



**MATIES
RUGBY**

Maties Rugby News

December 2024



Bringing **150 Years** of History into the Future

Rugby is a sport that demands commitment, dedication, and teamwork. This year we saw this spirit from all our passionate stakeholders across club disciplines and roles. Maties Rugby staff, ex-players, supporters, the greater University and many more, work tirelessly to ensure the ongoing spirit and legacy of what makes this Club great. Working with exceptional student-athletes continues to drive Maties Rugby in their efforts to sustain and grow this historic club. Ensuring that they receive and live the Maties experience is vital to us.

We recognise the dedication of our players, who balance the demands of rigorous high-performance training, competitive matches, and their academic responsibilities. Thriving as a Maties rugby player requires significant resilience and focus in today's challenging environment.

This year, Maties Rugby has much to reflect on and celebrate beyond trophies. We've made meaningful progress toward becoming a more sustainable, modern, and relevant organisation. Highlights include strong performances on the field, the acquisition of nine new sponsors, securing the hosting rights for the FISU 2026 World Sevens, introducing a reimagined Campus Rugby competition, and receiving several awards for the club, its players, and staff. Additionally, our alumni continue to honour the Maties Rugby legacy in their professional and personal endeavours.

Looking ahead, 2025 kicks off with Varsity Cup - for which our players began preparations in October - alongside our 150th anniversary celebrations. Officially established in 1875 as the Stellenbosch Rugby Football Club, Maties Rugby is the second-oldest club in South Africa, with roots tracing back to matches played on the Braak.

Maties Rugby operates out of the Danie Craven Stadium, a venue with a 17 000-seat capacity, and supports its extensive programme with eight additional fields. With 31 teams and

over 900 registered players, the club is one of the largest competitive rugby organisations globally. Our teams compete in various leagues, including the Varsity Cup, Campus Rugby League, the Western Province Club Rugby League, and the USSA 15s and 7s competitions.

In 2024, Maties Rugby achieved significant milestones, including playing in the Women's Varsity Cup final, securing three consecutive USSA Men's tournament victories, and being the only University with all three teams competing in Varsity Cup semi-finals. The Club also continues to build on its legacy of producing Springboks, with Jordan Hendrikse, Edwill van der Merwe, Ben-Jason Dixon, and Andre-Hugo Venter earning caps this year.

As we commemorate 150 years of Maties Rugby, we honour the values of dedication, resilience, commitment to excellence and teamwork that define our community. This anniversary is not only a celebration of our past but also an acknowledgment of our ongoing journey and shared aspirations for the future. This milestone is an opportunity to reflect on our history and evolution into a high-performance rugby operation as well as evolving into a modern relevant University club.

Throughout 2025, we will host events and gatherings for alumni, supporters, and current players, celebrating the enduring legacy of Maties Rugby. For now, our focus remains on preparing for Varsity Cup success, welcoming new talent, and refining our operations for continued growth.

In this newsletter, read more about our Club President, Charl Cronjé; all the stats that we evaluate in preparation for Varsity Cup; and our award winners. Also read through my full report for the AGM to stay up to date on Club matters.

Drikus Hancke
Head of Maties Rugby

Proof: Once a Matie, Always a Matie!



You may not recognise this face from the '80s but you will know the name: Charl Cronjé, President of Maties Rugby Club! He may have a sterling reputation in business as former CEO of Ackermans and as a current member on numerous Boards, but this Malmesbury boy actually stumbled into his career because of needing to study "something" in order to fulfil his dream - to play rugby for Maties!

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Recognition for a job well done



Maties Rugby dominated at the Maties Sport Awards this year. Not only did our esteemed alumnus, Ben Jason-Dixon give the keynote address, but we took a Sportsman of the Year, Club of the Year and Coach of the Year. Two of our players also received a Rector's Award for outstanding sport and academic performance, and our Head of Rugby, Drikus Hancke was honoured with an award as an outstanding staff member by Stellenbosch COO, Prof Stan du Plessis.

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Dates to Diarise VARISTY CUP 2025 FIXTURES

Varsity Cup kicks off on 15 February for our men with a televised home game in the Danie Craven Stadium. Our Young Guns start their competition on 24 February and our Women on 14 March. **SEE ALL FIXTURES HERE**

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MATIES RUGBY 150

Throughout 2025 we will be hosting and staging events and gatherings to mark Maties Rugby's extraordinary 150 years of uniting generations, turning out champions and rolling out a legacy. Make sure you are connected on our communications channels to stay updated.

#Go!
MATIES

Join the conversation

Running up for a 2025 VC win

As our Club President will tell you, student rugby has come a long way from the old "pitch-and-play" inter-varsity days. Today, it's High-Performance and Best Practice all the way - from administration, support staff and structures, coaching and conditioning, sponsorships, and of course, training and playing like a pro. This is specially so for Varsity Cup where analysis is key to future game strategies. Take a look at some stats from 2024 in our build-up to VC 2025.



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We thank our generous sponsors and donors, passionate supporters, dedicated players, coaches, and all support staff for making 2024 memorable. **Have a great festive season, and be sure to join us in January another milestone year!**

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