global media community.

Organisers of the 1991 Cup set out in pursuit of television's global reach. Television Sport Leisure Ltd (TSL), a London based independent television production and sales company, were appointed to sell television rights internationally.<sup>60</sup> They went on to help produce approximately 59 per cent (£11.7 million) of total commercial revenue for the 1991 event.<sup>61</sup> Regular broadcasts (of

perhaps questionable quantity) reached the world's largest untapped television market, China.<sup>62</sup> It should be noted, however, that in the face of such abundant television revenue, the ideological tension between amateur sporting practice and commercial business practice still existed as it had in 1987. Some players expressed dissatisfaction with the lack of financial rewards they received from what was a highly commercialised and profitable rugby tournament. Among those unhappy was Australian winger David Campese, named player of the tournament, who threatened legal action for unauthorised use of an unflattering image of him to sell a commercial product, and the French team who demanded more money for the promotional work expected of them.<sup>63</sup>

The burgeoning global commodity market surrounding the 1991 World Cup extended into the sponsorship and advertising markets. The increasing role of advertising in the globalisation of the world economy once again situated the Cup organisers in a felicitous situation.<sup>64</sup> A key benefit for organisers was that the United Kingdom ranks third in the world for per capita advertising spending.<sup>65</sup> This, combined with the three-fold increase in the number of hours of television watched globally between 1979 and 1991<sup>66</sup>, ensured sponsors and advertisers were only too willing to associate themselves with a global media event such as the World Cup in order to access a transnational client base. The 1991 Cup organisers appointed one of the world's largest advertising agencies, the British based Saatchi & Saatchi, to handle sponsorship arrangements.<sup>67</sup> They, in turn, extracted £3.7 million (or 18.5 per cent of total turnover) from sponsors for the 1991 event.<sup>68</sup> From transnational television, to transnational sponsorship and advertising, rugby union had entered into integrated global commercial media market. As the *Sydney Morning Herald* reported, rugby had never before 'been analysed so deeply or found itself so immersed in the chase for the elusive dollar as this World Cup'.<sup>69</sup> The medium of the World Cup represented a tide change in the way world rugby was being presented, sold and consumed.

The accelerating intersections between globalisation processes and international rugby union are also apparent at the national level in Australia. Further commercialisation is evident with the ARU signing a three year contract for domestic television rights with the commercial television network, Ten, the first time ever a commercial network had held these rights. In addition, the ARU's overseas television rights were 'successfully driven' by Communication Services International (CSI).<sup>70</sup> As their 1991 Annual Report indicates, the ARU was fully cognisant of the media/sport/capital nexus lying at the heart of commercialised sport.<sup>71</sup> By signing with a commercial television network the ARU hoped to bring about more promotional opportunities and augment sponsorship opportunities for the code nationally.<sup>72</sup>

The importance of the Australian victory at the 1991 World Cup in precipitating such a move, and its role in producing record ARU television fees

and sponsorship income of A\$1,203,016 cannot be underestimated.<sup>73</sup> The World Cup had raised rugby's popularity and profitability on a global stage and, in turn, across the Australian national and regional terrains. The ARU acknowledged the significance of the Cup:

The next three year preparation for the 1995 World Cup will require more costly funding if the Wallabies in that year are to adequately defend their World Cup title. All countries have now recognised the World Cup as the ultimate Rugby prize and most have the resources available and will be prepared to financially expend to the limit in a bid to win the coveted crown.<sup>74</sup>

Given the importance placed on the World Cup by national rugby unions around the world, it appeared inevitable that the next Cup would take on even greater significance in international sport.

### **1995: Global Expansion and Further Profit**

The 1995 World Cup in South Africa made further inroads for rugby into the global sporting entertainment market. The tournament reached an estimated 2.5 billion people in 124 countries to confirm its position as the fourth most watched sporting event in the world behind the Olympics, the Soccer World Cup and the World Athletic Championships.<sup>75</sup> The expanding television audience reach of the Rugby World Cup was, in part, due to further transformation within global communications technology. Television rights for the Cup were sold to fifteen licensees internationally. However, providing substantial additional media distribution above and beyond these licensees was the development of multinational media conglomerate controlled 'service delivery platforms'. These 'platforms' have been expanding regionally and hold the potential for global reach.<sup>76</sup> During the 1995 World Cup, they included Eurosport which reached thirty countries. Star TV which encompassed fifty national television markets in the Middle East, Asia and Far East, Horizon in French Africa, and M-Net in English speaking African countries.<sup>77</sup> Such development within communications technology is inextricably embedded within economic and media globalisation processes, and holds out the possibility of a genuinely global reach for future sporting media events.

