

SUPER SPORT RUGBY CHALLENGE- ZIMBABWE

The vital link between provincial and club rugby in South Africa has somewhat been lost and the SuperSport Rugby Challenge aims to revive that. The tournament's mission is to bring rugby back to the people, using club grounds in the rugby heartlands to showcase some of SA's biggest provincial club derbies.

This year's 59-match tournament kicked off on the 26th April, featuring 14 South African provincial unions, Namibia's Welwitschias and Zimbabwe in an 8-week event.

The grounds were packed and televised, hosting up to 3 back-to-back games at a time and giving the amateur athletes a much-deserved chance to showcase their talents on a bigger stage.

As the new addition and 16th team to enter, the Zim Academy were an unknown factor in the competition and I was quite surprised when the first two players arrived in my Claremont waiting room.

Both teammates were currently playing for the national 7s side and had recently picked up mild niggles at the Hong Kong 7s tournament. I was impressed to hear that they regularly and primarily sought out chiropractic care for recovery, prevention and performance.

After inquiring further, I was told that the Zim Academy was made up of the national team and coached by former Zimbabwe flanker Brendon Dawson, ex-Springbok winger Tonderai Chavhanga and former Boks, Marius Hurter and Brendan Venter, consulting as scrum and defence coaches.

The players went on to describe some of the financial difficulties faced by Zimbabwean Rugby, whose 7s team turned up without a kit in 2015 and came within a heartbeat of winning the qualifying tournament, losing narrowly to Russia in the final.

"Due to flight expenses, it is a challenge to get players together and often, players have to meet at tournament destinations to start training."

Needless to say, when travelling, Zimbabwe does not have the budget for a full medical team and I was only too happy to offer our practice's services at an affordable rate to the players.

The very next day, I had a waiting room full of players all eager to get treatment and I made the decision to contact the coaches and volunteer my services while the team was in here in SA, explaining that all I expected in return was experience and passion.

The coaches did not hesitate to bring me on board and queued up for treatment themselves, along with the rest of the team, on my first visit to the training camp. Players presented with everything, from the usual sprains, strains, back and neck pains to suspected fractures, concussions or just the general check-up and confidence boosting KT tape.

My first game, sitting on the bench at Newlands stadium in Cape Town, was against Western Province and I was happy to hear that I would be meeting the team's physiotherapist for the match. It was a pleasure to have another mind and perspective to work with throughout the tournament and we quickly established each other's strengths and weaknesses. The synergy continued and improved as the tournament went on and the players felt confident that they were being well-looked after for a change.

Having had the opportunity to look after a local South African rugby club for 2 seasons, it was interesting to be able to compare experiences. Besides the general professionalism, player conditioning and on-field experience, one of the major differences I found between club level rugby and national level rugby was the respect for an injured player's wellbeing.

At club level, amongst players, coaches, medical staff and management, there is general lack of emphasis placed on the severity of injuries and their potential long-term effects.

My time spent with Zimbabwe taught me that this does not need to be the case and that coaches, medical staff and management can work together with the players best interest being the priority.

I believe that SA club rugby should aim to reach this level of professionalism and that getting a chiropractor involved in every team is the first step in the right direction.

Chiropractic has a way to go in SA Rugby but the fact is, the players want chiropractic, the coaches want chiropractic and the medical teams need chiropractic. The onus is on the individual sports chiropractor to approach clubs and offer their services.

Dr. Jesse Bruins Roberts







GOD'S PLAN, GOD'S TIME



Kf Chimanza

