

APPLICABILITY OF THE NCAA AMERICAN FOOTBALL AND  
NFL DRAFT SYSTEM ON THE SA RUGBY SYSTEM: A  
COMPARATIVE APPROACH

DISSERTATION SUBMITTED IN FULFILLMENT OF THE  
REQUIREMENTS OF

MASTERS IN SPORT AND RECREATION MANAGEMENT

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by

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## DECLARATION

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I, Andries Jacobus Kruger, hereby declare that this research for the degree, MA (Sport Recreation and Management), at the University of Pretoria, has not previously been submitted by me for the degree, at this or any other university; that it is my own work in design and execution, and that all materials from published sources contained herein have been duly acknowledged.

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Date

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Signature

## SUMMARY

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<b>Candidate:</b>	Andries J Kruger
<b>Degree:</b>	MA Sport and Recreation Management
<b>Title of Dissertation</b>	Applicability of the NCAA American Football and NFL Draft System on the SA Rugby System.
<b>Promoter</b>	Dr. E van der Klashorst

South Africa has a very rich sporting history with South Africans renowned for being huge enthusiasts of the many different sporting codes played in the country. Former president Nelson Mandela emphasized the importance of sport at the Laureus World Sports Awards Ceremony in 2000 “*Sport has the power to change the world. It has the power to inspire. It has the power to unite people in a way that little else can. Sport can awaken hope where there was previously only despair*”. South Africa Rugby have played an important role in the country’s history, with world-class provincial matches, producing an international feared national (Springboks) side. However in recent years the Springbok side have been gradually slipping down the world ranking list. Since the sport of rugby turned fully professional in the mid-1990’s the South African system started to use the tertiary developing process less as a stepping block for high school rugby players to the now professional rugby franchises, with the contracting of 18 and 19-year-old players. With rugby being a highly collision sport, the study investigated the American football system in the United States of America. The study focus on how both investigated collision sport (SA Rugby & American football) systems develop players from high school amateur players to professional players, placing emphasis on the path way through the tertiary systems of both sporting codes and the selection process from amateur to professional sport.

The overall aim of this study was to determine to what extent the NCAA American football and NFL draft system, could be-applied to the South African rugby system. Investigating factors such as physical and physiological maturity, Long term athlete development and talent identification by adopting an exploratory ethno-graphic qualitative research design as methodology, to ask the research question: *To what extent can the NCAA American football and NFL Draft system be applied to the*

*South Africa tertiary system?* Based on the preceding research question it postulated that similarities exist between both collision sports, with both sports being part of highly competitive organised school sport, followed by the tertiary platforms provided through the NCAA (USA) and Varsity Cup (South Africa) towards professionalism.

Results of the study established through the documentation that the American football system utilised a student-athlete system as academic requirements for participation is, implemented from school level and players competing within the tertiary platform needs to be amateur certified to be able to compete. Whereas for the South African rugby system having no academic requirements for participation through school as this only becomes a requirement when going through the tertiary system. (Varsity Cup). With Varsity Cup having similar academic eligibility rules, like that of the NCAA it does not excluded the participation of professional players.

The conclusion of the study confirmed that Varsity Cup is more athlete-student then student-athlete as with the NCAA. The study provided evidence that the two collision sports compared sharing many characteristics. The principles inherent in NCAA American football and NFL Draft can be applied to that of SA rugby to a certain extent. The following recommendations for both SA rugby and Varsity Cup where suggested Not allowing SA rugby franchises and unions to contract rugby players under the age of twenty – *SARU policy change*. Discontinuing/Cancelling the u/19, u/20 and u/21 age group provincial competitions – *SARU policy change* Excluding players which are contracted at a SA rugby franchise or union and excluding players receiving a salary for participating in rugby – *Varsity Cup policy change*.

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**Table i: Abbreviations**

<b>Abbreviations</b>	<b>Description</b>
ACT	American College Testing
AFL	American Football League
AHA	Allegheny Athletic Association
APR	Academic Progress Rate
AYF	American Youth Football
Exco	Executive Committee
FBS	Football Bowl Subdivision
FCS	Football Championship Subdivisions
GPA	Grade Point Average
HESA	Higher Education and Student Affairs
PHV	Peak Height Velocity
IPT	Interprovincial Youth Tournament
IRB	International Rugby Board
LTAD	Long Term Athlete Development
NCAA	National Collegiate Athletic Association
NSC	National Senior Certificate
NFHS	National Federation of State High School
NFL	National Football League
NHL	National Hockey League
NQF	National Qualification Framework
PAC	Pittsburgh Athletic Club
RAE	Relative Age Effect
SRSA	Sport and Recreation South Africa
SAQA	South African Qualification Authority
SA	South Africa(n)
SACRB	South African Colored Rugby Board
SACRFB	South African Colored Rugby Football Board
SARA	South African Rugby Association
SARFB	South African Rugby Football Board
SARFF	South African Rugby Football Federation
SARFU	South African Rugby Football Union
SARU	South African Rugby Union
SAT	Scholastic Aptitude Test
SEC	South Eastern Conference
USA	United States of America
USSA	University Sport South Africa
W.P.R.F.U	Western Province Rugby Football Union
YMCA	Young Men's Christian Association

# CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

## 1.1 INTRODUCTION

South Africa has a very rich sporting history with South Africans renowned for being huge enthusiasts of the many different sporting codes played in the country. In 2000 former president Nelson Mandela emphasized the importance of sport at the Laureus World Sports Awards Ceremony “*Sport has the power to change the world. It has the power to inspire. It has the power to unite people in a way that little else can. Sport can awaken hope where there was previously only despair*” (Mandela, 2000).

Sport plays an important role in South Africa. Rugby, as one of the five dominant sports – as identified by the Department of Sport and Recreation South Africa (SRSA) – is a game that is played from a very young age with selection into a university team considered as crucial in becoming a professional rugby player. The current system utilized in recruiting rugby players for university level to compete in the SA Varsity Cup Championship is more athlete-student orientated than student-athlete. Varsity Cup SA (inter-university tournament) currently allows professional athletes to take part, thereby utilizing an athlete-student approach. In this approach the athlete’s first priority is to their sport with academic performance as secondary goal and priority.

