



EDDIE JONES
NATIONAL COACH

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Finishing the season with an historic and close victory over England at Twickenham, Australia's first since 1998, was a fitting way to complete a satisfactory year for the Wallabies.

Off the back of a Rugby World Cup, our aim was to win every Test, both at home and away. To do this we had to defeat England, France, South Africa and New Zealand, as well as Scotland and the newly-formed Pacific Islanders.

While it was disappointing that we struggled to achieve our goals away from home, especially on the big occasions in Durban, for the Tri Nations title, and then against the French at Stade de France, our Test record in Australia was pleasing.

The convincing victory over England in Brisbane was not only a satisfying achievement, but also showed us just how well we could play and specifically, how well we could attack. Rugby in Australia, like so many other sports in this country, has always been about attacking and in our game, running the ball. To defeat England with limited possession, we showed good skill and precision, but it was also a sign of where we want to take the game.

Since the Rugby World Cup, the game has continued to evolve with a continuing emphasis on defence. Precise attack, especially off first and second phase possession is vital. The days of holding onto the ball, phase after phase and breaking down an opposition's defence are gone. The Wallabies need to become more flexible and adaptable in attack, continue to be solid in defence and round it off with clinical precision at the primary contest of scrum, lineout and kick-offs.



National Coach Eddie Jones at the 2004 Wallaby Squad announcement and Season Launch. Getty Images

To play the perfect attacking game of Rugby, we require the players to be fitter, faster and stronger. Working off a good benchmark from the fitness levels required during the 2003 season, Strength & Conditioning Coordinator, Jason Weber continues to improve and demand more from the players. Professional and player specific programs meant a number of increases in fitness and physical strength, ensuring preparations for the opening Tests of the season were sound.

To meet the demands of the Test schedule in 2004 we placed much emphasis on the quality of individual and team preparation, both at home and overseas and we need to keep improving in this across all areas. In international Rugby, only two to three percent separates the top six teams in the world. Preparation is extremely important.

To the players and team management, I would like to thank you and acknowledge your dedication, commitment and hard work.



National Coach Eddie Jones instructs the players during training at Coffs Harbour. Getty Images

Changes to the coaching personnel and structure post-Rugby World Cup brought with it new demands and personalities within the Wallaby Management team. Thanks to Andrew Blades, Roger Gould, Ross Reynolds and Scott Wisemantel for their contribution and assistance in 2004. Physiotherapist and former Test prop Cameron Lillicrap also assisted in a technical capacity with the scrum, while long-time Technical Adviser, John Muggleton and Technology Analyst, Anthony Wakeling again made a significant contribution to the program.

Another full travel itinerary, including 11 different Test match cities and camps in Coffs Harbour and Sydney ensured high demands in the area of logistics and team support. Praise must go to Wallaby Team Manager Phil Thomson for his diligence and attention to detail and to his Assistant, Scott Harrison, who after eight years on and off with the Wallabies has now moved on to work with the NSW Waratahs. Thanks also to Administration Assistant Lizzie Greenwood, who works long hours diligently and enthusiastically.

Dr Martin Raftery led a committed and tireless medical team to ensure players were at their peak for each Test match.

His work and that of Physiotherapists David Bick and Cameron Lillicrap was immeasurable, alongside Simon Atkin in his first year as Wallaby Massage Therapist.

The increased profile of Rugby ensured continual media scrutiny as expected in 2004 and Communications Coordinator Lachlan Searle and Media Unit Producer Anthony George handled all requests professionally, promoting strong coverage of the team both at home and overseas.

Throughout 2004, a total of 35 players were involved with the Wallaby squad, with six making their Test debut (Mark Chisholm, Nic Henderson, Matt Henjak, Stephen Hoiles, Clyde Rathbone, and Radike Samo). As always, ahead of any Test match or tour, a number of players experience the disappointment of non-selection, but I would like to congratulate everyone involved in the way the team and individuals handled themselves in this process.

George Gregan, who became the most capped Australian player of all time in 2004, showed leadership and disciplinary skills that should be commended. He is an outstanding captain.

I should also mention those players who joined the Wallabies on the Spring Tour as part of the Australia A Squad and who prepared and played with distinction, defeating the French Barbarians.

To Managing Director & CEO Gary Flowers and his staff, thanks for your support during the Bundaberg Rum Rugby Series and the professional manner in which the ARU hosts international teams and Tests.

To all the Classic Wallabies, thank you for reminding us of the tradition and history that surrounds the great game of Rugby and more importantly, the Wallabies. A special mention must also be made to outgoing President Mr Peter Crittle, who went well beyond his brief in providing support and advice to the team during his tenure. The team will miss him.

Looking ahead to 2005, the Wallabies will continue to strive to be a force in world Rugby, as we look to further develop the perfect game. Our talented, yet small, player base will be more skillful, fitter and committed, and the challenge will be to play Wallaby style rugby, attacking the opposition in home and away Tests.