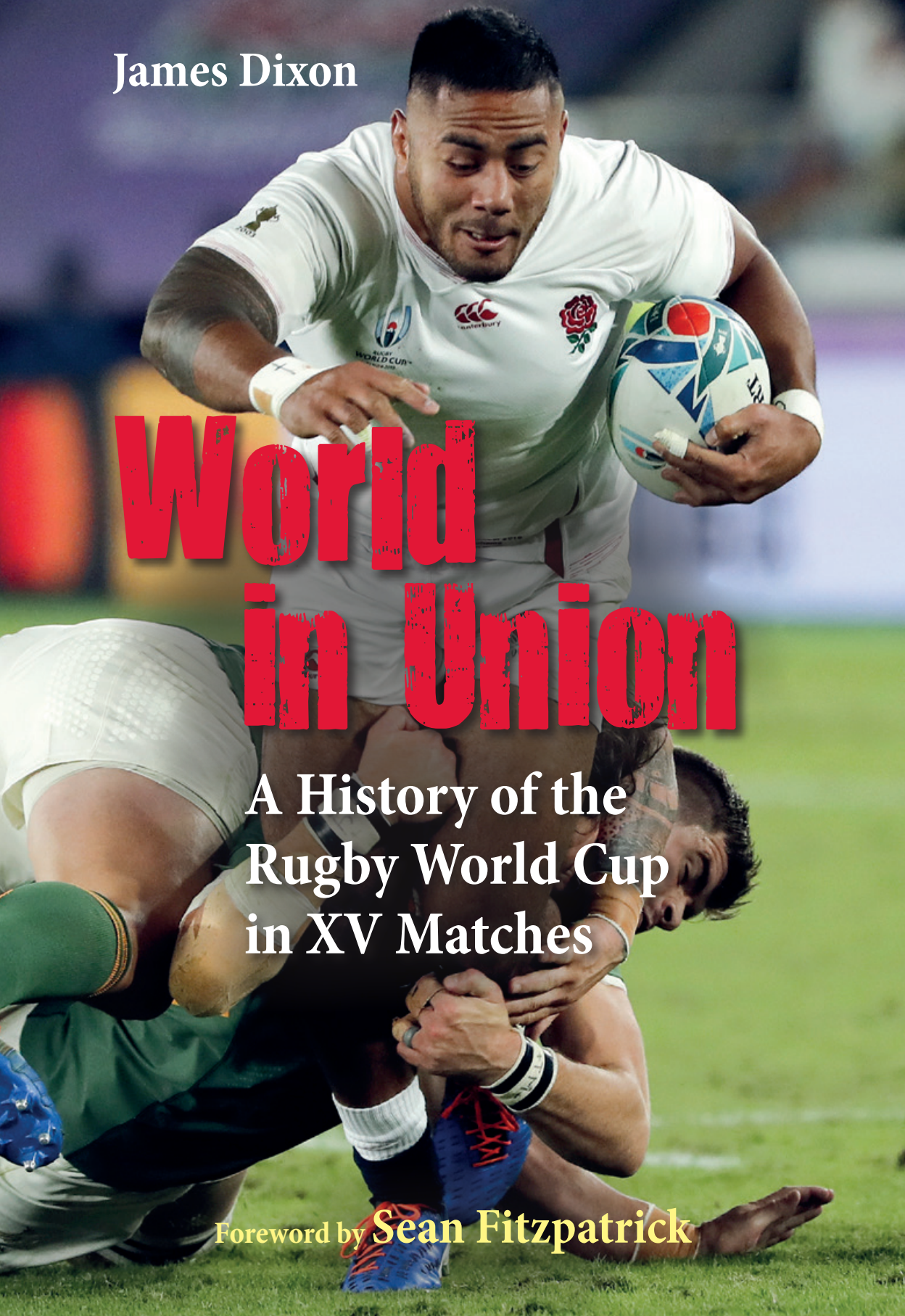
James Dixon
World in Union
A History of the Rugby World Cup in XV Matches
Foreword by Sean Fitzpatrick

World in Union

I dedicate this book to my darling daughter Aubrey.
Your love and kindness sustain me each day.
–Dad x

James Dixon

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Foreword

I've been fortunate enough to be at every Rugby World Cup final, either playing in it or as a spectator watching. Four years ago in Yokohama, I watched the final between England and South Africa with my great mate, Francois Pienaar.

