

YOU'RE A LEGEND...

DAVID
CAMPESE

The Wallabies great answers *Alpha* readers questions on knock-ons, corners and Gregan

THE NAME David Campese is one of the very few to have transcended the closed circle of rugby union lore to become one of the household names of sport. The maverick winger played more than 100 games for the Wallabies and scored an astounding 64 tries. He has never been known for his shy, retiring nature...

Of all your games for the Wallabies, which one was the most memorable?

D Gilleat, via email

The game against France in '87 at Concord Oval, when I broke the record for tries. But we didn't win the Test and it was more important to win. Then you go to '91, the World Cup. Being part of a great try in '82 in New Zealand, when we ran the ball against the All Blacks and it went through 11 sets of hands and I scored under the posts.

What was it like making your debut against the All Blacks in Christchurch aged just 19?

G Towne, Broome, WA

I was lucky because, coming from a rugby league background, I didn't know much about [union] at all. I started playing in '79 and made the Wallabies in '82, so it was quite a quick rise. It was a lot of fun; unfortunately we didn't win. We made a lot of mistakes. But we beat them in the second Test – so second Test against the All Blacks and beating them wasn't a bad record.

(Alpha: in the World Cup '91 against the All Blacks you ignored the haka...)

The haka is great for the game, but it's an individual thing how you approach it. I played against them 29 times, so it's not like I didn't know what the haka was all about. I just thought at the time, "Well, I'm just going to kick a ball about – rather than watching the guys do the haka and trying to intimidate us."

How much time did you spend perfecting the goosetep?

C Bramley, via email

None. I didn't practise at all. I first did it when I was playing league for the Queanbeyan Blues. I got the ball underneath the goalposts and saw these two kids coming towards me – I did something, I didn't know what it was. I ended up scoring up the other end, looked back and the two kids had collided heads. I thought, "That looks pretty good," so I kept on using it.

That knock-on against England in the '91 World Cup final – was that rugby's equivalent of Maradona's "hand of God"?

B Elliott, via email

You should ask (B Elliott) what would he have done in my position. I had

instead of the good things. That's life. I don't know if anybody watched the week after that, I played for the Anzacs against the Lions and I did exactly the same thing and it worked.

Have you ever, in the course of conversation, used the phrase "Easy Campese"?

L Brown, via email

No, I've never used it, but I've got T-shirts in my shop called "Too Easy". I didn't put Easy Campese because I thought it was a bit on myself.

Do you really hate England? (We assume he means the team, not the country.)

D Morling, via email

The problem is, they've got everything and they still have a problem winning. We won the World Cup in '91 with two teams. We won in '99 with three teams. England have got all the players, all the resources, all the money, and I think it's a typical "We should win" [attitude]. Then you have Clive baby (Woodward), who was an absolute idiot. The thing about World Cups – if you haven't got the players it doesn't matter how good a coach you are. He had great players who performed at the time. The story is that during the final of the (2003) World Cup, with extra time, Clive Woodward came down to the team and Martin Johnson said, "Clive, I've got it. Don't worry about it, I've got it." The team didn't want to listen to him. And if they win they give them knighthoods. Bloody hell, we won a World Cup and we got a decanter.

Is it true that before every game you used to read a poem that your mother gave you?

R Youngs, via email

Yes. In '88 I wasn't playing well against the All Blacks – John Kirwan ran around me many times. My mum sent me a poem she found – by Nancy Simms I think, called *Winners Take Chances*, and yes, I used to read it every game. *(Alpha: Can you remember it now?)* "Winners take chances. Like everyone else they fear failing, but they refuse to let fear control them. When the going gets tough, the tough get going." I've written it in a couple of my books in the front page.

I want George Gregan sacked. Why do the selectors keep picking him?

A Coorey, Melbourne, Vic

George Gregan doesn't want to get sacked because the money's good. He's hanging on because of the money and he's got nothing else in his life. He used to be a good player when he came in – a fantastic player. But he made a comment a couple of years ago like, "You don't need passion to play rugby." That comes from the captain of the Wallabies, which is really strange.

(Alpha: Why do they keep picking him?)

The problem is Rod McQueen picked Gregan and Larkham for 10 years and wouldn't give anyone else a chance. And now we're in a situation where we haven't had good half-backs – no one's been given the opportunity. We used to have a fantastic back line and now we struggle.

Who's the best player you ever played with – and against? Do you think you were better than both?

D Butland, via email

Mark Ella was probably the best player I played with – he was very natural. His style of rugby you'll probably never see again. Best I played against was Serge Blanco and a guy called Jean-Baptiste Lafond – an absolutely fantastic player. I don't think I was better than Mark Ella. I learnt a lot off him.

What do you say to people who say you're too outspoken?

J Tidman, via email

I love the game – why shouldn't I comment? If you've got a point of view, why not say it? I've been in the game – I gave 20 years of my life to Australia, so why shouldn't I?

Want to ask Sam Newman what he's playing at? Got something you need to ask Shane Heal? Who WOULD you like to see on the rack? Send your question to: alphalegends@newsmagazines.com.au

"We won the World Cup and got a decanter."

Rory Underwood and Jeremy Guscott outside and there was only myself.

I realised I was in a bit of trouble.

I wasn't trying to knock it down,

I was just trying to stop the pass from (Peter) Winterbottom, whose passing skills probably weren't as good as a back's. Maybe I should have just gone for the intercept and scored at the other end – that would've really pissed them off.

Campo's corner and the 1989 British Lions tour – does it still haunt you?

S Martin, via email

It doesn't really haunt me. It's interesting, when I go to speaker functions – someone in the audience is going to bring it up. I made a mistake – I made many mistakes. But people remember the bad things