



21 August 2004 at Headingley Stadium before the Leeds v Bradford match. From left to right: Henri-Pierre Lauga, Committee Chairman Gironde XIII, Sir Harry Jepson, Vice President of Leeds Rhinos, Lord Mayor of Leeds, Frank Perrin and Kevin Perrin

*Front cover :
"Australia v France, 3 November 2017 in Canberra, Australia. French prop Jason Baitieri in action. Photo by AFP.Source: FFR13"*

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**Dedicated
to All followers
of Rugby League**

Rugby League
From 1895 to present day

Preface

Our beautiful, fast and strategic game of rugby league has certainly suffered since it began in Huddersfield in 1895 when the clubs in the north of England split from the Rugby Football Union, emerging later, in 1906, as the legal entity, Rugby Football League.

The Vichy régime banned rugby league during the period of occupation and it was not until after the Liberation, on 17 September 1944, that the Ligue Française de Rugby à XIII (French Rugby League) rose again from the ashes.

Paul Barrière was in charge at the Conference of Arcachon in July 1948 when rugby league was allowed to call itself the 'Federation Française de Jeu à XIII' (French Federation, Game with XIII players) before finally being able to use the name FFRXIII (French Federation of Rugby League) in 1993.

Relentless clashes, grudges and bitterness had led to the defeat and disappearance of a rugby born of resistance, passion and exciting play.

I witnessed this passion in my career, both as an Elite League and international player, and as captain of the French national team.

My job took me away from this extraordinary game for almost twenty years. Now, after everything rugby league has given me, in expression of my gratitude, and in honour of the greatness of the game, I accepted the presidency of the FFRXIII on 2 July 2016.

We have many plans in the pipeline, including more ways of communicating using new IT technology. And with so much pride in our status as a respected sporting federation, and a passionate and committed management team by my

side, we can offer so many benefits to this most beautiful game of rugby.

I wish you all as much enjoyment reading this book as I had with every chapter and historical documents.

Yours in rugby league,
Marc Palanques, President FFR13.

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Foreword

The imperial city of Biarritz was where I had the good fortune to discover the wonderful world of rugby. From a very young age I would go with my grandfather to Aguilera stadium every Sunday to watch 'the curtain rise' on a first division match. My primary teacher at the time was the great Henri Ithurritz, who played second-row forward. At the end of the warm-up, away from prying eyes, the players from Biarritz headed through a passageway bordered with plane trees before reaching the official locker rooms. It was the only chance I got to look my primary school teacher in the eye before kick-off. Dressed in red and white, already sweating and 'in the zone', my favourite second-row player would wink at me while his intense look of concentration scared me a little. It was a powerful moment just before making our way to the old wooden stand. We felt the players' determination. The tension was palpable. The visiting team would emerge in little groups from the Haget stand (now the Serge Kampf) jogging as they warmed up. We looked on in amazement at the black and white shirts from Saint Sever with their opener, Brethes, and at the players from Tulle in blue, with their bearded, second-row giant, Orluc. We would see the Colombier brothers from Saint Junien in their red and black shirts, the Saint Claude team with its sky blue shirts and white circled patterns, and the great Roland Crancée, known as "Big Bertha". On another Sunday, we might see the tango colours from Chalon-sur-Saône, and their international fullback, known as "Brindosier", Michel Vannier. Then there were the famous yellow and black striped shirts from Mont de Marsan and the stars of their day: the Boniface brothers and Christian

Darrouy, known as “the hare”. These top players had everyone on their feet in Aguilèra stadium!

The men, the shirts, the ball and the game: it was all one big spectacle. The atmosphere was electric and you could feel the public’s impatience before kick-off. But in those days there was no music or flags. It was more like an audience at the theatre, all murmurs and hushed voices. When Biarritz Olympique’s first team played away from home, we would go to Saint Léon stadium (now Jean Dauterive) in Bayonne, to the ‘enemy camp’ just six short kilometers away. The stadium was a world apart, not just because the colours and atmosphere were radically different from Biarritz, but because an atmosphere of popular spectacle reigned over it. So it was not just by chance that rugby league was successful from 1934 in the Basque capital, a city once host to Emperor Napoleon I, from 14 April to 19 July, 1808. In Biarritz, what stood out was its ‘uptight’ atmosphere and a crowd that held itself back, although physical disputes did occasionally break out among Biarritz spectators. Madame Vigne, mother of Christian, scrum-half from 1962-1964, was a star performer of the wooden stand (previously Coubertin and now Serge Blanco), striking her legendary blows with an umbrella. She would rise from her seat and vent her anger on anyone who dared to criticise her son.