Taking the 2019 Rugby World Cup to Asia was a brilliant decision. The hospitality, respect, and organisation of the Japanese were better than any other World Cup I have ever seen. What I loved about the 2019 Rugby World Cup was any one of the quarter-finalists could have gone the whole way. Even Japan, who I do not think anyone truly expected to be that competitive, set the tournament on fire.

Over the years I have become friends with many of my former adversaries, not just Francois. I have enjoyed working with Noddy Lynagh on television. Now that I am retired, I love visiting Biarritz and staying with Pascal Ondarts and Jean-Pierre Garuet. Phenomenal players but more importantly good people off the field.

My relationship with Francois is different. Bonded not only years of competition and mutual admiration but the unique moment we shared in June 1995 on the Ellis Park pitch in the presence of Nelson Mandela. When the great man walked out onto that field, energy filled that stadium. It is something that I will never feel again.

At the time I was desperately disappointed not to win the World Cup. I was the captain of my country and felt we had a very good side, certainly capable of winning the World Cup. Tactically, we probably got it wrong, but at the end of the day the game was level after normal time, and we did not take our opportunities. For a long time afterwards, there were not many days that passed when I did not think about what I could have done differently.

As I get older – and it has been a few years since that day in 1995 – I feel very privileged to have been part of that particular game. Mandela showed us the power that sport has and its capacity for good.

Years later I would get to meet him again at the first Laureus World Sport Awards where patron President Mandela gave a scintillating speech: *'Sport has the power to change the world. It has the power to inspire. It has the power to unite people in a way that little else does. It speaks to youth in a language they understand. Sport can create hope where once there was only despair. It is more powerful than governments in breaking down racial barriers. It laughs in the face of all types of discrimination.'*

There is no better example of this than South Africa. When the Rugby World Cup began, the Springboks were not invited because of apartheid. Thirty-two years later, a black captain led South Africa to their third World Cup win.

When the 1987 All Blacks won the first World Cup, we were led by the brilliant David Kirk. We were streets ahead of what other teams were doing on fitness and analysis even though we were still amateurs.

It is amazing to think of the growth of this tournament from what it was in 1987, when rugby was not even a professional game, to what it is now. In 1987, we trained at schools and in local parks and for part of the tournament were billeted with local families, where we sang some songs and shared a few beers with our hosts.

I was a builder. After winning the 1987 World Cup Final against France on a Saturday afternoon, I was back on a building site by Tuesday. I doubt Siya Kolisi, Owen Farrell, or Kieran Reid had to bunk down in a Japanese family's spare room. Although perhaps their experience was a little poorer for not having had the opportunity. They definitely were not expected to be at work the following week.

Rugby is all the richer for allowing its talented players the ability to make a good living from the game, and the Rugby World Cup has been a force for good, modernising our sport and growing the game far beyond the traditional northern and southern hemisphere unions. You can really see the influence of World Rugby investing in the global game in countries like Uruguay and Namibia. Money that would not be available without the commercial success of the World Cup.

My father was my hero. In 1953, Brian Fitzpatrick was selected for New Zealand on the 1953-54 tour of Britain, France, and North America. It took the touring party five days to reach England, which then was considered fast. They were the first All Black tourists to travel to Europe by plane rather than boat. Although I never got to see him play live, snippets of cine film documented some of their games on that tour, but I doubt he would have imagined there would be a rugby tournament seventy years later, featuring teams from all five continents that almost one billion people are expected to watch on television.

I am looking forward to being in France for the tenth edition of the Rugby World Cup and whether you are going to be in the stadiums or watching at home or in your rugby club, this book is a wonderful companion to a special tournament. Full of stories of epic comebacks, cruel heartbreak and triumph over adversity. Truly, some superb memories from the world's greatest rugby tournament.

