



Michael Cheika

HSBC Waratahs Head Coach

Born in Sydney, 45-year-old Michael Cheika took over as the HSBC Waratahs' Head Coach in October 2012, returning to his home state after leading Irish Province Leinster to Heineken Cup glory and spending two seasons as director of rugby with French Top 14 side Stade Français.

Cheika moved into coaching at the end of a playing career that saw him play over 300 games for the famous Randwick club. In 14 seasons with the Galloping Greens, he won seven Shute Shield Premiership titles between 1985 and 1999, captaining the side in his last two seasons. The tough No. 8 made 212 first grade appearances and is the club's sixth most capped player of all time. In June 1988, he played alongside the likes of David Campese, David Knox, Gary Ella and Ewen McKenzie and Simon Poidevin as Randwick took on the touring All Blacks in what has since been described as one of the most memorable rugby matches ever played in Australia.

As well as playing for Australia U21s (1988) and representing NSW on their spring tour of the UK in 1997, Cheika played in Europe, representing French Division 1 side Castres Olympique (1989/90 and 1990/91) and Division 2 outfit CASG Paris (1991/92) before spending two seasons on the Tuscany Coast with Rugby Livorno, where he played alongside David Knox, between 1992 and 1994. In 1993 he represented an Italian Selection XV against the All Blacks.

Hanging up his boots in 1999, Cheika began his coaching career at Padova, where he spent a year as head coach of Series A side Petrarca Rugby, before returning to take charge at Randwick in 2001. His three year tenure with the Galloping Greens culminated in the club achieving both first and second grade Premiership titles in 2004.

In May 2005, Cheika replaced Declan Kidney as Head Coach of Leinster, where he stayed for five years, overhauling the squad and leading the Province to a first ever Heineken Cup Victory.

In his first season he took Leinster to a Heineken Cup semi-final, losing 30-6 to eventual champions Munster at Lansdowne Road.

Despite failing to qualify from their Heineken Cup pool in 2007/08, Leinster ended the season as Celtic League champions for the first time since 2001. Sealing the title with a six-try 41-8 victory over Newport Gwent Dragons in front of a sell-out crowd at their new home, the RDS Arena, the title was Cheika's first trophy as Leinster coach. The following season, Leinster topped their Heineken Cup pool and went on to overcome Harlequins at the Stoop, a match famous for the 'Bloodgate Scandal', before overcoming their underdog status to topple Munster 25-6 in the Croke Park semi-final. Watched by a crowd of over 82,200, the match broke the world record attendance for a club rugby union game. Their 19-16 final victory over English Premiership champions Leicester Tigers at Edinburgh's Murrayfield Stadium saw the Province claim its first every European crown. Included

among Cheika's coaching team that year was former Randwick head coach and HSBC Waratahs assistant coach Alan Gaffney, while the team's on field efforts were helped by a man of the match performance from Rocky Elsom and a drop goal from inspirational Ireland captain Brian O'Driscoll.

When he left for Stade Français in June 2010, the club was known as the market leader. Having overhauled the club's entire rugby operations, from the training facilities and techniques, to the team's player recruitment and retention policies, the club's strong identity was reflected in a 400% increase in season ticket holders.

Also a successful businessman, in 2001 he set up fashion distribution company Live Fashion, opening a worldwide distribution network three years later. Founded on the same three fundamental disciplines of his coaching success; leadership, management and technical expertise, in 2010 when he sold the company, it employed 20 staff across Sydney London and Hong Kong. He remains on the board of directors.

He lives in Sydney with wife Stephanie and his three children.