Much later, in 2005, I made the acquaintance of another famous supporter in Saint Estève near Perpignan. Grandmother of Catalan UTC XIII scrum-half David, later of the Catalan Dragons, she was known as “Granny Berthèzene”.

From the start of the match she would walk up and down the length of the stand making scandalous remarks in Catalan like, “Deck him, deck him”. It set the tone and guaranteed an atmosphere! In Saint Léon in Bayonne, the fervour of the crowd rose as we entered the stadium. Whistling at the referee was certainly just as frequent as it

was in Biarritz, but what got my attention were the cries of encouragement, the 'holas and olés' from the public throughout the match.

It was this 'white heat' of an arena that produced a deep sense of internal joy mixed with fascination. Despite the appeal of Biarritz Olympique for me, subconsciously I preferred going to Bayonne simply because I was more at home in this 'popular' atmosphere. At Saint Léon stadium in Bayonne there was a real atmosphere of 'communion' between the players and the public. The atmosphere was beautiful, powerful and absorbing, and already felt like rugby league. And so it was that Bayonne became a major rugby league city from the start of the Ligue in 1934, with its two great leaders, Dr Dejeant from Biarritz, and Mr Miremont at the helm of Côte Basque XIII. The birth of the BAC (Biarritz Athlétique Club) was a significant event years later in the summer of 1951. This rugby league team set up by Charles Gienger and Paul Barrière would end up leaving Biarritz in 1956. Unfortunately I never knew this period. But I discovered rugby league later on by watching broadcasts of World Cup, Cup Final and French championship matches between 1964 and 1972 on ORTF (French TV and Radio service). The dynamic and physical nature of rugby league appealed to me with its many tries and longer match time. The Spectacle of Rugby shown in black and white on French television was an endless display of balletic skill and dazzling fireworks. I still have strong images etched on my memory: the blows struck by the "Cube" from Toulouse, Georges Aillères, and by his brother-in-arms, Francis De Nadaï from Limoux, otherwise known as "Nanache", or by the late Henri Marracq from Saint Gaudens. The terrifying tackles of Jean-Pierre Clar from Villeneuve, nicknamed "Bombshell" or "Jam" by rugby league fans, are unforgettable, as are the two phenomenal tries scored by

winger Jean-Marie Bonal, a former rugby union player who was part of the team against New Zealand in the 1972 World Cup. But it wasn't until Tuesday 3 November 2002, in Bordeaux, that I entered the mysterious and fascinating universe of rugby league. Following a meeting at the local Maison Départementale des Sports (local sports governing body) I had dinner with the President of the FFR 13 (French Federation of Rugby League), Jean-Paul Ferré, and his National Technical Director, Jean-Eric Ducuing. The adventure was just beginning. I was already very motivated and prepared to do anything to pursue this rugby league adventure. In March 2003, I began organising sponsorship and post-match ceremonies for the university championships held in Talence in Gironde. Two years later, on 21 August 2004, I discovered the unique atmosphere of rugby league in the north of England. I visited the Temple of Headingley, in Leeds, where the crowd worships its rugby league "God".

As a guest that day of President Garry Hetherington, and Vice-President Sir Harry Jepson (aged 85 at the time), I found myself comfortably settled on a wooden numbered seat in the North Stand. The well-oiled English machinery of rugby league started up with Sir Harry Jepson as its guide and conductor. Accompanied by my son Kevin, and by my friend, President of the Ligue Aquitaine, Henri Pierre Laugu, we followed our esteemed guide for the evening to our numbered seats. Having arranged to meet us at halftime for refreshments below the stand, he showed us the room where he once saw French pioneer Jean Galia warm up before a match in 1934. It really was very moving. From the very start of the derby match between the Rhinos of Leeds and the Bulls of Bradford, I shed a few tears as I discovered for the first time, like a new-born, a wonderfully rich and glittering world that I had neither suspected, nor even imagined, existed.

It was a totally amazing show from start to finish. Biarritz and Bayonne were far away that day and it was really time for the story of rugby league to begin for me. On 20 August 2004, I witnessed twelve tries over two halves (final score 42-16) in a true display of rugby fireworks, with a grand finale of endless tries, each more glorious than the last... I take this opportunity now to pay tribute to Sir Harry Jepson, Honorary President of Leeds Rhinos, who passed away at the age of ninety-six, on 29 August 2016. As an inevitable part of life and loss, rugby league said goodbye to a great servant of the game that day.