–Sean Fitzpatrick, All Black No. 871

Preface

A mere 116 years after the first rugby union international, the International Rugby Football Board finally got around to organising a tournament to determine the best team in the world.

The tournament that nearly didn't happen due to backroom politics, lack of government support and the amateur era's aversion to commercialism has now grown into the third largest sporting event in the world, behind only the FIFA World Cup and the Olympics.

My first memories of the Rugby World Cup come from television in 1991, brilliantly soundtracked by Dame Kiri Te Kanawa's operatic *World in Union*. I remember Samoan power, Australian insouciance and English heartbreak – a mandatory ingredient among early nineties World Cups according to football, rugby and cricket.

World in Union: A History of the Rugby World Cup in XV Matches is the story of the Rugby World Cup told via 15 of its most notable matches.

By choosing just 15 games to focus on, I hoped to more deeply explore the matches, the issues relevant to them and the significance they played within the panoply of our great game of rugby.

I also made a conscious effort to ensure that this book stayed as true to the 'world' part of the Rugby World Cup as possible. Argentinian, Fijian, Japanese, Samoan and Uruguayan matches are covered, whereas some Six Nations unions don't feature at all. I could just as easily have picked classic games featuring Canada, Georgia and Tonga.

It's important to emphasise that this book seeks to be *a* history of the Rugby World Cup, not *the* definitive history.

I know every hardcore rugby fan reading *World in Union* will have at least one game they're flabbergasted didn't make the cut. People will rightly ask, 'How can you not include Scotland vs England from 1991?' Or some other compelling match. Nine times out of ten, the answer will be, 'I wish I could have'.

Who knows? If this book does well, maybe there'll be an opportunity to add an addendum of another eight great matches so I can add a full replacement bench to my starting XV.

Finally, I hope you can forgive whatever slight I have given your favourite team, and you enjoy reading this book half as much as I have enjoyed researching and writing it.

The Pre-Match

Nick & Dick versus The International Rugby Board

March 21, 1985, Paris

'If someone did not do something towards promoting the game, it would eventually curl up and die'

Dick Littlejohn, New Zealand

Chaos theory hypotheses that small, seemingly inconsequential events can lead to major divergences in outcomes. A county cricketer suffering an injury while bowling against Nottinghamshire may have been the flapping butterfly wing that led to the inauguration of the Rugby World Cup.

Basil D'Oliveira was born in Cape Town, South Africa. He emigrated to England in 1960 because the Indian part of his mixed Indian and Portuguese ancestry was barring him from being selected as a Test cricketer for apartheid-era South Africa.

After satisfying a three-year residency requirement, D'Oliveira began playing for Worcestershire and received an England call-up in 1966. D'Oliveira was in and out of the side during the 1968 Ashes. However, a superb 158 in the final Test of the summer at the Oval seemed to have secured his place on that winter's tour to South Africa.

Under intense political pressure from the South African government, the Marylebone Cricket Club (MCC) (under whose auspices the England cricket team formally toured until 1977) declined to select D'Oliveira. The Warwickshire all-rounder Tom Cartwright, who hadn't played Test cricket since 1965, was chosen instead. The omission prompted an outcry in England. Most believed D'Oliveira had earned his place on merit and was being denied it on the grounds of race.

When Cartwright, a working-class lad from Coventry with socialist sensibilities, withdrew from the touring party (officially due to an injury, but many suspected partly mixed with morality), the MCC belatedly selected D'Oliveira. B. J. Vorster, Prime Minister of South Africa, gave a sharply critical speech about D'Oliveira's inclusion and the MCC opted to tour Pakistan instead.

The D'Oliveira affair was not the first sporting boycott of the apartheid state. Still, it was the first in one of the two main sports of the ruling Afrikaners and directly led to South Africa's total exclusion from international cricket from 1970 onwards.

