

Edward Griffiths, *One Team, One Country: The Greatest Year of Springbok Rugby*. Viking Penguin, London and Johannesburg, 1996. Illus., index. pp. xi + 228. Rand 99.95.

In this book, Edward Griffiths, former Chief Executive Officer of the South African Rugby Football Union (SARFU), provides a detailed insider account of the Springbok rugby team in the lead up to and during the Rugby World Cup (RWC) of 1995. The book demonstrates the best and worst of insider accounts in that it brings as close to the inner workings of SARFU as one can get while refraining from full-scale criticism. Having said that, Griffiths does not fail to lay blame for SARFU's failure to capitalise on the success of the 'One Team, One Country' idea. In short, white Afrikaner SARFU rugby officials failed to see the national unity powers in the game or were not interested in making rugby a truly national sport for the 'Rainbow Nation'.

It would be an understatement to suggest that South African rugby is in a state of crisis less than two years after the amazing success of the national team in their first rugby World Cup competition after the isolation

period caused by apartheid. Griffiths was sacked via fax, national hero and captain Francois Pienaar was summarily sacked and national coach André Markgraaff was forced to resign after the release of a tape with him calling black government and rugby officials 'kaffirs', the worst of racist insults in South Africa. All of this happened in the space of twelve months from early 1996. On top of all this turmoil, the government launched a formal inquiry into the affairs of SARFU after charges of corruption were laid at the white-dominated administration in general and SARFU supremo Louis Luyt in particular. As Griffiths demonstrates, such problems were briefly overcome during the 1995 RWC campaign as the Springboks were transformed into Amabokoboko and became a force for national identification across colour lines. Although the team was nearly all white (Chester Williams excepted), team members according to Griffiths made a genuine attempt to learn the new national anthem, to promote the game in townships and to become non-racial heroes of the new nation. The distance to be covered was immense — several Boks had not been in a township prior to their first coaching clinics for township youth. Through the shrewd planning of Griffiths, the popularity and humility of national coach Morné du Plessis and Pienaar and the commercial promotion of Chester Williams, the Springboks won over the support of President Mandela and, as a result, the mass of the South African population.

When Amabokoboko won the final against historic arch-rivals New Zealand, the whole of South Africa erupted in a brief orgy of national celebration. Unfortunately, as Griffiths relays, the rugby bosses were not interested in capitalising on the possibilities to make rugby a game that might rival soccer in the national imagination. Provincial unions and SARFU squabbled over who had to pay for development projects and schemes were ignored or implemented only out of necessity. As early as 1992, Ngconde Balfour, then a SARFU development officer devised a plan to integrate rugby more fully. Griffiths tried a strikingly similar plan in 1995, but this soon dissipated as well. 'Development' became the brief of 'Coloured' officers of SARFU while white officials attempted to run the elite competitions.

Finally, Griffiths charts the fight between players and administrators over payment and working conditions following the RWC. First, the Transvaal rugby players went on strike, then Pienaar led the Springboks briefly into the camp of the World Rugby Corporation before Luyt astutely struck a deal with the players and forestalled a split in the game.

One Team, One Country is essential reading for anyone hoping to understand the forces at play in rugby union in post-apartheid South Africa. While this is very much Griffiths's own personal account, it enables the reader to get a feel for the place of the Springbok team in South African society during 1995. While many criticisms can be made, used as a primary source, this study is most useful in aiding the construction of critical accounts of rugby in the new South Africa.

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