The current system utilised in the United States of America, the American National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA) is, however, orientated towards the student-athlete model of tertiary sport, with the first priority being that of the students academics followed by their participation on the sports field. The NCAA is a membership-driven organization dedicated to safeguarding the well-being of student-athletes and equipping them with the skills to succeed on the playing field, in the classroom and throughout life (NCAA.org - The Official Site of the NCAA, 2014). Investigating how the NCAA system of American Football can be implemented to tertiary rugby in SA. Then having a look at how the NFL (National Football League) draft selects the American football players from the NCAA which is eligible for the draft into the 32 professional NFL franchises teams and how this possibly allow players that mature later than those that mature early a more equal chance.

In most team sports - and especially in a physical sport like rugby - maturation plays a tremendous role in the performance of youth athletes, ages 15-21. Individuals mature at different rates, with certain athletes maturing faster than others. Resulting in faster maturing athletes performing at a higher level than those athletes with a slower maturation rate. The maturation of young players has a strong impact on selecting prospective players. South Africa's top professional rugby franchises mostly contract their prospective players from the young ages of 16-18. This is done in the process of creating a long-term athlete development (LTAD) plan. Even though it contributes to LTAD, this approach does not favour the athletes maturing later as contracts are being issued. Dr Kevin Till conducted a study over a period of three years looking at the performance of players who matured early versus the players that matured later (Till, 2015). This study shows that the player who was the early maturing player performed better in all the tests in comparison to his counterparts that didn't have the same maturation rate. As the study reached its third year the earlier maturing players' performance decreased in some of the tests with very little improvement in the rest. An interesting outcome of his study is that the later maturing players, in effect, caught up with the early maturing players, with late maturing players performing better in most of the tests conducted (Till, K. 2015).

Dr. Sean Cumming (Rugby Science Network, 2015) also looked at the phenomenon of maturation from a psychological perspective in his study on "The Underdog Effect in Academy Rugby in the United Kingdom". Cummings looked at two aspects, firstly grid and secondly self-regulation (Rugby Science Network, 2015). These two aspects have been shown to be the building blocks and adaptive functioning of sport. The study found that most of the late maturing kids were already out of the system. He did however, find that some of late maturing kids, who were still in the system, recorded a much higher level of grid (shows much higher perseverance and higher effort) and they presented more adaptive self-regulative perseverance. This not only provides evidence that the athlete, which matured later, have the potential to become physically a better performer than those who matured early, but in a psychological perspective as well (Rugby Science Network, 2015).

## **1.2 PROBLEM STATEMENT**

The South African school boy system is very strong and competitive. In comparison to the rest of the world that mostly uses the club system to develop their youth rugby players, utilising this strong high school rugby system to produce the best possible national side.

Since the sport of rugby turned fully professional in the mid-1990's the South African system started to use the tertiary developing process less as a stepping block for high school rugby players to the now professional rugby franchises, with the contracting of 18 and 19 year old players. In 1999 with the introduction of the under 19 Currie Cup the situation started to worsen over time with some of the rugby franchises in South Africa already contracting players as young as 16. With a player being professionally contracted 16 years of age and still having two years of high school left, does that affect those players approach to academics and the decision to pursue a high education after school with the aim of obtaining a degree finally. In receiving a junior professional contract in South Africa the probability of playing Vodacom Super Rugby or International test matches and making a living for the rest of your life from rugby is very small, only a hand full of players will be fortunate enough in doing so. With the professionalising of rugby came the exclusion of the tertiary stepping stone for players from a high school level to professionalism.

In 2008 the Varsity Cup competition was introduced in South Africa in the light to rebuild the image of university rugby in the country. In giving the rugby players who first of all want to better them academically, that was not given the opportunity of receiving a professional contract at a South African Rugby franchise the opportunity and necessary exposure to become a professional player. However the Varsity Cup could not eradicate the use of young professional contracting players within the competition, which is somewhat contrasting to why the competition was originally intended for. Varsity cup, however, has come a long way from the introduction and launch of the competition in 2008. Varsity cup started with only eight universities (NWU-Pukke, University of Johannesburg, University of Pretoria, University of Stellenbosch, University of Cape Town, Nelson Mandela Metropolitan University and Tshwane University of Technology) competing in a single round followed by a Easter weekend rugby festival in George including the semi-finals and final of the competition. In 2009 the Varsity Koshuis championship was introduced alongside of



the previous year successfully run Varsity Cup, with the koshuis champion of each of the competing Varsity Cup universities to fight out between each other for the title of the best rugby koshuis in the country. In 2012 Varsity Cup introduced two more “divisions” with launching the Varsity Shield (second tier competition) and the Young guns competition for u/20 players of the universities that compete in the Varsity Cup. At the start of the competition of the Varsity Cup in 2008 the competition was open to everybody as the rules consisted of not much, as the years past rules was introduced as form of eligibility in the aim of making the competition more and completely student based. The rules of the competition dictate that students need to achieve 60 credits in the previous academic year in order to be eligible. Varsity Cup also state that the competition is based on the very popular NCAA system that is used to govern tertiary sport within the United States of America.

The National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA) is a membership-driven organization dedicated to safeguarding the well-being of student-athletes and equipping them with the skills to succeed on the playing field, in the classroom and throughout life (NCAA.org - The Official Site of the NCAA, 2014). The bedrock principle that the NCAA base competition on is amateurism (NCAA.org - The Official Site of the NCAA, 2014). The NCAA also believe with the maintaining amateurism in college athletics is crucial to preserving an academic environment in which acquiring a quality education is the first priority.

The NFL Draft includes the 32 teams that compete in the competition. Each team is given one pick (one player) each round of the 7 rounds that the draft consists of. There are 32 additional picks given out as compensatory selections to teams that qualify. Assuming that the 32 teams in the National Football League take part in the draft and no picks have been taken away, there are a total of 256 draft slots available each year. Draft order for the 32 teams is determent and based on the record and play off finish by each team in that year, with the team that had the worst record picking first in the draft and the Super Bowl winners picking last. Thus providing the opportunity for the teams that struggled the previous season the change to pick the best young player in the position they need to better them for the next year. With that there is a certain level of competitive balance kept in the NFL.

