

# 2009 SCHOOLS RUGBY REVIEW

BY RICHARD ASHER

Schoolboy rugby is getting better, faster and more professional with each year that passes. With the 2009 season now behind us, *SI* looks back on what made the top-ranked schools so magic...



Say what you like about what's happening to test rugby as a spectacle, and say what you like about the state of this country's club rugby. But there's no denying that schools rugby in South Africa is in rude health.

If we're looking for a reason why South Africa's rugby trophy cabinet is bulging right now, maybe we need look no further than our burgeoning schools rugby scene. It's a long, long time since a first team rugby match was just an excuse for

a Saturday runaround – schools rugby has arguably overtaken club rugby as the major feeder to the provinces. Whether or not that's an entirely good thing is another question, but there's no doubt that the seriousness of the game at school level is helping keep SA rugby as powerful as tradition demands.

Schools rugby nowadays means sponsorship, television coverage and year-round training. On the touchlines, tannies with boerewors roll stand are being

replaced by mobile Spur outlets. And if you want to go and watch, you may well have to pay for a ticket. Times have changed.

There's also a ranking system to keep the boys motivated – though the traditional rivalries and prospects of female adulation probably do that anyway. More than that, even we at *SI* are starting to sit up and take notice. So, by way of introduction, we bring you a closer look at rugby in the top-ranked schools of 2009.



## GREY COLLEGE

SCHOOLS RUGBY

When Francois Steyn and his powerful boot sank the All Blacks in Hamilton, South Africans jumped up and down euphorically. Except perhaps the rugby masters at Grey College, who might have found it a bit of a yawn. After all, they'd been watching half the current Bok team in action for years.

Grey doesn't need to advertise its rugby, because people like Steyn do that for them. So does hooker (and part-time fetcher!) Bismarck du Plessis, whose brother Jannie is also a Grey old boy. Then there's the gifted, versatile Ruan Pienaar, and SA's new opportunity-stealing superhero, Heinrich Brussow. The Bloemfontein school has their stamp on this all-conquering Bok squad – and that's nothing new.

It's almost old hat, in fact: Grey, founded in

1855, is the oldest school in the country that's not in Cape Town. This dual-medium college was named after then-Governor of the Cape Colony, Sir George Grey. It's often confused with Grey Port Elizabeth, but do this at your peril – Grey PE cannot boast 36 Springboks.

Grey Bloem's 2009 rugby crop, quite typically, went almost unbeaten. Between March and August, 16 points was their smallest margin of victory; and most teams were walloped by much more. Only in their tryless final game against Paul Roos did they slip up – Grey's first loss since Paul Roos beat them in 2006. And that was with several first-choice players missing at the U18 High Performance Programme. It's hard to imagine there aren't a few future Boks among this lot.

### WEIRD GREY FACTS

Pupils use a special three-fingered handshake, apparently dating back to the 1920s and owing its origins to the insignia on a 19th-century French knife.

Only the first XV is allowed to train in non-Grey rugby jerseys – and only the first team wear white shoelaces.

Grey are so good that only four schools in Bloemfontein dare to play them. Games in the Free State are stopped if the score reaches 30-0 before half-time – it's happened many times when Grey have been involved. Sentraal, Jim Fouche, Louis Botha and Fichardtspark all gave it a go this year, but all conceded over fifty points. The team travels to all its away games by train.

### FUTURE BOK?



At over two metres, Carl Wegner has the necessary physicality to go all the way. The son of former Free State forward Kallie, he's from fine rugby stock.

### GAME OF THE YEAR



The massive 62-3 win over Glenwood stands out, especially given that Grey struggled to beat the KZN side in 2008.

### RUGBY PHILOSOPHY

"We play 15-man rugby," says Head of Rugby Dries van der Wal. "We don't want to force anyone into a pattern. No individual is made to feel threatened about making their own decisions – if an opportunity is there, he must use it."

### ARCHRIVAL



The year-end derby against Paul Roos is the big one, but the showdown with Affies is also a major deal. Both weekends are like an *en masse* school outing, with a multitude of teams in action.



**THE INTIMIDATORS** Grey like to run the ball. All Black-style. But they did it with more success than the Kiwis this year!



