

8 business lessons from the Springboks

 By [Tara Turkington](#)

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As the Springboks come off the back of a great win (and riveting match) against the hosts of the Rugby World Cup in France, they are an example of how good leadership can benefit business.



Springbok wing, Cheslin Kolbe, charged down a conversion kick that will be talked about for years to come. Image supplied. Photo credit: Stefano Delfrate

Here are eight lessons from our Green and Gold.

1. Believe

As Nelson Mandela said, “It always seems impossible until it’s done.” South Africa won an epic quarter-final clash against France 29-28 on Sunday night – already being spoken of as one of the best Test matches in rugby history – in front of nearly 80,000 predominantly French fans at the national stadium, Stade de France, north of Paris. South

Africa had significantly less crowd support, less possession and less territory than Les Bleus, but still walked away with the win. To win, you first have to believe you can win.

2. Play as a team

Each person in a rugby team is there to do a job, and you need to work together to do it. There may be superstars in your team, but it's also the background support that matters. There are players on the bench, doctors, physios, psychologists, coaches and marketing people who help the Springboks shine. It's the full performance of the entire team that matters.

3. Be humble and say thank you

The first thing Siya Kolisi did in his post-match interview following the match was to praise the opposition for their brilliant play. Then he thanked his team, their families and the millions of South Africans who supported the Springboks.

4. Dream big

South Africa are tantalisingly close to winning their fourth Rugby World Cup title, following victories in 1995, 2007 and 2019. No team has ever done this before (New Zealand are fighting for the same record). The Springboks have taught us again and again to dream big. After all, if you don't have dreams, they can never come true.



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5. Strength in diversity

Coaching brains trust Jacques Nienaber and Rassie Erasmus have built a Springbok team that is magnificently diverse in terms of skills, experience, age and specialisation, allowing impressive agility in team selection ahead of each match. This has made South Africa dangerously unpredictable to its opponents.

6. Discipline and creativity are equally important

When playing at the top levels of the game, small infringements can easily lead to penalties. South Africa's discipline in the 2023 Rugby World Cup so far has been excellent – for example, receiving only one yellow card in the tournament by the end of the quarterfinals (for Eben Etzebeth, in the France game).

At the same time, the Boks have been creative, surprising their opponents with team selections, for example, and announcing their teams early in the week for many matches in a row, then leaving the announcement to the last minute just before the quarterfinal, no doubt to keep the French guessing.

As Springbok assistant coach Deon Davids told *SA Rugby Magazine*, “At this level, teams analyse each other to the bone, so you have to find ways to outsmart the opposition while staying [true] to your core – the things that are important to you. That will stay part of our approach – to find that edge to doing something differently. It won’t be something new, in terms of our approach. That’s how we look at our strategy going into this game.”

7. The small things count

Cheslin Kolbe’s charge down of French fullback Thomas Ramos’s attempted conversion following France’s second try was an athletic feat hardly ever seen in rugby.

Kolbe needed to run about 20m in only a few seconds and to get his arms up at the right angle to stop the ball as Ramos kicked it goalwards.

Going into the match, Ramos was the leading points scorer in the tournament with 74, including 21 conversions. By thwarting the conversion with quick thinking and even quicker running, Kolbe saved two near-certain points, which could have made all the difference to the Boks, who won the match by only a point.

8. Be resilient

The Springboks have modelled tenacity and resilience throughout the tournament, by never giving up, even when the odds seemed insurmountable. By the end of the match, Springbok centre Jesse Kriel was covered in blood, symbolising the physicality and toughness of the contest.

Hooker Bongi Mbonambi, who was named the official player of the match, said in his post-match interview, “We knew it wasn’t going to be easy playing the host team in their backyard with a sold-out crowd singing their national anthem the whole time. We’ve still got two more games to go, this is still nothing. We were just focused on what we had to do and we stayed on task. It was a great game of rugby.”

ABOUT TARA TURKINGTON

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