With Rugby South Africa not having a structure of professional contracting and in how the countries talent is spread over the country so that we develop more

international top players via improving the competitive balance within the national competition. Having 14 senior rugby unions as well as 6 franchises (4 Super Rugby & 2 Pro 14) within South Africa, with only 5 providing junior contracts to players in high school for development processes. When there are 29 rugby-playing universities in SA that can be use as development platform as the United State are doing with the NCAA stepping-stone between competing at high school to the professional level. With the delayed period before going to the professional level provides the chance for players that mature slower than those who matured quicker and physically performed better at high school than their counterparts to reach full maturity to have a change to be drafted as in the USA to one of 14 SA rugby unions. The study therefore asks the question, *To what extent can the NCAA American football and NFL Draft system be applied to the South Africa tertiary system?*

### **1.3 AIMS AND OBJECTIVES**

The aim of this study is to determine to what extent the NCAA American football and NFL draft system, be-applied to the South African rugby system. The objectives of the study included:

- to explore how the current athlete development system for rugby players function in South Africa;
- to identify how the NCAA athlete development system function in the United States of America;
- to identify whether the NCAA American football and NFL Draft systems can be applied to the South African rugby system;
- to recommend possible ways in which the SA system can adopt the NCAA and NFL Draft system.

### **1.4 LITERATURE REVIEW**

This study utilised the critical theory as theoretical framework, through which to explore the applicability of the American National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA) system on the South African System. In comparing and weighing these two sporting systems with each other to explore whether the NCAA is applicable to the SA tertiary rugby system. In accomplishing this, the two sporting systems will have to be investigated separately.

The SA tertiary sport system has recently introduced Varsity Sport and Varsity Cup that is trying to improve the image of university sport in SA. Varsity Cup is all about action packed Mondays. The eligibility of the Varsity Cup is that one needs to be a bona-fide student. Varsity Cup sees a bona-fide student in that all students that have been enrolled for a course at a Member University and is officially registered at a higher education institution by the appropriate national academic authority in the country (i.e. Department of Higher Education and Training) for a program of at least 120 SAQA credits on NQF level 5, and approved by that institution's senate (Varsitycup.co.za, 2015). That includes bridging courses but only one attempt is allowed to complete the bridging course, short courses or module units of study that are less than 120 SAQA credits does not qualify as a bona-fide students and will not be eligible to take part in the Varsity Cup competition. They have also now included that the players have to pass a certain amount of modules per year for the course they are registered for. Those modules have to accumulate to not less than 60 SAQA credits per academic year (Varsitycup.co.za, 2015).

The American National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA) is a membership-driven organization dedicated to safeguarding the well-being of student-athletes and equipping them with the skills to succeed on the playing field, in the classroom and throughout life (NCAA.org - The Official Site of the NCAA, 2014). The bedrock principle that the NCAA base competition on, is amateurism (NCAA.org - The Official Site of the NCAA, 2014). The NCAA also believe with the maintaining amateurism in college athletics is crucial to preserving an academic environment in which acquiring a quality education is the first priority. So for explaining the general requirements that the concept amateurism do not allow is as follow; Contracts with professional teams, salary for participating in athletics, prize money above actual and necessary expenses, play with professionals, try-outs, practice or competition with a professional team, benefits from an agent or prospective agent, agreement to be represented by an agent.

The above mentioned is only the general and basic requirements that is needed to qualify as an NCAA amateur athlete, a more detailed document of how to be and become eligible in terms of the NCAA standards can be find on the NCAA Eligible website (NCAA.org - The Official Site of the NCAA, 2014).

The NCAA is used as the stepping stone from high school athletics in the USA to a professional career. An athlete has to compete for a minimum of three years before they can move to the world of professional sport. When the athlete makes him or herself eligible for professional teams that athlete is then not allowed to return to college or university sport when not picked for a professional franchise.

With the SA system contracting players from the age of 16 to professional unions the term Long Term Athlete Development (LTAD) comes to mind. With most team sports being influenced by maturity at a young age how effective will talent identification be at a young age especially in a sport like rugby. Looking at the physical and psychological aspects of athletes that are maturing at different rates in determining whether contracting players at a younger age is beneficial for the future of the unions and national team.

The research of Dr. Kevin Till that was conducted over a period of three years look at the performance of players who matured early versus the players that matured later (Till, 2015). This study shows that the player who was the early maturing player performed better in all the tests in comparison to his counterparts that didn't have the same maturation rate. As the study reached its third year the earlier maturing players' performance decreased in some of the tests with very little improvement in the rest. An interesting outcome of his study is that the later maturing players in effect caught up with the early maturing players, with late maturing players performing better in most of the tests conducted (Till, K. 2015).

Dr Sean Cumming looked at this phenomenon from a psychological perspective in his study on "The Underdog Effect in Academy Rugby in the United Kingdom". Cummings looked at two aspects, firstly grid and secondly self-regulation (Rugby Science Network, 2015). These two aspects have been shown to be the building blocks and adaptive functioning of sport. What Cumming found was that most of the late maturing kids were already out of the system. He did find, however that some of late maturing kids who were still in the system, recorded a much higher level of grid (shows much higher perseverance and higher effort) and they also presented more adaptive self-regulative perseverance. This not only provides evidence that the athlete, which matured later, have the potential to become physically a better performer than those who matured early, but in a psychological perspective as well (Rugby Science Network, 2015). According to the two studies and their finding it is

possible that the scouts of SA unions is not contracting the best talent on offer but the rather the athlete that matured quicker.

## **1.5 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

The study utilised a qualitative research design. Creswell (2012) describes qualitative research as a methodology in which the researcher starts with certain assumptions and a theoretical framework that informs the study of a specific research problem. The purpose of qualitative methodology is therefore to describe and understand, rather than to predict and control (MacDonald, 2012).

### **1.5.1 Research population:**

The research population consisted of rugby players that are involved in tertiary rugby and also at senior level. Research also included players that were in the tertiary and senior structures that have fallen out of the system.

### **1.5.2 Sampling Methods**

The study utilised key information sampling, a non-probability sampling technique often used in qualitative research. This form of sampling allowed the researcher to gather data from research participants with direct experience of the topic under study (Gratton & Jones, 2010).

### **1.5.3 Data collection**

The study will utilize a qualitative data collection methods and process. The methods and techniques that is integrated by qualitative research include the observing, documenting, analysing and interpreting characteristics, patterns, attributes, and meanings of human phenomena under study. The multiple forms of qualitative data collection typically require the examination of documents, observing behaviour and interviewing participants.

#### *1.5.3.1 Data collection tools*

The study will utilise a semi-structured interview as well as document analysis as data collection tools. The interview is a managed verbal exchange (Richie & Lewis, 2003 and Gillham, 2000) the effectiveness heavily depends on the communication skills of the interviewer. The ability to clearly structure questions, listen attentively, probe or prompt appropriately and encourage the interviewee to talk freely is some

of the characteristics of a good interviewer. Semi-structured interviews are open, allowing new ideas to be brought up during the interview as a result of what the interviewee says in response to the questions. The questions in a semi-structured interview are less rigorous than that of a structured interview. This allows the interviewee to speak more freely in the sense to get a better understanding and can lead to more questions in getting a better understanding of the structure or surroundings. With the use of semi-structured interviews in the study, the design of open-ended questions will be used to explore various change agents within the different rugby structures from the players and managerial point of view.

