



## INFORMATION PAGE

Week of April 29<sup>th</sup>, 2005

### Total Rugby - IRB Newsletter 9

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Also in this week's edition:

#### 1 **The Rugby Channel**

In the *Information Page* of March 11<sup>th</sup>, I wrote of the possibility of a North American TV Channel devoted solely to Rugby.

Details on this can now be accessed through the Rugby Canada web site, or directly at <http://www.therugbychannel.com/> where you can link to a survey.

It seems that 23,000 positive survey responses have been received from across North America, and that 35,000 positive responses is the threshold to launch the channel.

We are told that is now a time sensitive matter. If you would like to register a response, you should do so without delay.

*Note: The IRB is not responsible for the content of external Internet sites or television channels*

## 2 Canadian Referee at the IRB's Under 19 Championship

Canada's Phil Smith was appointed to the recent Championship.

Phil is 25, and a product of Oak Bay High School in Victoria, British Columbia. He has chosen a refereeing career path, rather than playing, and his excellent decision is already paying dividends. The Championship Head Official, Colin Hawke (of NZ), described Phil as an exciting prospect.

He kept a diary while away, and I have downloaded this extract for you from the Rugby Canada website. All aspiring young referees take note!

*"What an honour to represent Canada as a referee at the 2005 Under 19 Rugby World Championships in Durban, South Africa. Refereeing the top age-grade players in the world, in a country as devout and passionate about Rugby as South Africa, was an experience I won't soon forget. It was also nice to travel with fellow Victorian Mel Jones, who was invited to South Africa as an assessor.*

*Durban is located on the east coast of Africa, and our five-star hotel was right on the beach. Early morning breakfasts on the balcony quickly became a favourite part of my day, for there was always something amazing to see, whether it be the titanic surf of the Indian Ocean, the myriad freighters heading to and from Durban Harbour (one of Africa's busiest), or the monkeys sneaking down and stealing our toast.*

*I was one of 12 referees assigned to the tournament. Of the contingent, all Northern Hemisphere six nations were represented, as were the Southern Hemisphere tri-nations. In addition, a referee from Japan and one from Argentina were also selected. All of the referees were in the top 10 in their home unions, and several were either already full-time professionals or on the cusp of receiving a contract. Although I became known to some degree as the young rookie of the group (I was the youngest by several years) I did not feel out of place, and everyone treated me as part of the team. Without sounding conceited, I must admit my ability at the ping-pong table was without equal, and I quickly dispatched some other referees who clearly had not practiced their game before arriving.*

*The tournament had two divisions of 12 teams each. I refereed five games during the three-week tournament, and all five were in the B-division. Although it would have been nice to ref an A-game, the B-division games presented many challenges not available at the upper level. One major challenge was the language barrier. The B-division included teams such as Russia, Korea, Paraguay, Chile,*

*and Spain, and very few of the players spoke any English at all. This presented some major challenges for me, as the players did not understand such instructions such as "Leave it!" or "If you do that again you're off!" I learned as much Spanish as I could, but when I refereed the Russia-Korea match, I was all alone out there. At one point, a Russian player threw a blind-sided punch, at which point both teams erupted with a frenzy of what I presume to be off-colour remarks, though I couldn't be sure. Fortunately both teams understood what a red card signified, and I was able to restore some order. I learned that when language is limited, that body language and whistle tone become doubly important to get a message across. A smile, for instance, transcends language, and if used correctly can calm a spicy situation. Generally, I was well liked by the players and I refereed well.*

*The technology available to the referees was quite advanced. The refereeing team employed two technical analysts, who videotaped and digitally coded all of our matches. From there, a printout of all statistics was produced, detailing every detail of the game, right down to how many advantages were played and how many were brought back. Furthermore, each scrum, line-out, or penalty could be played in succession, eliminating the need to watch hours and hours of game tape. Though the technology was quite handy, it was interesting that all of the older assessors preferred to view the VHS cassettes to the computer program.*

*In addition to the technological support, the referees were given the best preparation with physio massages, pool recovery workouts, and referee-specific training sessions. We were led by our manager, Colin Hawke, a legend of a man who offered words of encouragement and gems of advice. His honesty and fairness are remarkable, and by speaking with him only briefly you get an idea why he was such a prolific test referee.*

*For finals day, I was given the honour of running touch for the final between New Zealand and South Africa. Because the home side was playing, 15 000 boisterous fans turned up to cheer on the Baby Boks. It was also exciting to be involved in a game broadcast to a national TV audience, as well as one with a television match official (TMO). South Africa stormed out early with two quick tries, and New Zealand answered with some deep forays into Bok territory. On one occasion, New Zealand converted a four-on-one into a walk in for the New Zealand winger, who dotted down one-handed. However, in his casualness, he fumbled the ball slightly, and the decision was referred to the TMO (Super 12 referee Craig Joubert), who ruled it a knock-on. Big play, considering that for the rest of*

*the match New Zealand controlled play but failed to pull ahead, and ended up losing the match by 5. In the end, strong defensive work by the Baby Boks earned them a well-deserved victory, and being a part of it was an exceptionally satisfying way for me to end the tournament.*

*In all, I learned a great deal about refereeing and about how things work on the international scene. Before I left, I was concerned that because I come from a Tier 2 rugby country, that the amount of support and respect would be compromised. It wasn't. I received an incredible amount of support and advice from everyone there, and the friends I met made the whole experience memorable."*

Best wishes to all.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Tom Jones". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style with a large initial 'T'.

Tom Jones  
Regional Development Manager