

Can 2010 affirm Brand SA same as 1995?

 By [Dr Nikolaus Eberl](#)

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Can the 2010 FIFA World Cup equal the “moment of wonder” that was experienced back in 1995, minutes before the kickoff at the Rugby World Cup, and lead to a similar legacy that will once again unite the people of the Rainbow Nation?



In his recently published book, *Playing the Enemy: Nelson Mandela and the Game that made a Nation*, John Carlin quotes the team manager of the 1995 Springboks, Morne du Plessis, reminiscing the moment when - just minutes before kickoff - Madiba stepped out onto the field, wearing the South African Jersey:

"I don't think I'll ever experience a moment like this. It was a moment of magic, a moment of wonder. It was the moment I realised that there really was a chance this country could work. This man was showing that he could forgive, totally, and now they - white South Africa - showed in that response to him that they too wanted to give back, and that was how they did it, chanting 'Nelson! Nelson!' It was awesome. It was fairy-tale stuff! It was Sir Galahad: my strength is the strength of ten because my heart is pure."

National unity

A moment of national unity and shared civic pride that “released a wave of latent patriotism... and led to a spectacular upsurge of national reconciliation across all races in South Africa, as researchers and social scientists have reported” - this is how *The Argus* described the legacy of the 1995 Rugby World Cup.

Can the 2010 FIFA World Cup equal this “moment of wonder” and lead to a similar legacy that will once again unite the people of the Rainbow Nation?

In other words, what were the key factors that enabled 1995 to become a “unifying catalyst”? According to the article quoted above, the following were instrumental: Mandela's vociferous support for “our boys” and his wearing of the

Springbok cap and shirt; Archbishop's Tutu's public support; the rugby team acting in concert with the "One Team, One Country" slogan; the team's success on the field; and the singing of the new combined anthem and the waving of the new flag.

Active involvement instrumental

In particular, Mandela's active involvement was instrumental in forging unity between the team and the nation. Remembers Du Plessis:

“ There was a cause and effect connection between the Mandela factor and our performance in the field. It was cause and effect on a thousand fronts. In players overcoming the pain barrier, in a superior desire to win, in luck going our way because you make your own luck, in all kinds of tiny details that together or separately mark the difference between winning and losing. It all came perfectly together. Our willingness to be the national team and Mandela's desire to make the team the national team. ”

When the final whistle was blown, Mandela emerged again, still in his green jersey, and, to even louder cries of "Nel-son! Nel-son!", walked on to the pitch to shake the hand of François Pienaar. As he prepared to hand over the cup to his captain, he said, "François, thank you for what you have done for our country."

Pienaar, with extraordinary presence of mind, replied, "No, Mr President. Thank you for what you have done."

As political analyst Van Zyl Slabbert put it, "When Francois Pienaar said that into the microphone, with Mandela there listening, laughing and waving to the crowd and raising his cap to them, everybody was weeping. There wasn't a dry eye in the house."

When interviewed by John Carlin about the significance of the 1995 tournament, Mandela concluded:

“ Sport will always hold a place of pride for the role it played in nation-building during those first years of our new democracy. Those memorable days in June 1995 when South Africans from all backgrounds and persuasions took to the streets to celebrate a national achievement, commonly embraced, must continue to serve as an inspiration to the current and future generations... Like few other occasions or events, it demonstrated the social power of sport. As we have so often said, sport reaches people in ways, and to an extent, that politics and politicians never can. ”

Promoting national unity and affirming South Africa's most precious brand asset, the Rainbow Nation, has become the key determinant for creating a legacy that will last beyond the 2010 FIFA World Cup.

Points to one factor

Commenting on the legacy aspect of mega sporting events, Simon Anholt, the author of the global Nation Brand Index, points to the one factor that sets a memorable event apart from an average one: "The event gives the country permission to make one single, clear, striking point about itself; and if the only point it manages is its ability to run an event competently, or that it has money to burn on new facilities and lavish opening ceremonies, then by the time the next host takes over - or even sooner - the world will have forgotten that the event ever took place."

Let us make sure that the world will remember 2010 for the momentum it will give to reuniting the people of South Africa in a similar fashion to what the Rugby World Cup achieved in 1995, and for rekindling the notion of a truly functional Rainbow Nation in a world torn apart by conflict and division.

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