# OUTENIQUA

George is not a place for the faint-hearted. The capital of the Southern Cape (if there is such a thing) is home to South Africa's most brutal golf course (the Fancourt Links), the remarkable Montagu Pass and some reliably foul weather. No wonder, then, that it also has our country's second-meanest rugby school.

Even more than is the case with Grey College, Outeniqua dominates its own region. Just look at the South Western Districts Craven Week side this year – more than half the squad's players were Outeniqua boys. It certainly doesn't hurt that the school is home to the Kwagga Rugby Academy, another thing that makes it *the* place to go in that part of the world if you're a good rugby player.

This year's team was a very experienced one, with loosehead prop Marius Fourie winning an unbelievable 62nd first XV cap in his final game. Speaking of forwards, former Bulls player Anton Leonard has been looking after the pack in the last couple of years – something that's made a big difference to the team's fortunes.

It showed in the 2009 season, with Outeniqua defeated only twice. The only losses came against Grey College and Monnas, and there was a 20-20 draw with Paul Roos. A win that put the seal on a good year was beating Boland Landbou 32-3 to take the Cape-based Burger Trophy. Oh, and 107 tries in 22 games ain't bad!

## WEIRD OUTENIQUA FACT

The school has a rather unusual badge, featuring a bee and honeycomb. It's all a reference to the fact that Outeniqua is a Khoi word meaning 'a man carrying honey'.

## NICKNAME

Kwaggas

## FUTURE BOK?



Fourie is the standout talent. He's exceptionally strong and muscular, but can play like a loose forward. Last year Fourie played a major role in SWD's successful Craven Week side, showing his versatility by playing hooker. "He's a bit like the Beast," says Head of Rugby Piet Cloete. Now that sounds promising... even if the name doesn't roll off the tongue quite like Mr Mtawarira's does!

## GAME OF THE YEAR



Beating Paarl Gim for the first time since 2004 was the highlight of the season for Outeniqua. "It was a close game, but our backs were quicker than them and we were able to push them back," says Cloete of the 18-15 victory.

## RUGBY PHILOSOPHY

"We don't have a fixed style like some schools," says Cloete. "We rather adapt our style to the team we have. This year we had a good backline and relatively light forwards, so we played at a fast tempo."

## ARCHRIVAL



The boys from across the Outeniqua Mountains in Oudtshoorn (known as Struisies, thanks to Oudtshoorn's ostrich connections) are the traditional derby enemy, but the annual clash with Paarl Gim has also become a big one for Outeniqua.



**GRUDGE MATCH** The Outeniqua boys proved too strong for their arch-rivals from across the mountain in this year's game against Oudtshoorn.

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## PAUL ROOS GYMNASIUM

SCHOOLS RUGBY

If ever a school was destined for rugby greatness, it's this one. When your school once had a headmaster who doubled as the first Springbok captain, well, you'd better front up on the rugby field. That rector and Bok captain was of course Paul Roos himself – rugby heritage is loaded into the very name of the school.

So it's entirely fitting that the Stellenbosch institution, which dates back to 1864, has churned out more Springboks than any other. Andries Bekker and Schalk Brits may have been the first in nearly a decade, but who's going to argue with a total of 48 Boks? And it's not just rugby players who've made the place famous – Jan Smuts was a pupil here, although he was nearly kicked out for not paying his fees!

2009 wasn't a settled season for the Stellenbosch boys, with losses to Affies, Paarl Boys' High, Bishops and Grey among the disappointments. They also had a couple of games cancelled due to bad weather and flu at the school, and injuries and call-ups meant a lot of combination changes and three different captains.

But the low-scoring win against archrivals Grey in the season finale rounded things off nicely, giving Paul Roos bragging rights going into the off-season. Grey may have dominated the rankings for three years now, but Paul Roos bracketed their unbeaten run with wins in '06 and '09. Though Paul Roos may not beat everyone, it seems they're the only team who can beat Grey – and that's a big deal in SA schoolboy rugby.

### WEIRD PAUL ROOS FACT

There's a grand ceremony called the Jolla Bolla, which gets played out after big wins. It's best described as a mass huddle involving the entire school. In the case of a rugby triumph, like that against Grey, the first team and head boy stand in the middle, while concentric circles of matrics, old boys and lower grades form around them. There follows a time-honoured routine of chanting and movement. It's a noisy but unique way to fill up a rugby field.