A semi-structured interview schedule was developed for this study. From the content analysis, data collection and of what was preserved of personal experience, a series of open-ended questions were designed for the use of the semi-structured interviews. Based on data collection during participation observation and document analysis certain themes were selected in advance; however the sequence and wording of the questions were determined by the interview situation.

#### **1.5.4 Data analysis**

Qualitative data analysis is non-statistical and its methodological approach is primarily guided by the concrete material at hand. The semi-structured interviews and documentary analysis were transcribed and coded and thematically analysed (Schirato, Danaher & Webb, 2012).

### **1.6 ETHICAL IMPLICATIONS**

With the study and research on putting the participants in any physical harm during the study, the ethical aspects that will be included in the study include voluntary participation; informed consent; no risk or harm to participants and privacy.

#### **1.6.1 Voluntary participation**

Participants will be informed about their rights in the study through the obtaining of informed consent making the participant aware that they can choose not to continue during the study (McMillan & Schumacher, 2010). Therefore the participants in the study will not be compelled, coerced or forced to participate within the study.

### **1.6.2 Informed consent**

Providing the participants with an explanation of the research aims and objectives will be the process in obtaining informed consent. That provides the participants with the opportunity to terminate the participation at any time with full disclosure of any risks associated with the study and without any penalty (Gratton & Jones, 2010).

### **1.6.3 No risk or harm to participants**

The research will not put any participant under physical or mental harm or injury. Participants that are involved in the research will not be forced to reveal any information that they do not want to share because of embarrassment of school performances as well as direct negative consequences in doing that (McMillan & Schumacher, 2010).

### **1.6.4 Privacy**

The privacy of the research done that involves the participants will be protected. The information gathered on participant's responses answers and other information will be restricted to the researcher. Privacy will be ensured by the using of confidentiality and the appropriate storing of data (Gratton & Jones, 2010).

### **1.6.5 Confidentiality**

Throughout the research process the participants that decide to keep their identity a secret through confidentiality will be ensure that only the researcher will have access to that particular individual's data and information.

### **1.6.6. Storage of data**

Data will be stored by the Department of Sport and Leisure Sciences for a period of 15 years.

# **CHAPTER 2: DEVELOPMENT OF A PROFESSIONAL ATHLETE IN A CONTACT SPORT**

## **2.1 INTRODUCTION**

Chapter One provided an overview and the methodology that will be used in the study. Chapter Two will focus on how an athlete participating in a contact sport such as rugby is developed from high school to professional player. This chapter provides an outline of the development phases of athletes within the two identified contact sports. The chapter concludes by identifying the factors which are deemed important towards the development of professional athletes involved in these contact sports

## **2.2 PHASES OF ATHLETE DEVELOPMENT.**

The demand for winning has become such a predictor in the professional sport era, so much that athletes, coaches, team officials and administrators will do anything to come out victorious on the other side. The famous quote used by Vince Lombardi, an American Football coach, emphasized the focus on winning by stating that *“winning isn’t everything; it’s the only thing”* (Dure, 2015).

With the mounting pressure on winning, the demand for more talented, stronger, faster and smarter athletes has increased. This demand necessitated sport federations and governing bodies worldwide to implement development platforms for prospective athletes.

Rugby union is a collision team sport of approximately 80 minutes and consists of two 40 minutes halves with a 10 minutes rest period between the two halves. Rugby union is characterized by frequent episodes of high-intensity running, sprinting, passing, tackling, interspersed with short recovery periods and longer periods of lower-intensity work demanding a high level of aerobic fitness (Smit & Krüger, 2012). American football also a collision sport, is made up of four 15 minutes quarters with a 12 minutes break at half time and 2 minutes breaks after the first and third quarters while the teams playing change playing ends. Each team consists of three units - offense, defense and special units. Offensive units take the field when the team has possession of the ball whilst the defensive unit fields to stop the opposing team from accumulating any points. The special teams are mostly considered as the kicking unit which goes on the field for kicking purposes only (punts, field goals and kickoffs)



(NFL.com, n.d.). Similar to rugby, American football is an extremely physical sport, as it is a fast paced game with players crashing into each other at high speeds, fighting and wrestling for superiority. Physical attributes differ in both rugby and American football, according to the position played by the player. Both sports have big power houses in the like of tight forwards in rugby and line-men in American football, the same physical attributes noticeable between the loose forwards and running backs, as well between the outside backs and wide receivers.

American Football and Rugby Union are both physical in nature and require athleticism. Diverse body types are required due to the differential position requirements. In this section an overview is provided that illustrates how players are developed from Primary School level to Professional player.

### **2.2.1 Kid to Pro Player**

Malcolm Gladwell wrote in his book "Outliers" released in 2009 that "ten thousand hours is the magic number of practice" (Baer, 2014). Using examples such as Bill Gates which attended a progressive Seattle high school giving him the opportunity to start coding as a teen, another was that of the great rock band the Beatles who long before they invaded America were playing eight hour gigs in Germany (Baer, 2014). As the ten thousand hours rule was born it sparked interest around the world. Daniel Coleman a professor at Harvard and the author of "Emotional Intelligence" said the ten thousand hour was only half true; "If you are a duffer at golf, say, and make the same mistakes every time you try a certain swing or putt, 10,000 hours of practicing that error will not improve your game. You'll still be a duffer, albeit an older one" (Popova, 2014). Florida State University psychologist Anders Ericsson, whose research on expertise spawned the ten-thousand-hour rule said: "You don't get benefits from mechanical repetition, but by adjusting your execution over and over to get closer to your goal" (Popova, 2014).

As sport started to become more professional and televised across the globe, it quickly became a source of income and profession for the elite athletes around the world. Seeing athletes chasing the ten-thousand-hour rule or parents believing that early specialisation within a particular sporting code will give their children the necessary edge over their counterparts. As there can be truth in most of these theories to certain extends, but within a collision sport where maturity plays such an

important role when it comes to identifying players during the period where individuals are not yet fully physical and psychologically matured, can professional programs start investing in these players.

