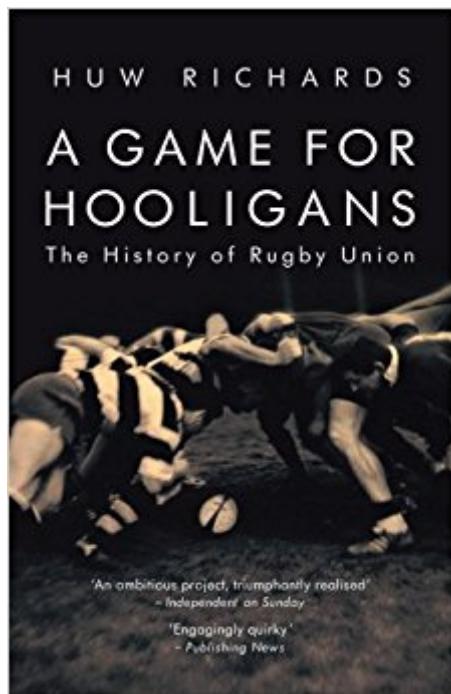


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# A Game For Hooligans: The History Of Rugby Union



## Synopsis

The rugby union has undergone immense change in the past two decades; introducing a World Cup, accepting professionalism, and creating a global market in players. This resource covers all of the great matches, teams, and players while also placing them in the context of the social, political, and economic changes which have affected the course of rugby's development. International in scope, this history includes not only Britain and France but also the great rugby powers of the southern hemisphere and other successful rugby nations, such as Argentina, Fiji, and Japan. Rich in anecdotes; including the story of why 1895 is the most important date in both the rugby union and rugby league history, allegations of devil worship at a Welsh rugby club, the game's contribution to the Cuban Revolution, and why the most fearsome of all New Zealand forwards was also a proficient knitter; this reference is a must-read for any fan of the oval ball.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

A Game for Hooligans, brought forth a font of information on how "the game they play in Heaven" was invented and evolved to what it is today. Huw Richards obviously put in a ton of research into this, presenting fact as fact, and fiction as fiction. He separated the two beautifully. Well done Huw! A hearty thanks. Don Maser

Grew up watching/playing Aussie rules, but moved to America and started looking for anything that wasn't NFL "football". The 2014 NRL final between the Roosters and Bulldogs, with Sam Burgess playing with a busted face, sealed the deal for me and made me a committed rugby fan. So,

basically, I'm a very new fan to rugby. I read this book as I was watching the second half of the ITM Cup season unfold and I was looking for more insights as to what I was seeing when I watched rugby. This is not the service this book is trying to provide. Fortunately, I am a history buff, so I went along for the ride with a good attitude. This is basically a history of rugby book, which is an outstanding concept. Rugby is a story that needs to be told. Now, if you are uninitiated or recently initiated, and NOT total Anglophile, you will get lost during major parts of this book. This book could have been MASSIVELY assisted by a few pages of maps. Richards tells a global story, a story of nations at times. Some maps would help! I would give 5 stars for this book if it had maps. Speaking to Richard's writing style, he has an avuncular, story-teller tone that he maintains throughout, quite pleasurable to read. His approach assumes you have some background in rugby, which is fine, probably most people who buy this book do. I can't imagine a rugby fan having a library without this book, but I would recommend it to a total novice. Other than no maps (which you can get around by looking places up online), I dinged this book 1 star because toward the end you get page after page of summaries of international rugby games that, I guess, were of some kind of importance.

Huw Richards's book is an engaging, and often quite funny, history of rugby union. (To my mind it is far superior to the cold and disdainful "Social History of Rugby Union", by Tony Collins.) Richards's is a clever writer. He crams a lot of info into this little book, while still making space for enlightening anecdotes. And his love for the game shines through. A very nice read.

This book gives us the history of Rugby Union, with mentions of Soccer football, Gaelic Football, U.S. Football, Rugby League and Aussie Rules when their history impacts the history of Union. We see the origin of Rugby Union and of soccer as each emerged from the myriad local rules popular in Great Britain in the Nineteenth Century. The story of the game's origin at one point in time at Rugby School, with one player given credit for the change, is debunked as being as silly as the story that a former Union general, Abner Doubleday, invented baseball out of nowhere in Cooperstown NY. Well, really it isn't as silly. It turns out that the rules used at Rugby School were the rules that various schools and clubs settled on when they decided that they were not going to play soccer. And the public (meaning private) schools such as Rugby School, are shown as being very influential in the spread of the game, as well as giving it such class-consciousness that one sometimes still sees in those longing for the good old days of the amateur game. Then we see the conflict that gave rise to Rugby League, a game that seems mid-way to U.S. football in some ways, although it was never played much over here. And we see the unintended consequence of the breakaway of the

clubs that went to League: English Rugby Union was weakened, making it possible for Ireland, Scotland, Wales and later on France and Italy to contest the Four, Five and finally Six Nations tournament that has been so instrumental in making Union popular. We see Australia, with three sets of rules, four counting soccer, weakened in comparison to New Zealand, where only League competes with Union. And we see that non-whites played Rugby in South Africa even before their liberation and the World Cup that came as if as a reward. All in all, it is a fascinating story and well-told. Just be advised that it does not include the most recent World Cup.

A moving dedication begins this extensive history of rugby, but this isn't for beginners. The fine writer and sincere fan Huw Richards created this detailed book, and it's good if you're already an informed insider. I suggest the very informative and fun book: *Rugby Union For Dummies*; it's published in Australia, with great descriptions/histories of all the major arenas. I still have to read *Odd-Shaped Balls: Mischief-Makers, Miscreants and Mad-Hatters of Rugby*. A very basic starter-book is: *A Simple Guide to Rugby Union*. Now, if only U.S. would carry the 2012 RBS Six Nations Championship on DVD! The Welsh won the Triple Crown, and the Grand Slam, with the aid of superb Tight-Head Prop (#3) Adam Rhys Jones: 20-stone of towering talent.

A very detailed history of the sport. At times I had to re-read sentences, due to Richard's writing style. I think he could have researched the US Olympic rugby teams more: it wasn't "basically a Stanford team." Santa Clara University and University of California were well represented on those two Olympic teams, as well as a Swarthmore student. Other than that I thought that there could have been more written about the New Zealand tour to the British Isles in the fall/winter of 1972-73 and how they weren't as successful on that tour as they had been and have continued to be on other tours.

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