In 1956, the International Table Tennis Federation severed its ties with the all-white South African Table Tennis Union. FIFA suspended South Africa from international football in 1963, and the International Olympic Committee excluded South Africa from the 1964 Olympics in Tokyo.

As early as 1934, the British Empire Games, the precursor to today's Commonwealth Games, had to be relocated from Johannesburg to London for fears over whether non-white athletes would be allowed to compete. However, rugby's relationship with apartheid South Africa was more complicated.

Unlike cricket, rugby did not benefit from having teams like India, Pakistan and the West Indies at its top table. Until 1978, only seven countries (Australia, England, Ireland, New Zealand, Scotland, South Africa and Wales) were represented on the International Rugby Board (IRB). The IRB was an anglophone, almost exclusively white organisation, more concerned with preserving amateurism than dismantling apartheid.

In 1960, South Africa refused to grant New Zealand's Māori players admission to enter the country. Shamefully, the All Black tour proceeded with an all-white team. The political fallout of that decision meant that New Zealand didn't tour South Africa again until 1970 when Māori and players of Samoan heritage were allowed but designated by their hosts as 'honorary whites'.

Stop the Tour – a protest group led by future Labour Cabinet Minister Peter Hain and including future UK Prime Minister Gordon Brown – disrupted the Springbok tour of the British Isles in the winter of 1969–70 with a civil disobedience campaign.

Halt All Racist Tours (HART), a similarly minded Kiwi organisation succeeded in having the Springboks' 1973 invitation to tour New Zealand revoked by the country's social democratic prime minister. Norman Kirk said a South African Rugby team touring New Zealand under the present circumstances would lead to the 'greatest eruption of violence this country has ever known'.

However, Kirk's untimely death in August 1974 at just 51 led to a change of government. The National Party's Robert Muldoon won the 1975 New Zealand general election and refused to prohibit the proposed 1976 tour of South Africa by the All Blacks.

The Australian government refused permission for the plane carrying the All Blacks to South Africa to refuel on its territory. Consequently, New Zealand travelled to South Africa via the United States, Portugal and Nigeria.

New Zealand wasn't alone. Much of the rugby world seemed determined to maintain sporting contact with South Africa. England toured South Africa in 1972 and France in both 1971 and 1975. The British & Irish Lions had toured South Africa in 1974, but some players like Wales's John Taylor and Gerald Davies had refused on moral grounds.

Commonwealth heads of government, including Muldoon, signed up to the 1977 Gleneagles Agreement, which was supposed to curtail sporting contact between Commonwealth countries and South Africa. However, since cricket already had its own ban, the Gleneagles Agreement aimed chiefly at hurting Afrikaner pride where it mattered most to them – the rugby field.

Rugby, with the notable exception of Australia, ignored the Gleneagles Agreement. The Lions toured South Africa again in 1980, while the Springboks toured New Zealand in 1981.

Although the Foreign Office briefly discussed confiscating passports from prospective tourists, Margaret Thatcher's government took the view that all they could do was dissuade, not prohibit. Replying to a letter from the President of Liberia, Thatcher wrote, 'We have sought by all the means open to us to discourage the tour … the fact, however, remains that our governing bodies of sport are rightly autonomous and Ministers do not have the power to direct them.'

Muldoon came up with an even more mealy-mouthed formulation of words. He said his government did not want the tour to go ahead but would do nothing to stop it. The National Party had one eye on the 1981 New Zealand general election and courted the votes of rural New Zealanders more likely to support the Springbok tour.

Hundreds of HART protestors succeeded in getting the second tour match played in Hamilton abandoned. Days later, a protest in Wellington at the South African High Commission turned violent with police baton-charging protestors.

The New Zealand Commissioner of Police advised the government that the police could not guarantee security and recommended cancelling the tour.

However, Muldoon ignored the Commissioner and deployed the New Zealand military to ensure the tour he was publicly against went ahead. Subsequently, Muldoon's National Party won a third term with a one-seat parliamentary majority even though they gained fewer votes than the opposition Labour Party.

HART heavily protested all three Test matches, and All Blacks captain Graham Mourie made himself unavailable for selection, later saying, 'You've got to be able to look at yourself in the mirror'.