#### *2.2.1.1 American Football*

Rugby Union and American Football both provide players with the opportunity to participate from a young age - American football youth league and rugby has introductory age group involvement and developmental systems. The American Youth Football (AYF) an international youth football organization established in 1996, having to promote the wholesome development of youth through their association with adult leaders in the sport of American football (Americanyouthfootball.com, 2017). To ensure that players play within an atmosphere of safety with a competitive balance as rules and regulations have been set in place, they include having scholastic requirements in place to ensure participants understand that schoolwork comes first (American Youth Football Official Rules and Regulations, 2016). Members of the AYF are allowed to govern themselves by remaining non-intrusive as long as they subscribe to the following principles; safety, sportsmanship, full participation (everyone gets to play) and general liability with accident insurance coverage (American Youth Football Official Rules and Regulations, 2016). All youth athletes are welcomed by the AYF regardless of race, religion, national origin and sex. Special divisions exist for children with special needs these divisions also serve various ages and weight groups. The AYF has a variety of divisions in place to have everyone competing in the one best suited for them. These divisions include: Instructional division, National division, All American division.

The instructional division of play is made out of two non-competitive divisions which are made out of an unlimited weight and weighted divisions as shown in Table 2.1 below.

**Table 2-1 The instructional division of play**

<b>DIVISION OF PLAY</b>	<b>PROTECTED AGES</b>	<b>WEIGHT</b>
7U Division	Cannot Turn 8 Before 8/1/16	UNLIMITED WEIGHT
8U Division	Cannot Turn 9 Before 8/1/16	UNLIMITED WEIGHT
9U Division	Cannot Turn 10 Before 8/1/16	UNLIMITED WEIGHT
<b>AGE DIVISIONS CAN BE COMBINED</b>		
<b>DIVISION OF PLAY</b>	<b>AGE CUT-OFF 7/31</b>	<b>STRIP WEIGHT + EQUIPMENT ALLOWANCE</b>
TINY MITE	7 YEARS OLD AND UNDER	85lbs + 5lbs = 90lbs
MIGHTY MITE	9 YEARS OLD AND UNDER	100lbs + 5lbs = 105lbs

Within the instructional divisions a non-competitive approach is taken as the goal for the division is for introducing the game of American football to the young and newly participants of the game. Within the age divisions (7U, 8U and 9U) and the combined age weighted divisions (Tiny Mite and Might Mite) an approach towards learning the participants the fundamental skills and rules of the game is prioritized within in the division. This is done to prepare participants for the competitive divisions that follow; this includes the national divisions of play age or weighted and the all-American divisions of play which is an age protected unlimited weight competitive division. The last youth division is that of the All-star division of play, this division is age protected with unlimited weight (American Youth Football Official Rules and Regulations, 2016). The All-star divisions are only used for the AYF national championship play only. All three divisions mentioned above (National division, All-American and All-Star divisions) are illustrated in table 2.2 table 2.3 and table 2.4 below.

**Table 2-2 National Division of Play**

<b>DIVISIONS OF PLAY</b>	<b>AGE CUT-OFF 7/31</b>	<b>STRIP WEIGHT + EQUIPMENT ALLOWANCE</b>
CADET	9 and Under	114lbs+5lbs = 119lbs
DIVISION 1 & DIVISION 2	10 Older Lighter	94lbs+5lbs = 99lbs
JUNIOR PEE WEE	10 and Under	124lbs+5lbs = 129lbs
DIVISION 1 & DIVISION 2	11 Older Lighter	104lbs+5lbs = 109lbs
PEE WEE	11 and Under	139lbs+5lbs = 144lbs
DIVISION 1 & DIVISION 2	12 Older Lighter	119lbs+5lbs = 124lbs
JUNIOR MIDGET	12 and Under	159lbs+6lbs = 165lbs
DIVISION 1 & DIVISION 2	13 Older Lighter	139lbs+6lbs = 145lbs
PRE-GAME WEIGH-IN MUST BE CONDUCTED PRIOR TO ALL GAMES		

**Table 2-3 All American Division of Play**

<b>DIVISION OF PLAY</b>	<b>PROTECTED AGES</b>	<b>WEIGHT</b>
10U Division	CANNOT TURN 11 BEFORE 8/1/16	UNLIMITED WEIGHT
11U Division	CANNOT TURN 12 BEFORE 8/1/16	UNLIMITED WEIGHT
12U Division	CANNOT TURN 13 BEFORE 8/1/16	UNLIMITED WEIGHT
13U Division	CANNOT TURN 14 BEFORE 8/1/16	UNLIMITED WEIGHT
14U Division	CANNOT TURN 15 BEFORE 8/1/16	UNLIMITED WEIGHT
15U Division	CANNOT TURN 16 BEFORE 8/1/16	UNLIMITED WEIGHT
AGE DIVISIONS CAN BE COMBINED		

**Table 2-4 All Star Division of Play. \*AYF National Championship Play Only**

DIVISION OF PLAY	PROTECTED AGES	WEIGHT
10U ALL STARS	CANNOT TURN 11 BEFORE 8/1/16	UNLIMITED WEIGHT
12U ALL STARS	CANNOT TURN 13 BEFORE 8/1/16	UNLIMITED WEIGHT
14U ALL STARS	CANNOT TURN 15 BEFORE 8/1/16	UNLIMITED WEIGHT
AGE DIVISIONS CAN BE COMBINED		

After the AYF with its different age groups and weighted divisions of play the next stage of play is that of high school American football. High school American football is governed by the National Federation of State High School Associations (NFHS). The NFHS who has led the development of education-based interscholastic sports and activities to aid and help students succeed in their lives since the federation was established in 1920 (NFHS.org, n.d.). The NFHS serves its 50-member state high school athletic/activity associations including that of the District of Columbia from there offices in Indianapolis, Indiana. The mission statement of the NFHS is emphasized on providing leadership for the administration of education-based high school athletics and activities through the writing of playing rules that focuses on health and safety, educational programs that develop leaders, increase opportunities and promote sportsmanship (NFHS.org, n.d.). High school sponsored sports in America is seen as a privilege by the NFHS, this make for student-athletes to be adhere to certain eligibility rules to be able to partake in high school sport. The eligibility standard for each school is set out by their respective state high school athletic/activity associations which forms part of the 50 member's state association which falls under the NFHS jurisdiction. No state had enacted legislations limiting participation in extra-curricular activities until 1984. This was largely because of the increasing drop-out rate within high schools during the 1970s. Now commonly referred to the "No Pass, No Play" laws, (Fernandez, n.d.) high school interscholastic associations has eligibility requirements for high school athletes, a minimum amount of credits passed needs to be met to allow a pupil to begin or to continue playing/participate within team or individual sports. Fernandez found a positive impact on high school graduation rates with the implementation of minimum academic restrictions for sports participation. As the NFHS does not enforce a certain minimum academic standard to be eligible it's the responsibility of the NFHS

