

Making the right moves with the right players

POSITIONS

Wingers

Come in two handy sizes: 1. Skinny playboys who stand a kilometre away from the action, straining to see who's winning the fight between the forwards; 2. Giant, quiet, religious types who operate like tanks with two forward gears and no steering wheel, and like rucking over the top of fullbacks. A winger's job is to "score with the ball".

Props

Frightening carnivores who operate as a meat wedge at the business end of the scrum. They are known for drinking an inhuman amount of beer, eating flyhalves as a small snack, and carrying scars on their ears, faces, and, strangely, knuckles. The professional era suddenly required them to run and pass the ball as well, creating the welcome spectator sport of "laugh at the puffing fat man".

Flyhalves

The brains of the team, this often involves issuing detailed instructions to the eager backs, before panicking at the sight of opposing forwards and kicking into touch.

Halfbacks

Tiny, big-mouthed link between forwards and backs. Known for being a useful extra referee, trying it on with people five times their size, or lying on the ground receiving treatment. See also Gregan, George.

Locks

Ogres masquerading as men, often found elbowing people in the face or trampling people enthusiastically. Required to act like Circus Oz in the lineout.

Flankers

Frustrated men, who might be forwards and might be backs, but aren't either, and take it out by tackling everything in sight until told the match is over.

PLAYS

Ruck

Where up to 20 people pile on top of the tackled player. The referee waits until said player is seeing a tunnel of light and beckoning grandparents, then blows the whistle.

Maul

The tackled player stays upright while everyone competes to get the ball off him by peeling back his fingers. At the first snapping sound, the referee blows up.

Rolling maul

Same as above, but with a higher degree of movement and fouling. Mainstay of English Rugby for years, with footage often sold as videos for insomniacs.

Lineout

A throw in, where players get lifted as high as possible to avoid the elbows flying in their direction, while dishing it out themselves.

Scrum

A pushing game, designed to give the backs a chance to catch their breath and comb their hair, and the forwards to heavily beat each other. Things go on in scrums that no-one is prepared to talk about. Terrible things.

is played by Welshmen with huge sideburns and socks round their ankles. It is a good try, though.

What happened?

It was a wet and windy afternoon at Cardiff Arms Park in 1973...

Sounds horrible.

... Barbarians against the All Blacks. Welshman Phil Bennett began a movement from near the Barbarians' own try line, side-stepped his way past four NZ defenders then passed it on through JPR Williams, John Pullin, John Dawes, Tom David, Derek Quinell and eventually to Gareth Edwards who beat the cover defence and scored in the corner. The Baa-Baas won 23-11.

All with their socks down?

Yes. And long hair.

♥♥ Jannie de Beer's five drop-goals in a match

So what?

It's a world record. During the 1999 Rugby World Cup quarter-final, the



Springboks binned all that flashy running stuff to grind the bejeezus out of the English pack. Tactic number two was to give the ball to flyhalf Jannie de Beer, who didn't miss.

Who won?

South Africa, 44-21. "Judge me on the World Cup results," said England coach Clive Woodward. To which, after the match, came the reply, "You're an idiot."

♥♥ Campese's pass

Rare sight, was it? I'm sure he made more than one.

Not as bad as this. In the deciding Test at the SFS between Australia and the British Lions, the score stood 12-9 to the Wallabies. David Campese caught a drop-goal attempt near his own try line, grounded it for a restart at the 22-metre line, and everything was fine.

Was it really?

No, it wasn't. Instead of grounding it, he decided to attack, and threw the ball to fullback Greg Martin, who was so amazed he spilt it. Welshman Ieuan Evans darted in and scored.

What happened next?

The Lions won by a point. Years later, and even after endless brilliant decisions and plays that did go his way, old Campo still hasn't lived that one down. The two of them even got on the luncheon circuit because of it. 