

# Sure, New Zealand, make a profit, but be modest and think long-term

PETER BILLS

AUCKLAND: They might have been a silent lot, the kind all airlines dream about. Not for the passengers on board Qantas flight 43 from Sydney to Auckland on Monday afternoon this week the sort of notorious antics which my rugby men have known on myriad flights across the globe these past years.

Like the return flight to London one year from the Hong Kong Sevens. As we levelled off after take-off from somewhere in the Middle East, a well-known former England international with a flushed face stood up, took a sip from a line of drinks he had amassed and which included champagne, white wine, red wine, port and brandy, and announced: "If this goes down boys, we have had our fill."

Well, we all drank to that... as you do. But the plane-load of travellers crossing the Tasman this

week were a more circumspect bunch. Perhaps they were pondering just what they could expect from New Zealand at this seventh Rugby World Cup. The possibilities are varied. A fleeing from the rip-off merchants, a few of whom I pointed out last year on my visit to the country for the Tri-Nations tournament?

Or maybe they will uncover a place just content to extract the maximum financial advantage from a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity and then retreat into the quiet world that this land's geographical isolation invites. Perhaps, too, some resent taxpayers' money being spent on a rugby event at the height of a major world recession.

Fact is, all three emotions would be wrong, quite inappropriate.

New Zealand is not the land it was, certainly not the secluded, hidden-away location that I first visited back in 1975. My parents had been a year or two earlier and their judg-

ment was as one. "It is like England before World War II," they chorused.

I found it quaint, but desperately isolated as I travelled on my own through both islands. Once, staying with friends on the South Island, they turned in for the night at 7.45pm. I too retired, bewildered at my surroundings and finding solace only through a radio which I tuned to the BBC to hear the late John Arlott's dulcet tones, commenting on the first Cricket World Cup final from Lord's.

In truth, much of New Zealand was like a closed country in those days, a strangely introverted place.

Today's offspring is brash, bright, so much more challenging and confident, not to say interesting. It offers excellence in so many fields; horticulture, oenology, literature, food, theatre and music, to mention just a few. It goes without saying that sport remains omnipresent in this land, as integral a part of the

national psyche to some as a beer in an Australian's hand. But many in New Zealand have grown up. Sport is no longer their only interest.

Indeed, some of my friends insist that the world's raging economic recession and the contagion it has spread to all corners of the globe, will continue to assume far greater importance than this World Cup, no matter what the outcome.

In a way, that is to be welcomed. A nation in which parameters begin and end with its national rugby team invites ridicule for such a blinkered existence.

If the great legacy handed down by so many people who achieved outstanding success on New Zealand's behalf, such as Sir Edmund Hillary, Dame Kiri Te Kanawa and General Bernard Freyberg, is to be truly honoured, national pride should never reverberate solely around a sporting activity.

In my estimation, New Zealand

has grown up rapidly since those times. Today, it offers culture, history, craftsmanship in a variety of fields and a broad canvas of activities and interests. This is the hallmark of an increasingly mature society. But, another element denotes true maturity among a people, and that quality is vision.

Those who can see beyond the immediate and peruse a horizon far away, hitherto not yet glimpsed by most, invariably profit from their foresight. Taking the long view, adopting a stance and philosophy that it is the next 10 to 20 years that will really count and define that individual or his land, not the immediate or even the next six weeks or six months, is the hallmark of a really mature mind.

New Zealand in this week, the start of the World Cup, has a glorious opportunity to sow seeds that will continue to flourish for 20 years or more. If the tens of thousands of

overseas visitors who will flock to the country over the next six weeks enjoy an experience without parallel, then the nation will indeed reap a rich harvest.

If, at the end of the tournament, they depart for every corner of the globe carrying a message of a beautiful land, a warm, friendly people whose company is to be enjoyed and revered, then the true success of this event should not be gauged by which nation holds up the Webb Ellis Cup at the end of it all, but the long-term value accrued by the host nation.