member states to set the minimum standard for individual academics. In the study done by Bukowski (2001) randomly selected 125 high schools across 48 states where he compared their requirements for athletic eligibility. Bukowski (2001) found that the minimum grade point average (GPA) ranged from no minimum grade point to 2.5. Schools that didn't include a grade point demanded a percentage grade to be met in all classes (70% or 60%). All states require a minimum unit of courses that students must be enrolled in order to even participate in athletic programs. With the ineligibility of a student-athlete comes an academic suspension period. In the study by Bukowski (2001) it was found that the academic suspension varied considerably throughout the 125 schools, ranging from one week to half a school year.

The state requirements in the study by Bukowski (2001) ranged from only being enrolled in a minimum number of courses, to a combination of a minimum number of courses, a minimum GPA, no F's and an attendance policy. As high school football players reach the end of their high school athletic careers it is not yet the pro's for them. As the NFL has a rule that does not allow any player to play within the NFL, players have to be at least out of high school for at least three years. High school football player's road to play pro ball then turns to the NCAA and college football. As with high school sports being nationally convened by the NFHS, college sports convening body is the NCAA (National Collegiate Athletic Association). An athlete is allowed a total of five athletic seasons to play and compete if he/she adheres to the eligibility rules of the NCAA (NCAA eligibility Center, 2017). As the three-year period out of high school pass the athlete can then make him eligible to be drafted by the NFL. As soon as the athlete renounces his athletic eligibility and enters the draft, he then loses the right to play or return to compete within the NCAA (NFL, 2017). When a player gets drafted or is a free agent that player is considered as a professional player.

#### *2.2.1.2 Rugby in South Africa*

Within SA rugby athletes gets introduced to the sport at a young age with organised training already being available from the age of 7. Rugby in SA is generally practised in an organised matter through the public and private school system. The game being one of the top 3 national sports within SA, it gets introduced to the youth at a very young age, with some babies receiving a rugby ball days after they have been born. Rugby is very popular under the Afrikaans speaking population within SA

regardless ones skin colour; they are closely followed by the English speaking population with the rest of the 11 official languages making up the rest of the 239,614 pre-teens; 148,779 teens and 84,522 seniors rugby players registered within SA (Durant & Lambert, 2010).

Organised rugby in South Africa is played according to a chronologically age limit determined by a players age on the first of January each year starting at the age of 7 up to 20 years old as illustrated below in table 2.5.

**Table 2-5 Chronological Age division of Play in SA Rugby**

Division of Play	Age Cut-Off 12/31	Weight
Under 8	Cannot Turn 8 Before 1 January	UNLIMITED WEIGHT
Under 9	Cannot Turn 9 Before 1 January	UNLIMITED WEIGHT
Under 10	Cannot Turn 10 Before 1 January	UNLIMITED WEIGHT
Under 11	Cannot Turn 11 Before 1 January	UNLIMITED WEIGHT
Under 12	Cannot Turn 12 Before 1 January	UNLIMITED WEIGHT
Under 13	Cannot Turn 13 Before 1 January	UNLIMITED WEIGHT
Under 14	Cannot Turn 14 Before 1 January	UNLIMITED WEIGHT
Under 15	Cannot Turn 15 Before 1 January	UNLIMITED WEIGHT
Under 16	Cannot Turn 16 Before 1 January	UNLIMITED WEIGHT
Under 18	Cannot Turn 18 Before 1 January	UNLIMITED WEIGHT
Under 19	Cannot Turn 19 Before 1 January	UNLIMITED WEIGHT
Under 20/21	Cannot Turn 20/21 Before 1 January	UNLIMITED WEIGHT

Within these divisions of play, rugby players of the same age compete against each other, may it be for the school they attend or the club which they are registered to. As age is the only deterrent in which division separation is controlled for competition, faster maturing players (bigger, faster and stronger) has a clear advantage over their late maturing counterparts. Although adjusted rules to cater for the late maturing (smaller) players have been implemented by various provinces. One of these adjustments was the TAG programme which is played through almost the whole of SA. With the aim of this game to develop rugby oriented skills in a safe and fun environment, as tackling is not allowed with no scrums and line-outs taking place during the game (Durant and Lambert, 2010). The game of TAG rugby although is only played at the under 8 division of play.

As a player reaches the under 9 division of play tackling is introduced to the players including line-outs and uncontested scrums. Contestable scrums are allowed within the under 10 division of play. SARU annually host a u/13 interprovincial youth tournament (IPT) where the 14 rugby unions compete against each other. The players representing their respective union go through a selection process where selectors then pick the individuals to represent their union at the IPT. This showcasing of SA best under 13 rugby players competing against each other sees some talent scouts attending the tournament, ranging from the SARU Rugby Department that became operational beginning of 2015 to recruiters from the big rugby unions and recruiting high schools.

The under 14 division of play see most of the players entering high school. SARU has their second IPT, the Grand Khomo for u/16 division players. The Grant Khomo u/16 tournament sees talent scouts and agents flocking to the event. Just as SARU's Rugby Department identify the best talent at the tournament the top rugby union's talent scouts start approaching the top players in hope that they will join them after high school.

After the under 16 division of play sees the introduction of the under 19 school division of play, all players within the age group range of u/17, u/18 and u/19 which is still attending school are eligible to compete in this division. A number of interprovincial tournaments organised by SARU facilitating, two under/18 tournaments and one under 19 tournament. The biggest of the three tournaments by far is that of the Coca Cola u/18 Craven Week having television exposure for the



players. The Craven Week sees the best u/18 talent of each provincial union competing against each other. For many players this is the last change to impress the provincial union recruiters in hope of receiving a contract at one of the top rugby unions in SA. Annually after each u/18 Craven Week a panel of selectors identifies the best players at the tournament by selecting a SA Schools team that will compete in an international u/19 tournament between Wales, France and England. As the Craven Week is the major platform for high school players to receive a professional contract after school at one of the 5 rugby unions doing junior professional contracting.

