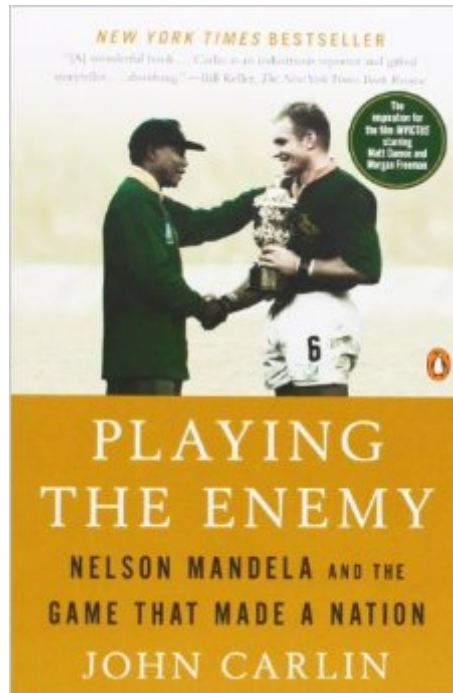


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Playing The Enemy: Nelson Mandela And The Game That Made A Nation



Synopsis

Beginning in a jail cell and ending in a rugby tournament- the true story of how the most inspiring charm offensive in history brought South Africa together After being released from prison and winning South Africa's first free election, Nelson Mandela presided over a country still deeply divided by fifty years of apartheid. His plan was ambitious if not far-fetched: use the national rugby team, the Springboks-long an embodiment of white-supremacist rule-to embody and engage a new South Africa as they prepared to host the 1995 World Cup. The string of wins that followed not only defied the odds, but capped Mandela's miraculous effort to bring South Africans together again in a hard-won, enduring bond.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

If you read nothing else this year, get your hands on "Playing the Enemy" and read pages 201 to 253. It won't take long. By the time Nelson Mandela walks into that stadium, your heart will be pounding. By the time he walks into the Springboks locker, you'll be in tears. And you'll cry pretty much straight through to the end. All because, on June 24, 1995, the South African Rugby team beat New Zealand to win the Rugby World Cup. If you're like most Americans, you know that Nelson Mandela spent 27 years in prison --- 18 of them in a tiny cell on Robben Island --- and emerged without hatred to spearhead a peaceful transfer of power in South Africa. But you probably know nothing about the 1995 Rugby World Cup match. John Carlin's brilliant book corrects that, and, along the way, presents a concise biography of a remarkable man. In these pages, Nelson Mandela is a brilliant politician with a genius for disarming his enemies. To Mandela, everyone is human,

everyone can be reached. The only question is how. In prison, he would introduce his lawyer to his "guard of honor" --- and his jailers would find themselves shaking hands with an attorney they loathed. And he used his dead time in prison to teach himself Afrikaans, read the Afrikaans newspapers and familiarize himself with Afrikaner history. Rugby is the favorite sport of Afrikaners, the dominant white tribe in South Africa --- "apartheid's master race." All but one of the 15 players on the Springbok team were white. In a stadium that held 62,000, 95% of the crowd would be white. No wonder that blacks saw the Boks as a symbol of oppression. "Don't address their brains," Mandela believed. "Address their hearts." One direct way to do that was through sports.

See the Movie, THEN Read the Book! And no, it's not all about rugby and the team. Sure, the book begins on the day of the Springboks' Rugby World Cup game against the New Zealand All-Blacks (so named for the color of their uniforms). Sure, it introduces us Yanks to the Springboks. But, in the following chapters, it retraces Mandela's life, 27-year imprisonment, his election to President, and finally to presenting the 1995 Rugby World Cup to the Springboks. It shows us a South Africa we thought we'd never see, let alone believe in. In fact, about two-thirds of the book covers Mandela's and others' lives, and much fascinating history, how Mandela turned a 27-year sentence into not bitter revenge but change, reconciliation, and uniting South Africans. While in prison, a rare strong seed was planted in the brain and heart of a man who had every reason to plot revenge against the injustices done to him, but the seed was nurtured and finally blossomed a few years before his release to make him speak truth to power as the world's most famous prisoner whom everyone wanted to free. Actually, he was still in effect the African National Council (ANC)'s leader. In the 27 years he aged from a young, husky warrior with a powerful Muhammad Ali-boxer's physique into a mellow, slender, and gracefully aged yet strong Xhosa elder (he was of chiefly ancestry), whose handsome Xhosa features were framed by a full crown of crinkly silver hair. He looked tired when he left prison but some of those wrinkles left as he became accustomed to freedom. As in the poem *Invictus* he was the master of his fate and the captain of his soul, prepared for anything and anyone, unfailingly courteous and respectful and even courtly to friend and foe, high and low, and, when necessary, he was blunt and straight.

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