The approach to administration of the World Cup in South Africa came to further resemble that of large scale business in the wider global corporate environment. The emphasis on 'marketing', 'packaging', 'buyers' and 'market place' in the comments of the Chairman of Rugby World Cup. Marcel Martin, is instructive in highlighting this similarity:

The success of the commercial programme of a Sporting event is determined by both the quality of the rights available and the ability of the event organiser and their marketing agents in packaging and selling those rights in the international market place . . . Rugby can sell itself, however it needs capable, professional marketers, who could package it smartly. make it available to the potential buyers and get the best price for it. It is important to know the marketing departments of the big companies interested in buying this type of event.<sup>78</sup>

These big companies for the 1995 Cup included Toyota, Coca-Cola, Visa, Heineken and Rank Xerox. Other agents contributing to this explicitly 'corporatist' approach included the appointment of the 'biggest noise in sports commerce', the International Management Group (IMG), as joint commercial advisers of the Cup with CPMA.<sup>79</sup> The appointment was triggered by accusations of poor commercial management from sections of the rugby community after the 1991 event. No such accusations can be made of the 1995 World Cup, with a 'corporatist' approach aiding in producing a reported profit of A\$60 million.<sup>80</sup> The only notable barriers to commercial success in South Africa appear to have been the host nation's lack of tourism infrastructure, high crime rates and difficulties in finding an insurance company for the event.<sup>81</sup> Judging by Cup profits, both hurdles appear to have been negotiated.

A key element within any account of globalisation processes is the rise, proliferation and role of transnational media corporations.<sup>82</sup> Herman and McChesney argue that it is the global media that have laid the foundations for global capitalism. To this point, a feature of the globalisation within the media has been a tendency towards centralisation of media control.<sup>83</sup> Centralisation of media control is evident within international rugby as it has entered the global market. Just prior to the 1995 World Cup, it was announced that South Africa New Zealand Australia Rugby Inc. (SANZAR) had been formed, and with this came the setting-up of what was officially termed 'the Perfect Rugby Product'<sup>84</sup> – the Tri-Nations Series and Super 12 competition between teams from South Africa, New Zealand and Australia. In a deal worth US\$555 million over ten years,<sup>85</sup> exclusive television rights to these high-profile games would go to the fifth largest media corporation in the world, Rupert Murdoch's News Corporation (News Corp).<sup>86</sup> Significantly, Murdoch views sport worldwide as 'the single most important' means to develop News Corp's global digital television system.<sup>87</sup> According to Peter Fitzsimons' excellent account, the formation of SANZAR was motivated by the threat of News Corp running a cross-continental Super League rugby league competition claiming many of rugby union's top internationals<sup>88</sup> and the possibility that a (ultimately failed) 'rebel' organisation, World Rugby Corporation (WRC), could steal almost all the establishment's top

players.<sup>89</sup> The end result was that Murdoch prevailed through securing the SANZAR deal to the considerable benefit of his pay television interests, particularly those in the southern hemisphere. News Corp. had achieved greater centralisation of media control over both rugby codes in Australia, New Zealand, and South Africa. Additionally, due to rugby's worldwide scope, Murdoch's pay empire is well situated to take advantage of an anticipated increase of 26 per cent to 38 per cent between 1995 and 2000 of global households with either cable or satellite television.<sup>90</sup>

The momentous historical footnote to all these events was the 27 August 1995 IRB announcement that open professionalism would be officially sanctioned in the sport.<sup>91</sup> The onslaught of corporate, commercial and professional practice within the sporting global political economy had finally claimed official sanction within rugby union internationally.