### JOLLA BOLLA

Those deep and meaningful lyrics in full

Jolla Bolla Jolla Bolla  
Boemalakka Boem  
Jolla Bolla Jolla Bolla  
Boemalakka Boem  
Temmalakka  
Temmalakka  
Rakwana Rakwana  
Lia Lia Lia  
Stellenbosch

### FUTURE BOK?



JP du Plessis – if he manages to ignore the rugby league offers he's getting from Australia, that is. This outside centre is known to be an incisive and blindingly quick runner, so maybe SA rugby had better hang onto him! Paul Treu is trying to do just that – last we heard JP was training with the Bok Sevens team.

### GAME OF THE YEAR



The 9-3 home win against Grey College. It helped that Grey missed a couple of kicks and had a try disallowed, but a win's a win.

### RUGBY PHILOSOPHY

"We try to get the best out of every player," says coach Stephan Jordaan. "There is a structure, but guys can also play the situation. We want to create rugby players."

### ARCHRIVAL



Surprisingly, it's not a Cape school. The annual clash with Grey traditionally rounds off the season for both schools – and for each of them, it's as big as it gets.



TRADITION RULES Paul Roos' legendary school spirit (above) is fanned by the remarkable Jolla Bolla (left).



# PAARL BOYS' HIGH

**F**our pupils were all they needed to get this school going in 1868 – not nearly enough to make up a rugby team. So you'd never have guessed this would become one of the country's top rugby schools, with Mannetjies Roux and Carel du Plessis among its many Springboks.

When 'Boishaai' scored a thoroughly convincing 24-12 win over their big enemies Paarl Gimnasium in 2009 – their first win in the derby for five years – it put the seal on a great year for the school's first XV.

Paul Roos, St John's, Monument, Bishops, SACS

and Rondebosch were all on the PBHS scalp list in 2009, not to mention an unanswered 50 points against HTS Windhoek. The big slip-up was going down 15-30 to Affies at the St John's tournament. They also lost to Grey (50-8) away and, a little more surprisingly, to Boland Landbou at home.

"We weren't a magic team and people were slating us, so I'm proud we were able to move up into the top ten this year," says coach Elmo Wolfaardt. "We had work to do among the backs, and made quite a few positional changes – with a more settled side next year, things should be even better."

## FUTURE BOK?



Frans Malherbe, the captain and tighthead prop. Malherbe was vice-captain of the winning Western Province Craven Week side, and of the SA Schools team that played England U18 in August.

## GAME OF THE YEAR



Winning the Paarl derby. It was a dominant performance from the underdogs, who made sure Paarl Gim never got into the game. It's arguable that the victory margin flattered Gim.

## RUGBY PHILOSOPHY

"We play a mix of Bulls and Stormers rugby," says Wolfaardt. "We hit them hard up front to lay a foundation, then create space among the backs. But we can play either brand of rugby, depending on the situation."

## ARCHRIVAL



Paarl Gimnasium. The clash at neutral Paarl Rugby Stadium is the biggest day of the year in Paarl, and splits the town down the middle.

This year the game overlapped with a Bok test against the All Blacks, but did the schools reschedule their kick-off time? No way. Nothing interferes with the Paarl derby.



**PEACEFUL PAARL** The school (left) may have an air of tranquility for most of the year, but passions run high (above) when they line up for derby day.

## WEIRD PAARL BOYS' HIGH FACTS

PBHS has had numerous names. Initially it was the Paarl First Class Public School, then the Paarlse Opvoedingsinstituut. In 1900 it became PBHS, or, if you were Dutch, De Paarlse Hoogere School voor Jongens.

In the 1800s, three attempts were made to merge PBHS with Paarl Gimnasium. Fortunately it didn't happen, or rugby would be without one of its great derbies.

## WAR CRY

Shimalaya wha!  
Shimalaya wha!  
HJS HJS  
Wha 'sop -  
'sop 'sop 'sop  
We are - we are  
HJS HJS  
Wha 'sop,  
Shimalaya wha!

## NICKNAME

Boishaai. But their bitter rivals Paarl Gim would call them *Galpille*.

