

Jean de Villiers announces retirement from Test rugby

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The 34-year-old De Villiers, who captained the Boks 37 times, has retired as the second most capped Springbok captain of all time, and is currently the fourth most-capped player in the history of South African Test rugby, with 109.



Image: www.facebook.com/springboks

"When I got injured yesterday and I left the field, I knew that I had played my last Test for South Africa," said De Villiers, who became the 54th Springbok captain when he was appointed by Heyneke Meyer in June 2012.

"Injuries are part of rugby and I've had my fair share, so by now I know how to cope with them. It's very sad, but life goes on - I need to take it all in and move forward.

"The last time I got injured in a World Cup match and had to go home, was in 2007, also against Samoa, and that finished well for the Boks, so hopefully it will happen again.

"I was quite sad on the one hand when I came off the field, as I knew I won't get the opportunity to play for my country

again. Having played for South Africa for 13 years, I've been fortunate to experience so many great things and I got to know so many good friends, but you never think it would end like this.

"It has happened now and I'll be eternally grateful for the time I've had in the Springbok jersey. I would like to wish the team all the very best and as a former Springbok, I'm now their number one supporter.

Focus on the future

"They still have a massive game this weekend, and I don't want anyone to feel sorry for me, but rather to focus on the task at hand against Scotland.

"In Heyneke they have a wonderful coach who knows what it takes to succeed, and who has given me the opportunity to lead my country for the last four years. I will be eternally grateful to him."

De Villiers thanked his family for their role in his career, especially his wife, Marlie, their three children, Layli, Lana and Luca, as well as his parents, André and Louise, and his brother, Andre-Louis, with whom he played for the SA Under-19 team in 1999.

"Without my family it would not have made it to where I am today," said De Villiers.

"Probably my favourite moment as a Springbok was my 101st Test, at DHL Newlands, with my two daughters in my arms as we took to the field. We recorded a brilliant victory against Australia, I was fortunate to score two tries and afterwards I could play with my children on the pitch.

"But there were many, many moments in my career that I will look back on with fondness. The same goes for all the wonderful friends I've made and people I've met.

"I've had a blessed career and I will be forever grateful for that."

De Villiers will return to South Africa on Monday to possibly have surgery on his fractured jaw.

Springbok coach Heyneke Meyer said: "Jean is a true ambassador for South Africa and a person everyone in our country can be immensely proud of.

"The way in which he never gave up fighting to overcome his last serious knee injury reminded me again how much of a warrior he is and how highly he regarded the Springbok jersey.

"He will go down as one of the greatest Springboks ever and in my eyes he is probably one of the best captains in the history of world rugby, who always put the team first and gave his time for any player, young or old without ever changing who he is.

"To see the emotions in the team room when he said his good byes to his team-mates made me realise how well-liked he is, by every person in this squad, but also most other people in the world-wide rugby fraternity.

"Jean enriched my life and I hold him in very high regard, as person and rugby player. Rugby will be poorer without Jean de Villiers."