Manifestly, that can and indeed should happen. New Zealand has the key ingredients to make it work - great people and one of the most beautiful, aesthetically delightful lands on the planet. So why wouldn't it be a straightforward task?

Excessive greed, a widely shared rapacious attitude that seeks to fleece every visitor for just about every moment he is in the place,

could undo all that potential, ruin all those possibilities. If, amid a raging world recession, visitors cringe at individual or corporate acts of extortion, then one of the greatest opportunities ever presented to this country will have been lost, criminally squandered on the back of short-term profit.

Should that prove to be the case, then Kiwis will be able to blame no one but themselves. Only they will carry the tag for ever more that says: "We invited the world to our country but turned them off forever by our greed and stupidity."

The alternative, I would suggest, should be a more alluring scenario. Offer all-comers a wondrously warm welcome from ordinary Kiwis, proud of their country and anxious to show those in the world who have not yet been here just why their hospitality can be quite unique.

Make a profit, sure, but be modest. And above all, think long-term.

# The hopes of a nation go with them

The real significance of the 1906 South African rugby tour, during which the 'Springboks' were born, went well beyond rugby, writes Dean Allen

AS THE Springboks embark on their defence of the World Cup trophy this week in New Zealand it is perhaps fitting that we reflect on the first ever Springboks and their inaugural tour overseas. In much the same way that the expectations of the current Bokke will unite South Africa in support of rugby triumph over the next month or so, for captain Paul Roos and his men of 1906 the team held the hopes of an entire country trying to rebuild through sport.

As a major part of South Africa's heritage, the history of rugby football has received detailed attention from those seeking to explore the intricacies of the game and the country. Rugby historian Chris Greyvenstein wrote during the early 1980s how "more than 90 years of triumph and defeat, achievement and humiliation, have gone into the forging of a tradition of which the Springbok jersey is the symbol". The tradition and past of which he talks owes much to the early days of the 1900s. The days

**'The tour had united us from Cape Agulhas to the Zambesi. South Africa was one, all the differences had been forgotten. May it always be the same'**

years after the war of 1899-1902.

In 1908, sports writer E.J.L. Platnauer described the 1906-7 tour as "the most important event that has ever taken place in the history of South African Rugby football".

For others, however, the significance of the tour went beyond rugby. For the first time, a touring team was made up of players actually born in South Africa - a point made by Platnauer at the time of the tour: "The men we have sent away to represent us are part and parcel of our life and our existence; they are our brothers; their success is our success; their joy is participated in by every one of us."

Those very sentiments could have been echoed in Joburg or here in Cape Town last week as thousands waved the current squad off on their way to the World Cup.

Peter de Villiers will be aware that the most successful rugby teams are those who are united in their desire for success. Perhaps the most incredible thing about the 1906 team then was that it contained players who had

fought on either side during a war. The idea of players being in the same scrum only four years after facing one another in battle is, perhaps, today unthinkable, but that is what made the first Springboks so remarkable.

As the team embarked on their groundbreaking tour of the UK and France, one local politician proclaimed how a "generation has come together in sport and the visit of a team largely composed of born South Africans to England has a higher significance than that of sport".

This "united" South African team (pictured right) was thus set to begin a tour that many had hoped would blot out misunderstandings of the past and cement lasting friendship.

A new team identity was needed and soon one was established within the British press, with the squad calling themselves the Springboks for the first time and adopting the myrtle-green jerseys first worn in



UNITED: The 1906 Springbok squad. To gain a true perspective on the first ever Springbok tour, one should remember it took place only four years after the war of 1899-1902. For some the significance of the tour went beyond rugby.

1896. On the field, the tour was an unprecedented success.

In all, South Africa played 28 matches in Britain, winning 25, losing two and drawing one, scoring 553 points to 79. Narrowly losing to Scotland in the first Test, defeats of Ireland and Wales were followed by a draw with England in difficult conditions at Crystal Palace. An easy victory against a naive French side in Paris at the end of the tour followed the team's only other reverse, a 17-0 defeat by Cardiff.