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# MONUMENT

**F**unny name for a school... so what's all this about a monument then? It's actually right next door to the school, and the structure in question is the historic Paardekraal Monument. And there's a replica on the school grounds, too.

But the Afrikaans-medium school's more about rugby than it is about distant Krugersdorp history. It gave us Springboks such as Jacque Fourie and Brendan Venter, and it also supplied this year's Lions Currie Cup coach, Hans Coetzee – recognised at the school as a rugby saint, after half a lifetime spent coaching there.

2009 was a typically strong year for Monument, who went unbeaten aside from an unhappy St John's Festival, where they went down to both Paul Roos and Paarl Boys' High. Thereafter things went well, with wins over Paarl Gimnasium, Outeniqua, Affies, Waterkloof and Pretoria Boys' High among the highlights. Titles included the Beeld Trophy and NuPower Tuks series, and Monnas supplied a host of Craven Week players.

"This year's team was a special bunch," says coach Schalk van der Merwe (that's Heinke's dad). "We were like a family, and everyone played for each other. Last year we had a lot of talent, but not the same spirit. This time round it was very much a team effort."

## FUTURE BOK?



The school expects flyhalf Jacob Taute to become the next Monument Springbok. The coach reckons he's as quick over 30 metres as Bryan Habana, and rates him highly as an attacking runner anywhere in the backline. The guy scored a jaw-dropping 21 tries this year. Could he be another Jacque Fourie in the making?

## GAME OF THE YEAR



"The win against Paarl Gimnasium really turned our season around," says Van der Merwe. "It was in the Cape and in the rain, but we managed to win 6-5. We played brilliant rugby after that."

## RUGBY PHILOSOPHY

"We like to play running rugby and score tries," says Van der Merwe. "We set a target to score a minimum of six tries per game."

## ARCHRIVAL



The Krugersdorp derby is against nearby Florida, but the enemy that really gets Monnas juices flowing is Affies.

## WEIRD MONUMENT FACT

The school has a ceremonial gate - bang in the middle of the campus. Monument tradition has it that when you start Grade 8, you take a walk through the 'hekkie', and when you leave matric you 'exit' the gate into life.



## NICKNAME

Monnas – but the first team is known as the Wit Bulle.



# AFFIES

**A**frikaanse Hoër Seunskool. It's got an intimidating ring. Maybe it's because the school is named after a language – founded in 1920, this was the first high school to instruct in Afrikaans rather than Dutch. And Afrikaans is a language with a terrific record in rugby – enough to scare the pants off most schools. If you're lining up to play these guys, expect a bruising game.

Affies, as they are known, have dominated rugby north of the Jukskei for a long, long time. For example, their first team won the Blue Bulls final ten times in a row between 1993 and 2002. No wonder the school has produced seven Boks, including Fourie du Preez and Pierre Spies.

No school shows quite the same pride in its rugby history as Affies. The rugby stats on its website go right back to the 1920s, when the Afrikaanse Hoërskool Rugbyvoetbalklub was founded. Their initial games were played on a nearby field now known as Loftus Versfeld, so it's hardly surprising that Affies became a Bulls production line.

In 2007, Affies pulled out of all competitions, saying they were making schools rugby too serious. Now Affies play just for the sake of winning matches – and they do plenty of that. In 2009 they won 11 out of 15, losing only to Grey College (who doesn't?), Paarl Gim, Monnas and Glenwood.

## FUTURE BOK?



Keep an eye on scrumhalf Lohan Jacobs, who captained the SA Schools side against Namibia. He has a great work ethic and kicks well with both feet. He's strong but not too big, and passes very well. The next Fourie du Preez, perhaps?

## GAME OF THE YEAR



The 25-22 win against Paul Roos at St John's was probably the most satisfying of the year. It was a tight match, and Affies had to tackle a would-be Roos try-scorer out in the corner on 80 minutes in order to hang on.

## RUGBY PHILOSOPHY

"We try to play open, 15-man rugby," says coach Sakkie van der Walt. "And we manage to do that most of the time!"

## ARCHRIVAL



Pretoria Boys' High. It's Afrikaans vs English, and in current Bok terms, it's Fourie du Preez vs John Smit. Virtually neighbours, they've been at it since 1923, with Affies winning 54 of the 104 clashes. It's intense.

