



SOUTH AFRICAN SPORT  
HALL OF FAME

## MORNÉ DU PLESSIS

*Rugby*

When rangy eighthman Morné du Plessis was chosen to lead the 1975 Springboks against France, he was following in the footsteps of his father Felix, and the pair remain the only father and son combination to have captained South Africa.

The younger du Plessis proved to be an inspirational and highly respected leader, which was hardly surprising given his family's distinguished sporting heritage. Father Felix apart, Morné's great uncle Nic du Plessis toured New Zealand as a prop and lock with the 1921 Springboks. Furthermore, Felix married Pat Smethurst, who captained the national hockey team, while her brother Horace Smethurst skippered the South African soccer team to Australia in 1947.

Morné was born a mere six weeks after his father had captained the Springboks in the last three tests of their 4-0 whitewash of the 1949 All Blacks. He attended one of the great cradles of Springbok rugby, Grey College in Bloemfontein, where he proved as adept at cricket as he did at rugby. A gangly seam bowler, he was selected for the South African Schools XI and later played first-class cricket for Western Province before opting to concentrate on rugby.

At Grey, du Plessis initially played flyhalf, before moving to centre to make way for another future Springbok, Dawie Snyman. It was at Stellenbosch University where he made the

switch to eighthman, a role for which his height, athleticism and ball-playing abilities made him a natural.

After turning out for Western Province for a season, Du Plessis made his Springbok debut in 1971 in Australia. He also made two appearances in the disastrous 3-0 series defeat against the 1974 British Lions. The following season he was installed as captain and in 1976, he led South Africa to a hard fought 3-1 series win over Andy Leslie's All Blacks. Four years later Du Plessis was at the helm as the Springboks subdued Bill Beaumont's British Lions by the same margin.

Of the 22 appearances du Plessis made in the green and gold, the Springboks were on the winning side 18 times, and he was victorious in 13 of the 15 tests he captained.

When South Africa hosted the 1995 World Cup, du Plessis was a natural choice for manager and his unruffled, diplomatic leadership was a notable asset to the victorious Springbok team.

Today du Plessis fulfils various sporting roles including chairman of Laureus South Africa and chairman of the Chris Burger/Petro Jackson Players' Fund, which was established to provide financial assistance to players who have sustained serious rugby injuries.



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