

Invictus

Invictus is a critically acclaimed 2009 film [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Invictus_\(film\)](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Invictus_(film)), produced and directed by Clint Eastwood, that relates the true story of Nelson Mandela's engagement with the South African national Rugby (Union) team, the Springboks http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/South_Africa_national_rugby_union_team, during the 1995 World Cup Rugby matches hosted by South Africa http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/1995_Rugby_World_Cup. Mandela was bound and determined to build a unified, rainbow nation, inclusive of the Afrikaners who happen to love rugby. The film is based on the book *Playing the Enemy: Nelson Mandela and The Game That Changed a Nation* by John Carlin. It stars Morgan Freeman as Nelson Mandela http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nelson_mandela and Matt Damon as François Pienaar http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/François_Pienaar, the captain of the Springboks. Both Freeman and Damon have been nominated for Academy Awards for their roles in the film.

The film starts in 1990 with the release of Nelson Mandela from prison (after 27 years of his life spent in captivity) by the apartheid government of F.W. de Klerk http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Frederik_Willem_de_Klerk. It quickly transitions to 1995 with Mandela's election as president of the post-apartheid Republic of South Africa. The entire world is left wondering what to expect from Mandela in his dealings with his former oppressors, the white South Africans who benefited with economic supremacy for some 200+ years, and the capitalist society they built. The fact that Mandela reaches out to Afrikaners via the Rugby World Cup is rather amazing to all involved. Indeed it is a remarkable testimony to Mandela's commitment to healing the nation and bringing all of its peoples together. As you can see this is just one example of Mandela's commitment to nation building that goes beyond the official government activities associated with the Truth and Reconciliation Commission. Nelson Mandela is a most remarkable individual and South Africa was indeed a lucky nation to have him as the founding father; you can see how deserving he was of the Nobel Peace Prize even though it was awarded to him in 1993, well before he made his mark as president.

The film was made on location in Johannesburg and Cape Town. Indeed keep an eye out for some of the sites we will see in Cape Town: Table Mountain and the Cape Peninsula, the Waterfront, Newlands Stadium, the area around the University of Cape Town, etc. There is a series of scenes at the Robben Island Prison where Mandela was held for 18 years, including his actual cell. If time permits we will try to visit this site while we are in Cape Town. Also look for a cameo appearance by the Soweto String Quartet playing one of its most well-known pieces.

The final World Cup rugby match is between the *Springboks* and the New Zealand national team, the *All Blacks*. There continues to be an intense rivalry between these two teams which over the last several years have been ranked as either number one or two in the world.

Rugby in South Africa is still largely a sport identified with the Afrikaner community. In the film there was only non-white on the team, Chester Williams (who is actually so-called-coloured, ethnically). Only recently has this begun to change. In contrast Cricket is identified with the English and Indian communities, while soccer is a national sport identified with Black South Africans, and the national team is known as *Bafana Bafana*. Of course an interesting parallel for us is that the 2010 Soccer World Cup is hosted in South Africa, just a couple of weeks before we arrive.

Mandiba: You will hear Mandela referred to as *Mandiba* throughout the film by many associates of his Xhosa ethnic group. *Madiba* is the name of the clan of which Nelson Mandela is a member. A clan name is much more important than a surname as it refers to the ancestor from which a person is descended. Madiba was the name of a Thembu chief who ruled in the Transkei region in the 18th century and the Madiba clan is still very important in the region. It is considered very polite to use someone's clan name (from WikiAnswers).

Bokke: You will see this cheer used during the rugby matches. Bokke references the South African rugby community – and is a diminutive reference to the Springbok team; the cheer in Afrikaans is "hier kom die Bokke" translates as "here come the Springboks". Incidentally springbok are one of the most common, iconic antelope to be found throughout South Africa [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Springbok_\(antelope\)](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Springbok_(antelope)). We will surely get a chance to see these in the wild and likely taste them too.