## WEIRD AFFIES FACT

At least 24 Van der Merwes have played first team rugby for Affies since it all began in 1921. There have been an equal number of Pretoriuses, however, so make of this fact what you will.



## NICKNAME

Affies. The first XV are known as the Wit Bulle – same as at Monnas.

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## GLENWOOD

**K**waZulu-Natal's only representative in the top ten can look back on a fine 2009 season, their copybook blotted only by a drubbing at the hands of Grey in Bloem – a defeat which severely dented their end-of-year ranking position.

But the Durban school's highs far outweighed the lows. Having won the schools' world title last year, one of Glenwood's highlights was going back to defend it in '09. They did well again, but went out in the semis to French side Dax Landes.

On the home front, Glenwood won all its games in KwaZulu-Natal, which included a 31-nil home win over Maritzburg College – their fifth straight win over their rivals from up the N3. They also took the scalp of Outeniqua at the St John's Easter Festival by one point, and later added a superb away win at Affies.

Glenwood dates back to 1910, when it was known as the Day Continuation School for Boys and formed part of the Durban Technical Institute. The two institutions were only separated in 1923. The Glenwood name was finally adopted in 1934, but it took many years for rugby to usurp soccer as the sport of choice. By 1965 the school was a powerhouse, however – the first XV went unbeaten that year. To this day that remains the only perfect season for Glenwood's top rugby side.

### FUTURE BOK?



Francois Kleinhans might have just missed out on a Craven Week spot, but being picked for Natal's under-19 Currie Cup side more than made up for it.

### GAME OF THE YEAR



Glenwood's most satisfying win was their defeat of Affies. "It's never easy playing in Pretoria, and this was a real mudbath," says coach Sean Erasmus. "But we played really good rugby that day."

### RUGBY PHILOSOPHY

"We had a really big pack of forwards," says Erasmus. "I concentrated on a lot of big runners up front. With a good platform and a brilliant Grade 11 flyhalf, Fred Zeilinga, the backs were able to finish things off."

### ARCHRIVAL



The traditional derby is against Durban High School, but that game has become a little one-sided in recent times. Tougher local opposition now includes Michaelhouse and Maritzburg College.

### WEIRD GLENWOOD FACT

Specific works of art in the refectory are turned around to face the wall if Glenwood loses a big game to a rival.



### NICKNAME

The Green Machine, thanks to the colour of their jerseys. But they're also commonly known as the Grasshoppers.



## MARLOW LANDBOU

**D**espite the fact that they've been around for almost 80 years and are no strangers to the top ten, Marlow remains a bit of a mystery. And that's probably because the school's in Cradock, an out-of-the-way place even for most Eastern Cape residents!

Marlow doesn't have much in common with the other schools in the top ten except for passion and excellence in rugby. For a start, it's small – only around 260 boys make up the school. They're all boarders, and only about forty *don't* play rugby for one of the 14 teams. It's also the only agricultural school to feature in the elite list.

Numerous Marlow players made it to Craven Week this year, but they were playing for EP Country Districts, which isn't the toughest side to get into. But don't doubt that the Marlow crew are a tough lot; they have to travel a long way to their away matches - Queenstown is their *closest*.

A good measure of their stature is the Easter Festival at KES. Playing on foreign territory, they trounced both Florida and Westville Boys' High. But their most impressive achievement was probably getting within one point of the hosts on the first day. Not bad for a country agricultural college. Then again, we all know farmers make the best rugby players... just ask Os!

### FUTURE BOK?



Outside centre Hanro Louw could be Marlow's next international star – he's big, strong, fast and has already been snapped up into the Cheetahs junior ranks. He's also a handy goalkicker.

### GAME OF THE YEAR



The highlight was beating Grey Port Elizabeth at the Graeme College Festival. The two teams don't meet on a regular basis, so it was a once-off opportunity for Marlow to show the city boys how it's done.

### RUGBY PHILOSOPHY

"The Marlow forwards aren't huge guys, but they're very mobile, so the interplay between the backs and forwards is one of the trademarks of Marlow rugby," says coach Paul de Koker.

### ARCHRIVAL



They don't really have one. It used to be Cradock High School, but they've given up the fight. The Classic Clash against Oakdale is being set up as the big one now, but in truth the fixture is only a few years old.