Players not taken into the professional system straight after high school that still have the dream of being a professional rugby player by participating in the Varsity Cup competitions that mostly use already contracted players or they will have to play for open clubs competing in the newly Gold Cup competition for open clubs that is not a tertiary education institution. Academies placed around SA makes for another opportunity for players pursuing a professional rugby contract. As the majority of players entering one of the academy systems have to pay thousands of Rand's to attend and it mainly excludes players from a lower social economic community.

### **2.2.2 Maturity and size as crucial factors in collision sports**

Maturity and size does matter in collision sports like American Football and Rugby. Players reach puberty at different stages that exacerbated the differences in size between players at junior levels. These differences in the rate in which players mature at physically sees that players who are bigger, stronger and faster have an advantage over smaller, less powerful players. Some of these players that's associated with the smaller less powerful players that mature (develop) late and possess the necessary skills associated to be highly successful players in collusion sports gets missed by the system across the board. These late maturing players especially are missed and over looked within the South African rugby system in the way and manner players get managed through the developing ages. If those players which mature later does not get managed appropriately, their possible superior skill set, size, strength and speed when they reached full maturity may not ever have an opportunity to manifest at the level at which it could have if they were to develop fully.

The primary aim of most professional team sports is the identification and development of talented young players. Within collision sports such as American football and rugby, the importance of maturity in the identification and development of talent process is of at most importance to not confuse early maturation with talent. Yes, it is a challenging and complex task to predict future performance from current ability, with the real challenge being able to identify those athletes with the most athletic potential as adults (Reilly et al, 2000).

In South Africa “Children participating in youth sports are grouped according to their age to supposedly ensure equal and fair opportunities for all (Grobler, Shaw, and Coopoo, 2016). However a growing body of research shows that children are grouped in a bias manner, according to various physical and psychological characteristics dependent on the distribution of their birthdate (Muscha and Grondinb, 2001). This is because children separated by less than 12 months may have significant physiological differences in size, strength, power and skill levels. This effect is better known as the Relative Age Effect (RAE).

Relative age and biological maturation has shown to be the two factors to cloud our understanding of ability and potential in sports. The relative age effect (RAE) is a bias that occurs when selection strategies favors individuals born earliest within their respective chronological age groups (Mush & Grondin, 2001). This means that relatively older athletes are frequently over-represented in elite teams with simultaneous under-representation of younger individuals in the same age category (Hancock, Ste-Marie and Young, 2013). RAE has been found to exist in both individual male amateur and professional sports, as well as in male amateur and professional team sports (Grobler, Shaw and Coopoo, 2016). In sports, the RAE is generally restricted to males. It has been documented across a range of sports (Mush & Grondin, 2001) and is most evident in those sports that emphasize physical size, athletic aptitude and competition for selection.

Baker and Logan (2007) turn RAE results into primary and secondary factors. Physical changes that accompany advanced age represented the primary factors (i.e. greater height, weight, strength, speed & power) (Cobley et al., 2009) and the secondary factors represented psychological advantages encouragement and reinforcement to participate in sport with greater access to training that could lead to more coaching opportunities and resources. (Baker and Horton, 2004) In junior

rugby, individual differences in growth and maturation are increasingly important, with secular increases in player size and fitness being documented in developmental programs.

Lombard et al. (2015) investigated the change in body size and physical characteristics of South African under 20 rugby union players over a 13-year period. They found a 50% increase in both muscular strength and endurance, an increase of body mass by 20% and 7% improvement in 10m sprint time. These results provide an illustration of the changes in physical demands of the game of rugby. This also explains why growth and maturity characteristics are an increasing important factor when dealing with the identification and selection process of young rugby players. With the competitiveness of modern sport the increased emphasis on competition producing immediate results and talent identification strategies has also contributed towards this selection bias (Till et al, 2013).

Associated differences in biological maturation have been an attribute of RAE. Meaning that those athletes born early in a competitive year are on average more advanced in maturity therefore passes an athletic advantage. However, while older players could possibly be more advanced in maturity, it does not necessarily imply that an older age possesses more advanced maturity. A delay in biological maturity within older athletes will most likely result in little to no athletic advantage. When flipping the coin to a younger player who is advanced in maturity may not experience an athletic disadvantage (Till et al, 2013).

### **2.3 LONG TERM ATHLETE DEVELOPMENT IN CONTACT SPORT**

The identification of individuals with the greatest potential to perform in sport at a later stage appears to be a challenging task (Van den Berg, Pienaar & Grobbelaar, 2013). Abbot and Easson (2002) further stated that talent identification in rugby tends to be based on physical and motor performance, with less emphasis on the psychological factors of excellence. According to these researchers the main aim of talent identification should be to identify young players who exhibit the potential to develop into successful senior rugby players. In professional sport, success is not dependent on physical and tactical aspects alone, as psychological skills also play an important role (Van den Berg, Pienaar, and Grobbelaar, 2013). Abbot and Easson (2002) recommended that sport psychological skills should also be included in talent

identification models. Despite various research projects conducted on rugby in South Africa, in line with this notion, van den Berg, Pienaar and Grobbelaar (2013) indicate that little is known about the variables that could play a role in talent identification, among which are the role of psychological factors. Due to its association with performance, the development of psychological skills in sport plays an important role in the development of a modern day rugby player. A study by Hare (1999) on 16-year-old rugby players indicated psychological skills as an important predictor of rugby performance although this finding was not linked to the player's maturity status. This usually leads to early developers at a younger age getting selected above average and late developers in sport types that require strength (such as rugby).

Several studies have been conducted in South Africa during the past twelve years on the profile and characteristics of elite youth rugby players (Spamer, 2009). Talented and gifted elite rugby players were investigated on a number of different components, age levels of the investigated players varied from 10-years to 19-years old. As part of a research project on Talent Identification and Development of youth rugby players that was launched in 1994, hundreds of youth elite rugby players were tested on several anthropometric, physical and motor abilities, game specific skills and injury epidemiology, in an attempt to compile the profile of a potential talented youth rugby player. This research project on talent identification and development in youth rugby was extended in the beginning of 2000 to England and New Zealand (Spamer, 2009). Stark (2000) is of opinion that three factors, namely the role that nature plays (inheritance), early maturation within the organizational structure of the sport, and the role that development plays, determines whether a youth sportsperson or athlete has the ability for outstanding performance.