CHAPTER I

Birth and Development of Rugby League (1895-1939)

Following several years of negotiations, struggles and battles, it was at the George Hotel in Huddersfield in the north of England on 29 August 1895 that rugby league first began. Yet another meeting had been organised that day by H.H. Waller (Brighouse) to break away from the Rugby Football Union. Of the 21 clubs taking part in the meeting, 20 decided to create the Northern Rugby Football Union, known today as the Rugby Football League. The 20 clubs that founded the league were:

Lancashire:

Broughton, Leigh, Rochdale, Hornets, Saint Helens, Tyldesley, Warrington, Widnes, Wigan

Yorkshire: Batley, Bradford, Brighouse, Halifax, Huddersfield, Hull, Hunslet, Leeds, Liversedge, Manningham, Wakefield.

The Dewsbury club representative was the only one not to join. Aware of its error, the club did sign up later in 1898, but was not considered a founding member. The club from Hull was actually Hull FC, as Hull KR only joined the Northern League in 1897. However, two clubs joined after the meeting: Runcorn and Stockport, which were considered de facto founding members. Two years later, Batley won the first English Cup at the expense of St Helen's (10-3). The final took place at Headingley Stadium in Leeds. Meanwhile, the federation authorities legalised professional rugby on Tuesday 19 July 1898. Rugby league was still played with 15 players on each side. Following the delayed proposal to

reduce the number of players to 12 in 1903 (24 in favour, 52 against) the number was finally set at thirteen in 1906.

As well as removing the line-out and reducing the number of players, rugby league legislators created the tackle to replace the loose scrum that was considered dangerous for players and a waste of time for spectators. Because it was confusing and difficult to see what was going on in the scrum, it was also considered a source of occasional unfair decisions by the referee. The fundamental difference between rugby league and rugby union lies in tackling. In rugby league, the tackled player must hold on to the ball or risk giving away a penalty. He must then immediately tap the ball backwards to allow the teammate positioned behind him to put the ball back into play. Long considered a hindrance in the game, the tackle is done at great speed to allow the attacking team to initiate further offensive play. The team in the defensive position must be 10 metres away from the player making the tackle.

The attacking team may make five successive tackles. The average time a tackle takes at international level is around three seconds.

If there is no score after the fifth tackle, the referee will blow the whistle to stop play and give the ball to the other team, which is now in an attacking position as a result of a change-over tackle. For strategic reasons, the attackers mostly prefer to kick the ball at the fifth tackle, but sometimes before, depending on the configuration of the game.

Like a low cross in football, it is not unusual to see little skimming kicks in the final 20 metres of the opposition half. These can take the defending team by surprise. A judiciously placed 'bomb' kick with the foot extended is often a lethal weapon. In 1922, the Northern Rugby Union disappeared and was replaced by the Rugby Football League.