### WEIRD MARLOW FACT

The school gets its misleading English-sounding name from the railway officer who originally built a railway siding at the property on which the school stands.



### NICKNAME

The Wolramme. Not only because sheep farming is a big part of the school's syllabus, but also because it's Marlow spelt backwards.

# ADVERT



# KING EDWARD VII SCHOOL

Rugby at KES began at, of all places, Johannesburg Station. Or, at least, on the site where the station now stands. That's where the first practices were held ahead of the school's first rugby season in 1932.

Interestingly, it was the Transvaal Rugby Union that helped construct the first field on school grounds – an investment that's still paying off for the Lions today, as KES continues to supply a steady stream of players to the provincial union.

The 2009 results show why the Lions do so well to keep an eye on the place. KES lost only one game this season, by two points away to Pretoria Boys' High. Westville Boys' nearly upset the Joburg giants, but had to make do with a 27-all draw.

But beating St Stithians, Jeppe and St John's comfortably were other 2009 highlights for KES, the school that gave us Bryan Habana. The institution has attracted a significant amount of talent from other parts of SA, which shows just how seriously they take their rugby. Nobody can say KES leaves stones unturned in its pursuit of success.

Eastern Cape arrival Siyabonga Ntubeni earned an SA Schools call-up this year, and seven KES players were picked for the Lions Craven Week side. KES, which hosts an annual Easter rugby festival, is now *the* place for rugby talent in Joburg.

## FUTURE BOK?



KES inside centre Jared Meyer made a big impression at the school this season with his all-round footballing skills. He's quick, defends well and has a great feel for the game.

## GAME OF THE YEAR



A big win away at Maritzburg College was the highlight, as everything went the way of KES and the team clicked better than in any other fixture.

## RUGBY PHILOSOPHY

"We don't have big, bruising forwards like some other schools, so we encourage a free, open game," says coach Carl Spilhaus. "We emphasize developing the skills of the players."

## ARCHRIVAL



Although St John's is closer to home, the biggest KES fixture of the year has always been against Jeppe.

## WEIRD KES FACT

The first team has special cardinal-red jerseys. The rest of the school's teams play in red, white and green. The only exception came during the second world war, when red cloth wasn't available.



## NICKNAME

The Teddy Bears – in honour of King Edward VII of England's nickname.



# HOËRSKOOL WATERKLOOF

Waterkloof is proof that your school doesn't need to date from the days before TV in order to excel at rugby. Compared to the other schools in the top ten, Waterkloof is pretty much a child. The co-ed Pretoria school dates back no further than 1979, and its first team didn't win a game until '81, but it still wields a mighty reputation on the rigger field. It's worth noting that Waterkloof is absolutely massive in terms of numbers – having well over 2000 pupils makes it more like a little university than a school.

Wikus van Heerden and Gary Botha are among the Springboks to have emerged from Waterkloof, which is situated in an upmarket part of Pretoria and close to the famous air force base of the same name. Given that Waterkloof was the first school to develop a rugby academy, it's no wonder its rugby remains constantly on the up.

## GAME OF THE YEAR



Beating Paarl Gim is a highlight for any school, and Waterkloof's 17-12 home win over the Cape side in April was no exception.

## RUGBY PHILOSOPHY

"This year half of our backline were Craven Week players, so we had the speed and ability to play an open 15-man game and spread the ball wide," says Head of Sport Henry Verster.

## ARCHRIVAL



Affies. Waterkloof's win against them in 1992 was a coming-of-age for their rugby, and the rivalry has only become more intense since. A more local rival (and also the school's televised Classic Clash) is Garsfontein, but this year's 48-0 result shows that this one is a bit one-sided.

## NICKNAME

Klofies

## WEIRD WATERKLOOF FACT

Before the school opened its doors in '79, a R10 prize was offered for the person who could come up with the best name for the new school. Other options included Hoërskool op die Kruijn and Hoërskool Pretoria-Oos, but Waterkloof presumably had a better ring to it.



## FUTURE BOK?



How about Van Heerden's younger brother, Schalk? He's an aggressive lock in the Bakkies Botha mould, and he's an equally hard worker. He's still in Grade 11, and so can look forward to another year in the first team.

For Rugby action at its best keep watching SuperSport