Security was ramped up for the deciding Test match, turning Eden Park into a fortress. A fortress HART protestors were very willing to lay siege to. Most memorably, two protestors, Marx Jones and Grant Cole, hired a prop plane to rain flour bombs down on the players below. When All Black front-row forward Gary Knight was felled by a flour bomb, South African captain Wynand Claassen asked if New Zealand had an air force.

Playing South Africa at home was now practically impossible. Even if governments allowed tours to go ahead, their citizenry in tune with the horrors of apartheid would not.

Not being able to play the Springboks was a mild inconvenience to the Five Nations, who could bank on two sell-out crowds each season to swell the coffers of their respective unions, but a significant problem for Australia and New Zealand. Playing South Africa was partly how the southern hemisphere unions made their money. Lions tours were infrequent, and despite the Australasian teams touring Britain since the Edwardian era, England had only reciprocated with three visits Down Under.

The answer was clear: Rugby Union needed a World Cup.

After all, FIFA held their first World Cup in 1930, Rugby League managed to host one in 1954 and even cricket had modernised enough by 1975 to stage an eight-team tournament.

In 1982, the Australian Rugby Union sought the IRB's permission to host a World Cup in 1988 to coincide with the bicentenary of Australia. Not to be outdone in 1983, the New Zealand Rugby Union (NZRU) proposed they host a World Cup in 1987. However, given the opposition among the home unions to the concept, the two Barbarians at the gate realised they couldn't waste their energy fighting each other. A World Cup hosted jointly by Australia and New Zealand in 1987 was proposed.

The 'Nick and Dick Show' was born. Nicholas Shehadie of the Australian Rugby Union and Dick Littlejohn of the NZRU toured the world and made the case for a Rugby World Cup.

'The game of rugby needed to be advanced worldwide … we were convinced of that,' said Littlejohn. 'If someone did not do something towards promoting the game, it would eventually curl up and die.'

The IRB split on the proposal. Some were sceptical, while others were outwardly hostile. South Africa (which maintained membership of the body throughout apartheid) saw the long-term benefit to the sport, even if they knew they'd not be able to participate at first.

France was persuadable as long as other members of the Fédération Internationale de Rugby Amateur (FIRA), a grouping of European rugby nations that they chaired, were also invited to participate. This was one of the sticking points when Neil Durden-Smith, a sports commentator and businessman, proposed an eight-team World Cup hosted in Britain.

Among the home unions, Scotland and Ireland were intractable. They felt a World Cup would be a trojan horse for professionalism. The Scottish Rugby Union's (SRU) Gordon Masson told Nick and Dick that they'd 'start a World Cup over [his] dead body'.

England and Wales were, however, persuadable and agreed to a feasibility study. The danger for rugby was that a business mogul would come and do to rugby what Kerry Packer had done to Australian cricket in the 1970s. Namely, sign up the best players and put on their own tournament outside the auspices of the governing bodies.

The feasibility study commissioned by Nick and Dick claimed a World Cup would be profitable. So in March 1985, the eight members of the IRB met in Paris to vote on Nick and Dick's World Cup proposal.

'We hoped we had the votes, but we really didn't know,' Littlejohn said.

England and Wales sided against the status quo and gave the necessary two-thirds backing to the decision. As a result, Australia and New Zealand would stage a World Cup tournament in 1987.


FREE
MANDELA

Match 1

New Zealand versus France

June 20, 1987, Auckland

'A lot of people despised us for what we done'

Buck Shelford, New Zealand

On June 20, 1987, Auckland's Eden Park witnessed sporting history: rugby union's first World Cup final. Co-hosts, New Zealand, were facing off against France. These sides last met on a rugby paddock in the last All Black Test match before the Rugby World Cup. *Les Bleus* beat the All Blacks in a spectacularly violent game known as the *Battle of Nantes.*

Four weeks earlier, the inaugural Rugby World Cup tournament began amidst widespread animosity in a half-full stadium and a country that had fallen out of love with its rugby team.