By emulating the performances of New Zealand, who had embarked on their first tour of Britain a year earlier, the Springboks had shown they had truly arrived as a power in international rugby.

Here's wishing that the 2011 team can produce similar results.

The real significance of the 1906 tour went beyond rugby. As with the current Springbok squad, there was a togetherness within the 1906 South African team, a unity

that many believed led to its success.

Aware of the symbolic importance of his team's visit, South African captain, the articulate Paul Roos, exclaimed at the time how "the tour had united us from Cape Agulhas to the Zambesi. South Africa was one, and all differences had been forgotten. Here, we are one; may it always be the same".

Back in South Africa, the team's progress had seemingly galvanised the rugby-supporting population and each victory was met with great enthusiasm. Following the win in Swansea against Wales, one newspaper reported how "cheering crowds marched through the streets for hours afterwards". Many hope this will be the same on Sunday following the opening fixture against Wales in Wellington.

Dr Dean Allen is a senior lecturer at Cape Peninsula University of Technology. Having lectured in the UK, Ireland and Australia, his work covers sport, history and social issues.



TEAM: The Springboks take on Wales in 1906. Captain Paul Roos (moustache) is in the middle. As with the current Springbok squad, there was a unity within the 1906 team, which many believed led to their success.



DAVID BIGGS

Tavern of the Seas

A FRIEND keeps sending dire messages to overseas acquaintances, warning them not to come to South Africa. It's just too dangerous, he tells them. You'll be mugged, robbed, raped or worse if you set foot on the soil of this benighted country.

I keep sending counter-instructions telling people not to take notice of him. We're no worse than any other country. In fact, we live pretty well here in the Cape. I wouldn't want to be anywhere else.

I was interested to read an article by Hugo Rifkind in a recent issue of Spectator magazine.

He admits that he keeps an iron bar under his bed, just in case. And

he lives in a relatively peaceful part of England.

After the recent London (and elsewhere) riots, he says, sales of baseball bats increased on Amazon.com by 5 000 percent.

And there are not that many baseball players in Britain. Oddly enough, sales of baseball balls did not rise at all.

Rifkind inquired among his friends and found that most of them kept the equivalent of an iron bar under, or near, their beds.

The hammer from the tool-kit had taken to staying on the bedside table, the cricket bat had mysteriously moved from the under-stairs

cupboard to the floor beside the bed, the firewood axe was no longer in the garden shed.

Rifkind says he believes the editor of the New Statesman sleeps with a truncheon beside his bed.

In a previous issue of Spectator, Toby Young describes how he patrolled his garden wielding a baseball bat, just in case some aspiring rioters chose his area.

So far none of my British friends has written to warn me of the dangers of visiting Britain, but I'm waiting for the first precautionary e-mail.

It would be interesting to find out how many of our local friends and

relatives keep the equivalent of an iron bar under their beds.

What about that sturdy hiking stick leaning against the wall? (Well, I often hike in Tokai forest, you know.) The carved African "knobkierie" next to the front door? (Just something I found in Kwa-Zulu Natal. I liked the design.)

I keep a stout bamboo stick near my front door, but it's because I can't reach the curtains to open and close them, so I use the stick. Yeah, right.

I think we have to admit that - worldwide - as the rich get richer and the poor stay poor, we'll continue to see an increase in crime and violence.

And we'll continue to see wrinkly old farts in every country posing in front of their bathroom mirrors trying to look fierce and imagining they'd know what to do with that Under-14 B team cricket bat if a burglar bust in through the window.

Maybe the clever inventors should put their money in sports equipment factories.

Last Laugh

Fifty metres above the street a building worker strolled along a narrow steel girder, hands in pockets, not even looking where he was going.

Down below an office worker

looked up in horror at this casual behaviour.

When the worker came down the man said admiringly: "You seem to be fearless. How did you manage to get a job like that?"

"Oh I used to be a school bus driver, but my nerves gave out."

The Wanderer

Tel: 021 788 9710  
Fax: 021 788 9560  
E-mail: dbiggs@qloink.co.za