

# SARU pays homage to life, contribution of Mandela

The South African Rugby Union (SARU) has paid tribute to the life and contribution of former president Nelson Mandela who passed away on Thursday, 5 December.



"All of our lives are poorer today at the extinguishing of the great beacon of light and hope that led the way for our country through the transition to democracy," said Oregan Hoskins, president of the South African Rugby Union.

"We have been steeling ourselves for this day for some time but, now it has arrived, the sadness is no less. Madiba had a place in all our hearts and his passing is a personal blow to us all.

"The South African Rugby Union shares in our nation's sadness: Madiba was a great man of vision, determination and integrity who performed a miracle that amazed the world as much as it amazed his fellow countrymen.

"His name will rank among that of the greatest liberators and humanitarians for as long as mankind walks the earth. It was our privilege to have lived in this country during his lifetime."

Mandela was a legendary freedom fighter, the first democratically elected South African state president and a Noble Peace Prize winner.

He used the 1995 Rugby World Cup, the first major sporting event to be hosted in SA after the 1994 democratic elections, as an instrument of change to help promote unity amongst all South Africans.

## True icon of inspiration

"Madiba was a true icon of inspiration and as much as South Africa owes so much to him, so does rugby," said Hoskins.

"Through his extraordinary vision, he was able to use the 1995 Rugby World Cup as an instrument to help promote nation building just one year after South Africa's historic first democratic election.

"Mr Mandela was also instrumental in retaining the Springbok as the emblem for our national team at a time when a chorus of voices advocated a change of the symbol, for various reasons. It was an act of reconciliation and generosity of spirit

which no one could have expected.

"The South African Rugby Union also sincerely appreciated the many times he inspired the Springboks to many great heights on the playing field. However, Mr Mandela inspired the entire South African nation with his kindness, generosity and ability not only to forgive, but also to understand his fellow citizens.

"The countless accolades bestowed upon him by various institutions and governments across the globe are testimony to his unique, caring and very humble character. I believe it is a legacy and personality trait to which all of us must aspire."

## **Energised the team**

Springbok captain Jean de Villiers said: "My lasting memory of Madiba is that of a person who had enormous ability to bring people together. His presence at a Test Match just lifted the crowd and energised the team - it is actually hard to describe.

"Of course, as a sportsman I am so grateful for him for what he did for our country. He inspired South Africans, who for so long were very divided, to peacefully build a united Rainbow Nation."

Hoskins said that SARU was considering ways in which the Madiba Legacy could be honoured in rugby.