At the national level, the commercial ramifications and importance of the World Cup for home unions remained constant. For the ARU, the poor 1995 Australian showing of only making the quarter finals, when combined with the expenses of defending the establishment against Super League and the WRC resulted in a trading loss of A\$800,000.<sup>92</sup> As Chairman of the ARU, Leo Williams noted:

The early part of this was concerned with the abortive 'Mission Repeat' program in which nothing in the way of time, personnel or money was spared in giving the Wallabies total support in their quest to defend the World Cup title. The results were bitterly disappointing.<sup>93</sup>

Such disappointing on-field and balance sheet results, however, did not in any way weaken the ARU's determination to have a much larger mass entertainment presence in Australia.<sup>94</sup> Across the Tasman Sea, the relative achievement of New Zealand at the 1995 World Cup as runners-up to South Africa and their continuing excellent record of success at the international level helped generate unprecedented revenue. A five year sponsorship deal with Adidas worth in excess of NZ\$70 million was signed in 1997. As the richest international rugby sponsorship ever, a key intent of the agreement was to promote All Black gear as a globally recognised uniform in the same manner as the Italian and Brazilian soccer teams.<sup>95</sup> That All Black gear could viably serve as a commercially profitable global symbol of sporting prestige can be partly attributed to the transnational media exposure and marketing arising from the World Cup. Nike formed a similar arrangement with the South African Springboks. Through the global media, the World Cup event has driven the maturation process of a self-perpetuating 'profit driven social order' among international rugby, and

consequently seen the most successful national rugby unions looking and thinking transnationally for promotional and marketing avenues.

### **Conclusion: The Future**

Since the first World Cup in 1987, dramatic alterations within the administration, presentation and trans- and cross-national media consumption of rugby are readily observable. Furthermore, a deceleration of globalisation effects within rugby is not likely with media outputs growing faster than GDP almost everywhere in the world.<sup>96</sup> The first three World Cups have served to redefine the cultural and symbolic identity and practices of global rugby union in the context of media and corporatised commodity value. As the current managing director of the ARU, John O'Neill, explains, 'rugby as a community sport and a social movement is Linked inextricably with rugby as a business. Each depends on the other in this professional age'.<sup>97</sup> The link between commercial practice and rugby appears almost unbreakable.

The issue remains as to how the rugby community globally responds in the long-term to commodified and commercialised rugby union. It is not axiomatic that a mediated and marketised global rugby union equates with a unified rugby community and fan base. As we head into the 1999 World Cup in Wales, Scotland and Ireland, and the 2003 tournament in Australia and New Zealand, will 'globophobia' result in quixotic and nostalgic calls for the former idealised amateur era of rugby to be resurgent? As Nauright demonstrates, nostalgia plays a definite role in the 'old-boy' networks of rugby union administration.<sup>98</sup> Some of the old-boys probably agree with commentator claims that the World Cup been responsible for the demise of rugby virtues.<sup>99</sup> Many rugby followers undoubtedly feel trepidation in the face of discussions in the rugby print media over a possible merger of rugby union and rugby league, particularly with News Corp. holding considerable power in both codes.<sup>100</sup> What is clear is that, for better or worse, globalisation processes within rugby and the media community have had an indelible effect on the sport. Furthermore, unless there is significant institutional restructuring of the administration of rugby on an international scale, the dominance of commodified and commercialised administrative and management practice in rugby union is inevitable.

That globalisation processes within sport are evident should not be doubted. Evidence of what is actually 'going on' in and through globalisation is developing apace. The continuing emergence and acceleration of globalisation, particularly through the medium of the global media, should further contribute to a trend in which the ways sport is presented continues to develop and shift for transmission to, and consumption by, cross- and trans-national audiences. Lacking from this analysis of the Rugby World Cup is any in-depth analysis of the power dialectic at work across national communities within the globalisation process. For

example, within rugby union the reaction to, and effects of, globalisation within a 'rugby minnow' nation such as Romania as opposed to a 'super power' like New Zealand are likely to be markedly different and create different manifestations in either rugby culture. In addition, attention to gender issues within the globalisation process is imperative. For example, an examination of the sporting culture evident within the 1998 Women's Rugby World Cup could provide fascinating insights. After all, when discussing globalisation we are usually referring to the transnational dissemination and transmission of male bodies in and through masculine domains such as multinational business affairs. Overall, our understanding of the specific effects of globalisation processes in sport settings, outside of a growing group of studies, needs expansion.<sup>101</sup> In this respect, rugby offers fertile ground for further study as its continuing re-configuration away from its former staunchly amateur organisational basis to that of global corporate cultural capitalism provides insight into the dominant practices within the continually emerging and developing global sporting political economy.

## NOTES:

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