AS THE NATIONAL COACH.

IT IS AN ENORMOUS PRIVILEGE TO WORK WITH AN EXTENDED **TEAM WHOSE READINESS AND CONVITWENT KNOWS**

NO BOUNDARIES

EDDIE JONES, NATIONAL COACH



Reaching the Rugby World Cup Final was an outstanding achievement by the Australian squad, but the disappointment of not taking the final prize remains with us all.

The management team went to great lengths to plan a detailed campaign, but the players did an even better job to fulfil those expectations.

The year began with much speculation about the make up of the World Cup squad, but first we had seven Tests to play. Those Tests were not experimental, however, it was a chance for several players to mount their case for selection later in the year. We started slowly but showed great courage in the wind and rain at Eden Park to very nearly defeat New Zealand.

We knew then we were on the right track for the RWC.

At the heart of our preparation was a robust physical program put in place by Strength and Conditioning Coach, Jason Weber.

To be competitive we needed to be fitter, faster and stronger.

After the domestic Test series, the squad was put through an intense running program that placed us in a strong position to play out the Tournament. As history has recorded, we went the distance thanks to our fitness base.

But fitness alone cannot lead to success, our skill level needed and continues to need improvement.

For as long as I can remember, Australian Rugby has been about running Rugby. The challenge now is to retain that spirit while developing a greater skill base to compete in set pieces in which the Northern Hemisphere excels.

We have introduced specialists in various areas such as kicking to improve our ability to win in any conditions. Adaptability plays a big part here and I'll use our performance in the Semi Final against the All Blacks as an example.

Beating New Zealand at that time required a ball-in-hand policy and many of the play makers that night had to fight their instincts to make it work. In this case it was run and pass with little or no kicking from inside our defensive zone. There will be other adaptations to make in the future, but we must continue to improve our skills to accomplish this.

The head coach demands much of his players and management team, and once again I must acknowledge their dedication to duty.

The logistics in a RWC year are a massive undertaking and high praise must go to Wallaby Team Manager, Phil Thomson, and his tireless assistant, Scott Harrison,

The coaching staff worked long and hard over many months to develop drills, game plans and training programs, and I would like to also thank them for their efforts.

Many of them have moved on to other projects, like Ewen McKenzie to New South Wales, and Glen Ella to Italy. Their contribution was enormous and both shall be missed. John Muggleton's credentials were again on show during the RWC as the Wallaby defence was the best in Tournament.

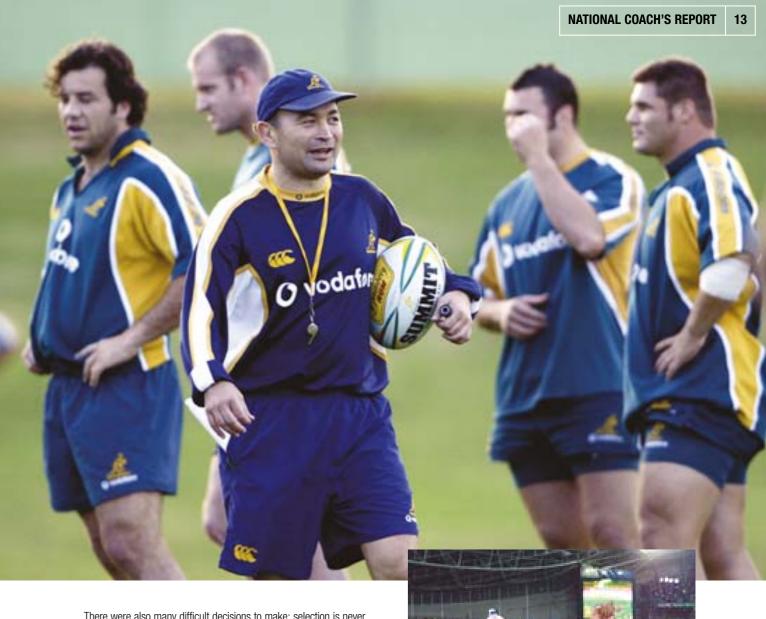
Technical support and analysis was another demanding task for Anthony Wakeling and his extended shifts were appreciated.

The medical team, led by Dr Martin Raftery, worked countless hours to repair wounded bodies.

The massive hands of Cameron Lillicrap, our National Physiotherapist, mended many injuries, as did David Bick and massage therapist, Matt Young.

I've always said that being the defending world champions gives you no advantage whatsoever. The slate started clean for all 20 teams and that included Australia. What we did appreciate though, was the overwhelming support we received from the Australian public.

Media scrutiny was intense but not unexpected. Our Communications Manager, Djuro Sen, and his Media Unit Producer, Anthony George, ensured that there was maximum exposure with minimal distraction for the squad.



There were also many difficult decisions to make; selection is never an easy task, but in a RWC year it definitely becomes harder. I'd like to commend the Wallabies themselves for their part here. Having a World Cup squad of 30 means disappointing at least seven players and severely disappointing eight.

But at no stage did the good of the individual dilute the good of the team and the cause. George Gregan's leadership here must also be commended. I would also like to mention the members of the shadow squad who had the toughest job of them all.

To outgoing CEO John O'Neill and his staff, we express our deep thanks for a job well done in delivering the RWC to Australia, then conducting it flawlessly.

To all of the Classic Wallabies, thank you for your inspiring words. Your presence was a timely reminder to us all about the great responsibility we have to this great game and country.

I think the greatest compliment for Australia came from All Blacks coach, John Mitchell, when he called the Wallabies a "smart team" during the RWC.

It is my hope that the new Wallaby brains trust will keep challenging the minds and bodies of our small, but talented, player base to remain a respected force in world Rugby.

Eddie Jones

National Coach

While the aim was to win the Tournament, the Wallaby coaching staff also wanted to ensure that the players enjoyed the experience.