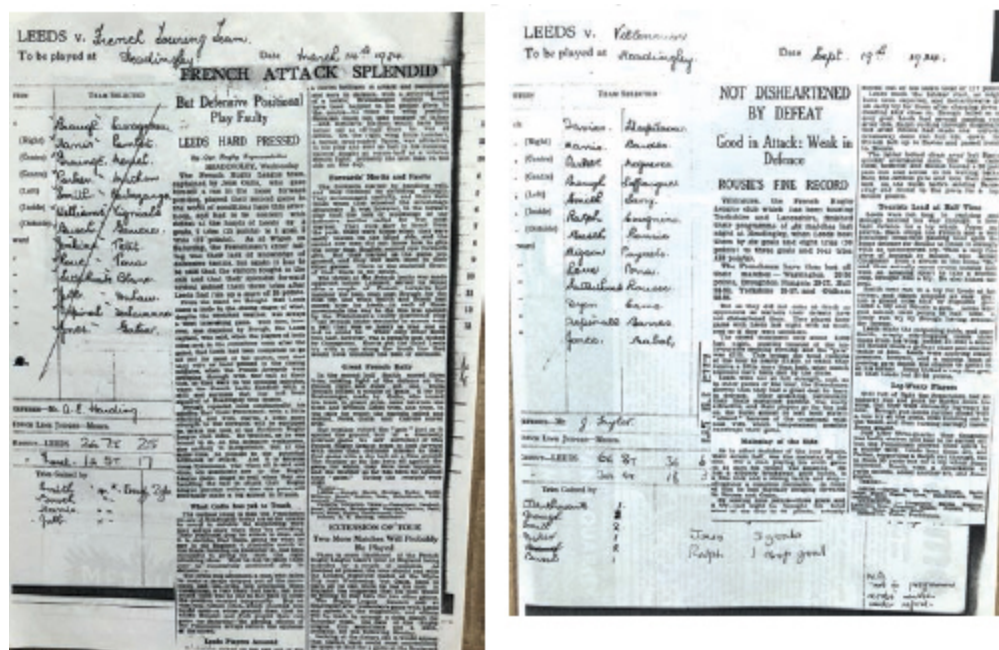
To understand the development of English rugby, it is important to explain that the workers who played rugby union, in the north of England in particular, were asking to be paid for time spent training and travelling to matches, and for absences from work as a result of injuries suffered during matches. There was to be no more 'sham amateurism'. The emphasis was on clarity, with players having a job as well as a secondary part-time activity on the pitch. In reality, the early English players were semi-pros. The legend began with the signing of the historic agreement by the major figures in the game at the St George Hotel in Huddersfield. Rugby-playing workers made the V for victory sign — the same 'V' for victory made famous by Churchill during World War II. The 'V' would later be worn on rugby league players' shirts as the logo of the new rugby, the 'descendant' of rugby union. It was not until 1934 that Rugby League first made its appearance in France. It was introduced by a certain Jean Galia, known as 'Monsieur Jean', who was from the island of Têt near Perpignan (Eastern Pyrenees). He had the support of well-known business leaders and sponsors like Jean Bourrel, the famous hatmaker from Quillan Espérazza, and owner of a company that employed one thousand people. Galia had just been struck off by the FFR (French Federation of Rugby Union) in 1932. France had been excluded from the Five Nations since 1931 on the grounds of confirmed evidence of professional play, drug-taking and repeated incidents of violence, particularly during an international match against Scotland in Paris.

The book 'French Rugby', written and published in 1962 by Gilles Gauthey and Edouard Seidler, includes a chapter with the title, 'Internal and External Split', describing in great detail the situation in rugby union in France at the time. There were 734 clubs in the FFR in 1930. By 1939, the number had fallen to 439. The eviction of French rugby union from the Five Nations tournament by the British was a

severe blow. Furthermore, its finances were also in the worst possible state because of a fall in ticket sales. Fans were going en masse to see rugby league matches that had widened their appeal because many rugby union stars had “crossed the Rubicon”. At the same time, the French Rugby Union Championship was about to implode, with the top twelve clubs like Toulouse, Perpignan, Biarritz and associates planning their own championship — to the great displeasure of the FFR. A first attempt to install rugby league in France by the British had been abandoned in 1921. It was not until 12 years later, in the autumn of 1933 in Paris, that French rugby leaders reached an agreement with Walter Popplewell, Chairman of Bramley and Rugby League, Wilfred Gabbat, Chairman of Barrow, and Joe Lewthwaite, Chairman of Hunslet, who were accompanied by the General Secretary of Rugby League, John Wilson, and Harry Sunderland, Manager of the Australian Kangaroos. After this meeting, a group of French rugby players was invited to an introductory tournament in the north of England. An ambitious man had to be found to lead this tournament, and up stepped Galia, with journalist Maurice Blain acting as interpreter between him and the English. Galia was a star of French rugby union and a second-row or loose forward. He accepted an invitation to a demonstration match between Australia and England on 31 December 1933 at Pershing Stadium in Paris. Despite glacial conditions of ice and snow on that New Year’s Eve, some 20,000 spectators arrived at the stadium to witness the first international Rugby League match held in France. It was a triumph, and the match ended in a victory for Australia against England 63-13.

The speed of the Kangaroos stunned the French crowd. When John Wilson and Harry Sunderland, the Australian manager, met Galia at the end of the match, his response

was, "When do you want to see a French team play in England?"



