

Rugby – From There to Here

As the professional rugby season gets under way, I thought it might be an idea to do a 'piece to internet' about how the words and images get from there to here...

I have chosen, for my illustration, one of last season's Autumn International matches involving Scotland and one of the Southern Hemisphere's Fantastic Four– New Zealand – which was played on the 11th November 2012.



Match day preparation began on the 13th September when the EMC Tests Accreditation Application dropped through my in-box, with the deadline for acceptance being the 19th October. Better get my skates on, then...


On the 14th September, the SRU received my application, via return e-mail, and the game was on! Or, at least, it would be if my application was accepted! The game would still be on, but... oh, you know what I mean... So, a bit of foot tapping, gazing into space and frantic e-mail checking and there we were, 22nd October – Accepted!


10th November 2012, match day tomorrow, so the kit was selected, batteries charged, memory cards formatted, bag packed. Done! Maybe I'll just check it all again though...

11th November and match day today. With kick off at 2:30, off I set from home at 10:30. A bit early? Well, no. Parking around Murrayfield stadium is a bit limited and as some of the photography pack are not entitled to parking passes, you need to be early. Leaving my kit in the car, I wandered round to the Media building to collect my pass, bib and to find out which end of the pitch and photographer's room I have been

assigned. And, most importantly, where and when do we get fed! South stand, purple bib and South stand photographer's room – familiar, but oh, so cramped (or cosy, you might say...) and some room I've not been to before for din-dins. Someone will know.

Back to the car, get my 'stuff' and off across the outfield car park, through the security checks and into the room to find myself a wee corner out of the way, so assemble my equipment, check it out – again – stick my bib on and go for a wander to see who's about and take a few shots. Just to check, you understand...

12:00 – 12:30-ish and it's time to wander – you do a lot of 'wandering' – off to lunch. Same old roast beef, salmon, roast pork, smoked mackerel, gammon, potato or prawn salad, green salad – you get the idea – after which it's about time to get sorted, bib on again and out to the pitch. 

Put my metaphorical towel on a suitable spot and off I go to do the rounds of the warm-up, the various TV stations doing their set-ups and run throughs with their presenters. The BBC ones are always familiar, Jill Douglas, John Inverdale and a variety of former players, now 'punditting' for their crust. Pre-match entertainment is provided, again, by the Red Hot Chilli Pipers playing an all too familiar selection of their tunes, again, to the gathering crowd. I like them, but they  must have a wider repertoire. They must...

I have a friendly exchange with a supporter who thinks I'm mad for doing all this for no pay. He has paid £50 for his ticket, plus travel and food and drink to sit up in the sky. I've accessed all over, had doors and gates opened for me, had a wee chat about hockey with Scott Hastings, I'm down at the end of the pitch and have been fed and watered. For the price of a gallon (that's 4.56 litres to you youngsters!) of petrol.

Who's mad?

Getting close now and kick-off is preceded by some of Scotland's Olympic and Paralympic athletes who are formed up into a guard of honour to usher the players onto the pitch to line up for...

The Anthems. Both New Zealand versions and then 'Flower of Scotland'. Belted out by 50,000+ voices in an enclosed arena... Wow! is the only word to describe the volume, the passion, the sheer feeling of a wall of sound battering away at your body and your senses... Fantastic! It's almost enough to make you rush out and vote for President Alex... Almost... You can never tire of it. Ever. Then it all goes quiet as the All Blacks get in position for 'Ka Mate' – The Haka! I defy anyone not to feel the hairs on the back of your neck tingling – even now as I write this – when the Haka is performed.

The Scots take up position, arms linked on their 10 metre line and scrum half, Piri Weepu, leads off.

✘ As we're all concentrating on the Haka, the noise from the crowd starts to build, so curiosity and all that, takes over and there we have it. Scotland are slowly advancing in a line toward the All Blacks with the referee trying to, at least, slow them down a little. That's it. Challenge accepted and met. Sir Chris Hoy delivers the match ball and 14:33, GAME ON!

✘


16:19. GAME OVER! 51-22 to the All Blacks. A sound beating? Nothing else than a win for the visitors was expected, however, Scotland played out of their skins, taking the opposition on and generally giving an excellent all-round performance. And, in the process, becoming the first team in a long while to score three tries against the World Champions.

Job done – for them. ✘

For me, it's back to the 'cosy' room, pack away my kit, curse quietly as someone has run off with my programme and fight my way back to the car. Luckily, the vehicles in the car parks are held until the foot traffic eases a bit, so fifteen minutes from the final whistle and off I go home, my head swirling with details and scores and statistics to try and remember for the match report.

Once I'm home, – 40 minutes from pitch side – the photos are uploaded to the computer – all 891 of them and the work starts – after I've had my tea, anyway.

I usually write the report, backing up my memory of the match by working through the images, using those taken of the scores and scorers to build the story and inserting small snippets I might have remembered. Once that's done, usually by the next morning, I check what I've written against the official SRU match report, just to ensure that I have the correct details – and no, I don't 'paraphrase' or plagiarise as the writing journalists have a different 'view' and experience to fall back on, so it would just turn into a poor rehash – and off it goes into cyberspace for our Editor, to collect at her leisure!

But, I'm still not done as I now have my editing to do... Firstly, get rid of all the 'dead' images. No ball, blurry, near duplicates, etc, all go to whittle the numbers down to about 700-odd. Another round of selection nets me 178 images 'suitable' for final editing.  This bit takes a while..... While over and successfully saved, now is the time to upload to my on-line gallery – as 'advertised' at the bottom of all my match reports – and before I know it, it's Monday lunch-time, and time for 'Neighbours' – we all have our secrets – as the wheels of the internet churn away. Album saved, made public, job done. Coffee...

So there we have it. When you guys out here – there are some, yes? – access The Edinburgh Reporter and see ‘Rugby – Scotland v New Zealand’ on the Sunday, you now know – you might not care – what goes into the preparation for the eventual report and why the gallery of images, infuriatingly, lags a day or so behind.

And all for the love and the glory. And a very nice buffet...

Web

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http://www.photoboxgallery.com/jlp-photography/collection?album_id=1562533375