Four months earlier, the rugby establishment viewed the nascent tournament with antipathy. The official Rugby World Cup mascot, an orange anthropomorphic rugby ball called 'Mr Drop', was banned from making a promotional appearance on the pitch at Twickenham during the Calcutta Cup match. In addition, there were suggestions that some of the home unions might send weakened teams or not award caps for this 'circus'.

Believe it or not, this was progress. Four years earlier, the very idea of a World Cup was an anathema. International rugby union had lasted well over a hundred years without the vulgar need to determine a conclusively best team. Some had still not resiled themselves from their opposition to doing so now.

A lot had happened in New Zealand since they, alongside Australia, had campaigned for the right to stage the 1987 Rugby World Cup. Robert Muldoon, the prime minister of New Zealand since 1975, lost a general election he called while visibly drunk in what became known as the schnapps election. David Lange, the centre-left leader of the Labour Party in his early forties,

became prime minister and radically changed the country's foreign policy.

Lange declared New Zealand a nuclear-free zone and barred nuclear-powered ships from its territorial waters; in response, the United States said New Zealand would remain a friend but no longer an ally.

The bombing and sinking of the Greenpeace vessel *Rainbow Warrior* in Auckland harbour shook the nation, especially when it emerged it was an act of state-sponsored terrorism from their supposed allies, France.

Lange's government also brought concerted political and moral opposition to apartheid. He was the first Kiwi PM to visit Africa and relocated the New Zealand Consulate in South Africa to Zimbabwe. None of this mattered to the New Zealand Rugby Football Union. They had accepted an invitation for the All Blacks to tour South Africa in 1985.

Around 50,000 New Zealanders joined protests opposing the new tour. The tour was a clear breach of the Gleneagles Agreement, which sought to prohibit sporting contact with the apartheid state. Protestors held a mock funeral for rugby in New Zealand while McDonald's, Adidas and DB Breweries withdrew their sponsorship of the All Blacks.

A group of anti-apartheid lawyers met at the Auckland District Law Society and formulated a plan to bring a case against the NZRU to have the tour cancelled. They argued the tour breached the rugby union's constitution that required them to act in the best interests of rugby in New Zealand. Justice Maurice Casey sided with the plaintiffs granting an injunction that prevented the tour from proceeding.

The cancellation wasn't universally popular, not least among the 30 All Blacks already selected to tour South Africa. Andy Haden, a veteran flanker with 40 Test match caps (in a time where 40 caps made someone an ironman of international rugby), flew to Johannesburg to arrange a private tour. 28 of the 30 players selected for the 1985 All Black tour calling themselves the New Zealand Cavaliers, agreed to visit apartheid South Africa the following winter.

'Part of my dream of being an All Black was to play in South Africa,' explained Wayne 'Buck' Shelford. 'That dream was taken away from me. I'd have loved to have gone and represented New Zealand as an All Black.'

The lure of 'competition' was heavily blurred with financial inducement. According to David Kirk, one of two All Blacks, alongside John Kirwan, who refused to join the Cavaliers tour for moral reasons, the players were offered NZ$100,000 (the equivalent of £145,000 in 2022) to go.

It certainly made little sense for Buck Shelford, who had to resign his commission in the Royal New Zealand Navy, to join the tour if all he received was the IRB's mandated maximum per diem of £14 per day.

'The [Cavaliers] players represent nothing but their own self-interest,' Prime Minister Lange said, condemning them. 'To travel to South Africa at a time of heightened racial violence, after hundreds of deaths, is insensitive in the extreme.'

'When I pulled out, I was offered double, which really annoyed me because I felt like someone was trying to buy my morals,' remembers Kirwan.

South Africa beat the Cavaliers, winning what was billed in South Africa as a Test series 3-1. However, no one in New Zealand saw the action as TVNZ refused to broadcast the matches. On their return from their sanction-busting trip, the players were handed paltry two-match bans.

For context, English cricketers, including Graham Gooch, who participated in a rebel tour to South Africa in 1982, were banned from international cricket for 3 years and missed 74 matches.