A date for the tour was fixed for the spring of 1934. Such was Galia's charisma that he had no trouble gathering together seventeen of the finest rugby union players of the day to travel with him to the north of England and discover the new rugby. Writing in L'Auto, forerunner to L'Equipe, journalist Jacques Goddet said, "In front of a Parisian crowd, rugby league presented a fast game that was light in colour but monotone...a beautiful sport...anyone who had gone to find out more got a taste for the game." The following seventeen pioneers joined the adventure in March 1934: Galia (C.A Villeneuve), Recarborde (Section Paloise), Duhau (S.A Bordelais), Samatan (S.U Agen), Carrère (R.C Narbonne), Porra (Lyon O.U), Blanc (Capbreton), Petit (S.L Nancy), Mathon (Oyonnax), Lambert (Avignon), Barbazanges (Roanne), Nouel (S.A Bordelais), Cassagneau (Espéraza), Amila (Lézignan), Vignals (Toulouse), Dechavanne (Roanne) and Fabre (Lézignan). The team, nicknamed 'Galia's boys', was beaten on 6 March in Wigan, (27-30) then two days later at White City in London, by the London Highfields, and finally on 14 March in Leeds.



The first international match between the English Rugby League team and the French side took place on 17 March in Warrington. It ended in another defeat for Jean Galia and his men (16-32). Although this first tour was short, it exhausted the French who had discovered an extremely fast form of rugby. Their fifth match on 24 March in Hull saw Galia's boys pull off their first win (26-23). The tour ended in Salford on 26 March 1934 with a defeat (13-35), but despite the disappointing results there were significant knockon effects in France. With relations broken off with British rugby union, the introduction of rugby league in France allowed the French public to attend new international rugby games. La Ligue (The League) was created on 16 April 1934, with François Cadoret, Member of the National Assembly for Finistère, becoming its first chairman. The head office was located at rue Drouot in Paris. Gaston Amila, the first player to back Jean Galia, was quoted some 60 years later: *"Everything was shaken up one day in March 1934. Lézignan had just been penalised again by the FFR and we were all disqualified because of a heated match between Brive and Montferrand. 'Jeannot' (Galia) called me. I told him he could count on me, and the very next day I found myself in Leeds, having travelled via the Pershing Stadium in Paris with sixteen mates who played at the highest level in France. They had also been excommunicated by the federal*

body. At first we appeared ridiculous. But several months later, it all became clear to us. When we returned to France, we launched the movement". On 6 April 1934, La Ligue lodged its articles of association with the Prefecture de Police in Paris. On 15 April 1934, France lost its first international match against England by 32 points to 21, in Paris. Well before the introduction of rugby league in France and the first international match involving a French side playing at home, a journalist from l'Echo des Sports had interviewed an important figure "with a strong voice on the board of the FFRXV". Here is an extract of that interview published on 24 April 1934: *"I never want to see a Rugby League team play in France. No-one would ever want to watch any other game after that."* Between 1934 and 1935 the first "amateur" Paris league championships were born.

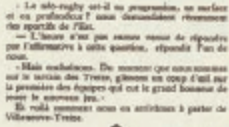
Sport Olympique de Paris and Galias's Boys were created, the former meeting Quartier Etudiant Club in the end-of-season final. In 1935/1936 an important man set himself up in Paris: Maurice Tardy. Clubs Celtic de Saint Denis, Celtic de Paris and Paris XIII later emerged in the capital and famous names would arrive later to play in these Parisian teams. They included Puig Aubert, André and Lucien Hatchondo, Albert Kempf and Robert Joanblancq, three-time French long jump champion between 1937 and 1943, and five-time French triple jump champion, with a record triple jump of 14.31 m set on 1 June in 1941 in Antibes.

Other big names included Roger Arcalis, René Bernard, Elie Brousse, Marcel Volot, Roland Moreau, Carvalho, Francis Lévy, Menichelli, and even some Americans (including Martineau). On 28 March 1935, the French national rugby league team achieved the first memorable feat of its short history when it held England to a draw at Buffalo Stadium in Paris. In front of more than 20,000 spectators, this accomplishment by the "professionals" left its mark.

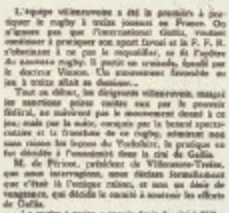


Max Rousié was named man of the match after a stroke of genius on his part. Setting off from his own try line, he dodged, sprinted and weaved, before scoring a try one hundred metres into the promised land, between the posts. The final score was 15-15. It had taken only five years for the Ligue Française de Rugby à XIII to become very powerful. Having already established thirteen professional clubs, it created a hundred or so amateur ones.

La Ligue was unique in that it had both amateur and professional players. The championship described as “professional” was in fact semi-professional, because all players were required by their contracts to have another activity. An article by sports journalist André Gignoux, taken from *Le Journal*, was published on 31 July 1938 in the second edition of *Rugby Treize*. The details of Marcel Laborde’s comments with regard to players who were non-professional in name only were specified in this article: they had to have a job, and only received payment to cover the cost of the time spent in training and travelling to matches. La Ligue also confirmed Marcel Laborde’s comments in the same edition of *Rugby Treize*. An extract from edition no 499 of sports magazine *Match Sports* in 1936 also appeared to show that all Villeneuve XIII players had an activity outside rugby league.



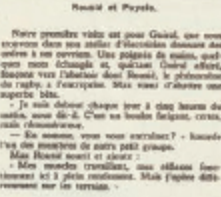
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Groupe, International
Re-quarta central, representant



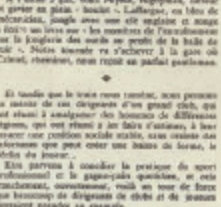
Perra (tailleur), Abbaye



Renaud et Payette



Culral (amifra), electrician.



Căbești, amplasat la gâră.



Rabot, contremaître à la Fabrique des Gai.



University, employed as P.M.U.

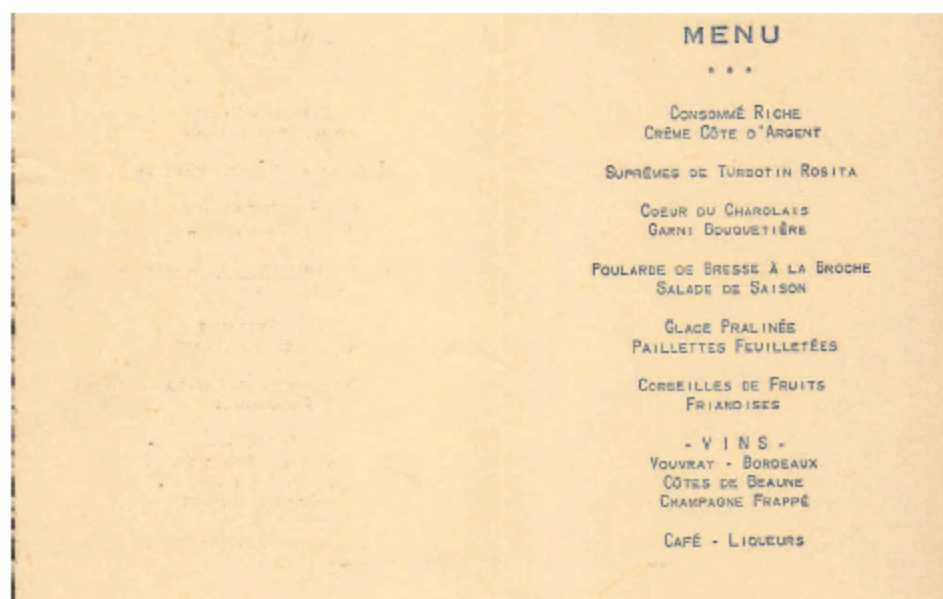
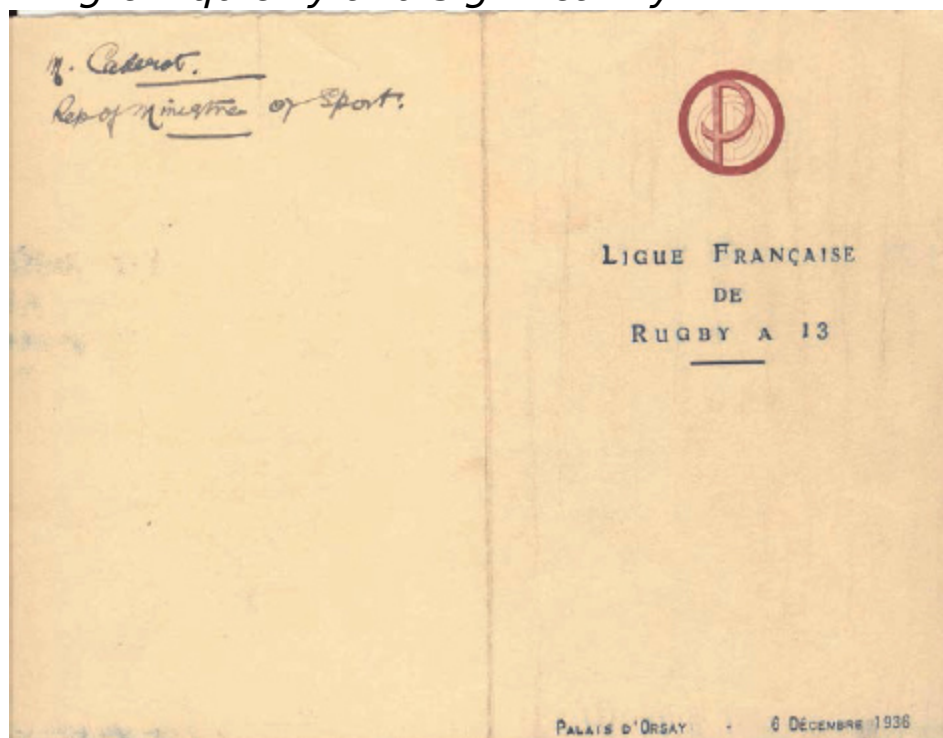
Dattis, maître de chai