Four years earlier, the NZRU had banned All Black captain Graham Mourie from rugby for 10 years for receiving royalties from an autobiography.

Kirk called the Cavalier bans 'a slap in the face with a wet bus ticket' and said it was widely believed that NZRU members were aware of the planned tour and had tacitly supported it.

With most established All Blacks banned for the first two games of the 1986 season, the NZRU turned to Captain Kirk. The softly spoken doctor from Palmerston North led a team of "Baby Blacks" featuring 11 debutants, including a young Sean Fitzpatrick, to a famous win over the Five Nations co-champion French.

After a 1-point defeat to Australia in the first Bledisloe Test of 1986, many of the Cavaliers were immediately welcomed back into the fold for the second Test, but Kirk remained captain. Partly because of how reviled the Cavaliers were and partly because Andy Dalton was injured.

In the second warm-up game of the Cavaliers tour, Northern Transvaal flanker Burger Geldenhuys hit the Cavaliers (and previous All Black) skipper Dalton from behind with a punch he never saw coming, breaking his jaw.

'I'm not sorry that I hit him. At least I hit him in the open. I didn't try and hide it at the bottom of a scrum or something,' protested Geldenhuys. Thanks for coming to South Africa, trashing your reputation and risking your career; enjoy your soup.

Kirk scored New Zealand's only try in a 1-point victory over the Wallabies in Dunedin, but the returning Cavaliers players ostracised him. Visibly, perhaps even performatively, pushed out of some team huddles by a forward pack containing seven players who toured South Africa. The captain was even cold-shouldered by his teammates when he scored. Alan Whetton instinctively half raised his arms but aborted the gesture when he realised the try was Kirk's.

'David bore the brunt of their displeasure, not just because he hadn't toured but also because he always spoke his mind. Some people didn't like him for that, but for me, it was one of the main reasons why I have such respect for him,' outlined Fitzpatrick.

'I had to captain a team where some of the players were angry and bitter towards me because I had not gone to South Africa,' admits Kirk. But, in truth, they were also angry about his comments after the France match in Christchurch, where Kirk said he hoped the Baby Blacks had a long future with the All Blacks.

The team was fighting itself, and no one was surprised when Australia hammered the All Blacks in the deciding Test at Eden Park to win the Bledisloe Cup. The Cavaliers were losers. The All Blacks were losers, and the New Zealand public was fed up with the lot of them.

Kirk discovered he'd been replaced as captain for the 1986 tour to France at the same time everyone else heard it announced on the radio. Jock Hobbs, Dalton's Cavalier understudy, would lead the team instead.

'A lot of people despised us for what we done,' concedes Shelford.

'Rugby was in trouble, on a real downer,' said Kirwan, an unusually bulky 15-stone winger. 'The game was crying out for some unifying action, a moment, something to rally round.'

The World Cup was still not sure to go ahead. The tournament lacked a title sponsor until Japanese telecoms business KDD committed US$3.25 million in sponsorship. 'If it had not been for [KDD], we would have had to cancel. It was really close,' admitted Dick Littlejohn, the New Zealand organising committee chairman.

Television rights went to the host state broadcasters ABC and TVNZ. In the UK, the BBC made a last-minute decision to pay the £1 million asking price for the rights to the tournament. Although the BBC's commitment didn't extend so far in showing the games live, preferring to stick with their regular overnight schedule of Open University programming. Only one quarter-final, one semi-final and the final were shown live to British viewers.

The odds of the Rugby World Cup providing that unifying moment Kirwan desired seemed slim when Andy Dalton was reappointed captain for the tournament. Prime Minister Lange announced no government member would attend a single World Cup match. He could not, he said, support an All Black squad that included 'apologists for the apartheid'. Nor would the government invite overseas dignitaries to attend or host functions for visiting players and administrators.

'There was so much anti-rugby feeling around that when the players went downtown, they didn't want to put on anything that would identify them as an All Black,' remembers Brian Lochore, the team's coach for the 1987 Rugby