Requisitos (objetivos de aprendizaje) de la asignatura

A single group containing ten professional clubs was launched at the start of the 1934 1935 season, with Villeneuve-sur-Lot the first winners. In edition no 397 of Match Sport, published on 17 April 1934, journalist Robert de Thomason, although at heart a rugby union player,

showed no hesitation when he wrote: *"I am sure that this game will grow quickly and significantly"*.



The leaders of Ligue Française de Rugby à XIII certainly showed vision by coming up with the idea of a single group of teams from the start. It took rugby union another 70 years to launch something similar. La Ligue then organised the championship into two groups of seven clubs during the 1935-1936 season, although later reverted to a "Top 12".

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A selection of players from southwest France met a team drawn from among the best British players on 12/11/1936 in Bordeaux. The referee for the match was an Englishman, Mr Hill. On 12 January 1938, thanks to Prime Minister Camille Chautemps, and the concerted and coordinated action of Popular Front Ministers, Léo Lagrange and Jean Zay, La Ligue Française de Rugby à XIII became a registered sport and was awarded authorisation number 16739. The Chautemps government resigned on 14 January 1938. Had the application been considered just two days later, La Ligue may not have obtained the title of "Government authorised Club" or S.A.G. (Société Agrée par le Gouvernement). During their first tour of France, Australia beat France 16-10 on 16 January 1938 in Marseille. The young prodigy, Jean Dauterive, from Bayonne, who was only 18 years old, put in a remarkable performance. Set up in 1921, France Olympique was the forerunner to today's rugby newspaper, Midi Olympique.

It reported sales from a match on 23 January 1938 between Le Midi (a selection from the south of France) and Australia of exactly 147,590 francs (in the currency of the day) from about 15,000 paying fans at Minimes Stadium. Le Midi won 15-0 against the Australians after a fantastic match, according to the front page of France Olympique. Here's what neuro-psychiatrist, Pétain supporter, and former major rugby union figure from Toulouse, Paul Voivenel, wrote in 1942 on page 325 of his book, "My Beautiful Rugby", about the following match:

"On Saturday 23 April 1938, I watched a truly unleashed Toulouse Olympique XIII defeat the British 23-10 on their home ground. I admit I was delighted by the exploits of Sahuc, Teychené, Duprat, Brané and the devilish Sylvain Bès, who cut through the opposition like an arrow. My loyal

affection is irrelevant when I see my compatriots triumph over a foreign team. Rugby league or union, I couldn't care less. We were beating the English." The author went on: "1938! The year that dissident rugby league enjoyed great success. The sport did not hesitate to hold its own Cup Final on the same day, in the same town.

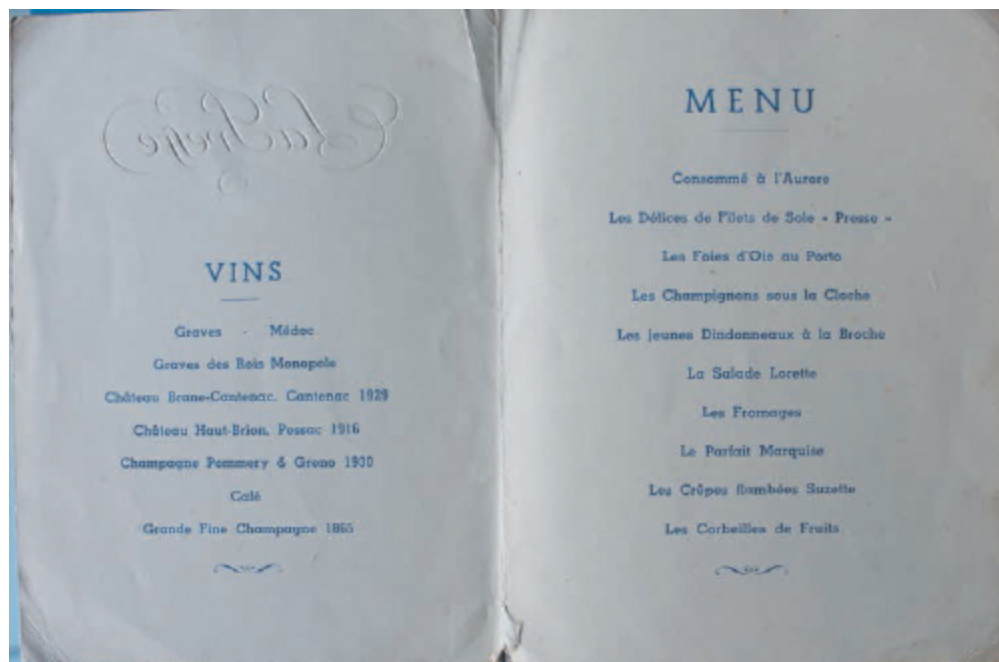
The dual played out to the bitter end. Roanne beat Villeneuve 36-12. The players who stood out on the winning side were: Rousié, Servole, (full-back), Samatan; and on the defeated side: full-back Guiral. Ticket sales for rugby league came to 88,000 francs. Rugby union match ticket sales totalled 225,000 francs. Traditional rugby won the day.

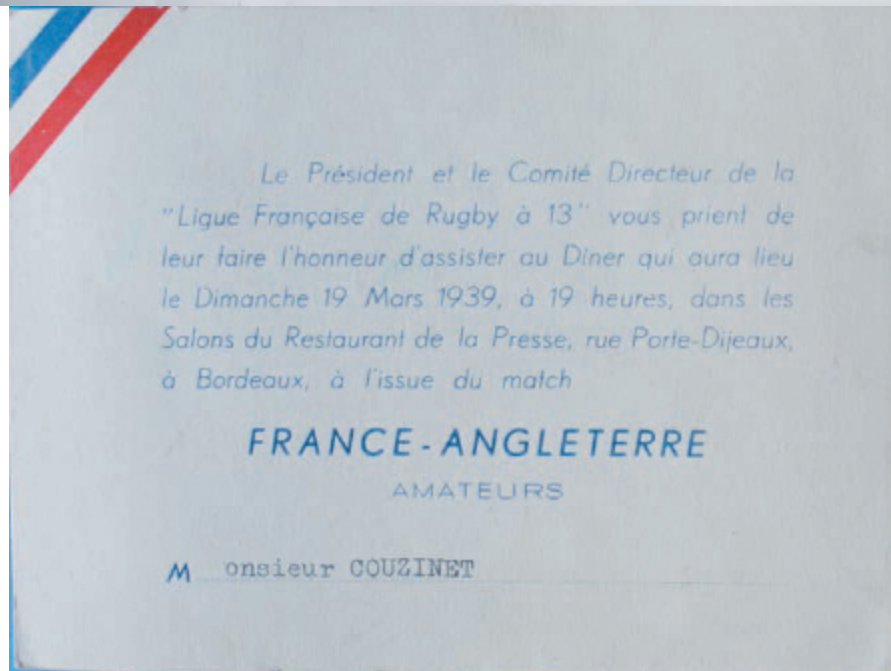
He continued on page 326,

"...The success they achieved over formidable athletes like the huge Narvo, a destructive sprinter weighing 96 kg, filled me with enthusiasm. The heroic defensive efforts of our players, their nervy attacks, the charges of powerful Villeneuve winger Cougnenc, the extent to which halfbacks Bès and Noguères were able to move into the other half, the resistance of the forwards, especially Bruneteau and Brané, and the skill of full-back Guiral were worthy of France's most famous sporting exploits. My feelings were real. It made me all the more sad that players like Dager, Max Rousié (from Roanne), Samatan and Desclaux had quit Rugby Union, to which my heart remained true."



A memorable amateur France-England match, won by *Les Bleus* by a score of 13 to 3, was played on 19 March 1939 at Lescure Stadium in Bordeaux.





The French captain at the time was Robert Couzinet who lived through some exceptional events during World War II. In 1945, the Romanian newspaper Sporturilor dedicated a front-page article to him. With the help of a fellow soldier, Couzinet escaped from a German prison camp between 1943 and 1944 and crossed the Carpathians to play tennis,