A comparative study done by Spamer (2009) was one of the major contribution studies after 2000, the study was conducted on the u/18 level, comparing an elite English group of Sport College at Ivybridge, England, with the Northern Bulls Craven Week Team. The results indicated that the South African group in this study was more skillful in the tests for passing distance and kicking distance. The South African players were also faster, and had greater arm and leg strength. In another comparative study between South African and New Zealand under 16 elite rugby groups done by Van Gent (2003); Spamer, Du Plessis, and Kruger (2009). South

African players which represented the North-West Province in the Grand Khomo Week (n=21) made up the sample, with the New Zealand group being representatives of the Taranaki Province under 16 rugby team (n=24). The New Zealand group was on average heavier than the South African group, girth measurements and skin folds showed to be larger, they also had greater body length than that of the South African group (Van Gent, 2003; Spamer, Du Plessis & Kruger, 2009). The physical and motor ability tests within the comparison saw the New Zealand group recording quicker times in the sprint tests. The New Zealand group again performed better than that of the South African group in the game specific skill tests, scoring better in kicking for distance, passing distance and kicking off distance (Van Gent, 2003; Spamer, Du Plessis, and Kruger, 2009).

After twelve years of research Spamer (2009) concluded that the following main conclusions can be made on talent identification on youth rugby players.

- The testing of hundreds of top elite youth rugby players of different ages resulted in the setting of norm scales and battery of tests that can be used to identify potential talent. However, norm scales are only applicable for three years due to improvements in performance.
- Maturation plays a role at a young age as the youth research clearly indicated. Each adolescent develops his own rate of growth. Early maturers tend to be taller and stronger, and therefore better athletes. Early maturers also seem to have more confidence, pride, and a shiny ego, compared to late maturers who seem irresponsible, childish, and seeks attention at that particular youth age.
- Still little is known about a number of variables that could play a role in talent identification, despite more than twelve years research on the project, including psychological aspects, diet, role of coaches and parents, and ability to make the correct decisions during matches.

Any framework, be it LTAD or any other, the purpose is to drive the allocation of resources in an effective and efficient manner. R. Tucker "Long-Term Athlete Development (LTAD) model is a physiological framework proposed to manage the focus, volume and type of training applied to athletes as they develop through adolescence into adulthood. There remain a number of question marks against the foundations of LTAD, although it provides a sound framework for sporting

development. It does however introduce a number of practical challenges, and its success requires that coaches recognize the potential barriers and conflicts.” From a child to a professional athlete the path that is taken is divided by LTAD into a number of stages, within each stage the focus, the role of the coaches and responsibilities of players vary. In a LTAD presentation, given by Tucker, on 12 February 2013 at the IRB (International Rugby Board) Coach education Workshop, Tucker discussed two foundations the “windows of opportunity” and the 10,000 hour concept within LTAD.

Physiology plays a crucial role in rugby as in many other sports. Players who go on to become the very best springboks are all part of a good group of rugby players but which have a small but significant difference in stature and mass. Tucker referred to findings within rowing in recent years, it shows that elite female rowers recorded testosterone levels 112% higher than those of sub-elite female rowers (Tucker, 2013). One interpretation of this particular finding within female rowing is that no amount of training, no LTAD is going to make you elite if one does not have testosterone levels in the range of elite female rowers (Tucker, 2013).

Tucker further more looked at data of how many rugby players have played at the highest level in South Africa at the ages of 13, 16 and 18. With only 31.5% of players that represented their particular unions at u/13 level also went on to represent a union at u/18 level. A much better 76% of young players who played at the u/16 age level also played at u/18 level (Tucker, 2013). Statistics of the SA Schools and SA Schools Academy rugby teams from 2000 to 2003, which was prepared by Wynand Claassen then the convener of the SA u/19 selection panel from 2000 till 2003 as well as National Selector. Claassen investigated the number of SA School players who ultimately goes on to represent South Africa at u/19 and u/21. Claassen used 44 players, the 22 players selected for the SA Schools team and the 22 Players which were selected for the SA Schools Academy team in both 2000 and 2001. Claassen found that only 20 of the 44 players (45%) which represented either the SA School or SA Schools Academy teams after the July 2000 Craven Week, went on to be included in the SA u/19 touring squad made up of 28 players the following year. The July 2001 Craven Week selected 44 players for the SA Schools and SA Schools Academy teams, this time only 18 out of the 44 players (40%) went on to be included in the SA u/19 touring group. This proves that the relative age effect and that delayed high volume predicts success, it also indicates that the longer you can delay

the selection of talent the more efficient your system will become. More profoundly what it does not tell us is the fate of all the players who were not selected at those younger age groups. Claassen then further more investigated how the South African Schools team and South African Academy teams who were selected at the 2000 and 2001 Craven Week. The 44 players selected within the SA Schools teams in 2000 only 5(11%) of them went on to tour with the U/21 South African side to the U/21 world cup in 2002. Out of the 2001 South African u/19 world cup touring team only 6 got selected in the South African u/21 world cup team the next year in 2002.

The research of (Dufur, Jarvis and Gibbs, 2011) investigated the underdog hypothesis among Canadian-born NHL hockey players. As they used public available data of hockey players from 2000-2009, they found that the RAE as described by Nolan and Howell (2010) and Gladwell (2008) was moderate for the average Canadian National Hockey League player. When they examined the most professional players they discovered that it was reversed. They also found that players which were born later in the year have longer average career duration. Lastly they found that there is a surprising relative age effect reversal that takes place from junior leagues to the most elite level of hockey (Dufur, Jarvis and Gibbs, 2011). Therefore, the relative younger players benefit more from the competitive play with their older counterparts which support the underdog hypothesis.

## **2.4 FACTORS IMPACTING ON PLAYER IDENTIFICATION IN CONTACT SPORTS**

Collision sports such as rugby relies primarily on the maturation rate during the developmental years of a player. With biological maturity playing an important role when identifying talent, as the relationship between maturation and performance within a particular age group can be an advantage or disadvantage. With size, strength and speed contributing to the physical maturation which will be investigated as player's physical measurements change during the adolescent phase between, that of the early maturing player, the average maturing player and that of the late maturing players.

The second impacting factor investigated is psychological maturation of players and how this important parameter influences the identification of talent and players.

### **2.4.1 Physical maturation**

Maturation is the most significant biological activity during the first 20 years of life from conception to full maturity (Till et al., 2009). The South Africa rugby system uses a chronological annual age grouping that starts, 1 January and ends on 31 December of the particular age group year (SARU, 2014). If it is considered that within the large individual variations in biological maturity, alongside the relationship between maturation and performance within that particular age group, considering all three aspects that will then normally result in that adolescents within that age group may be an advantage or a disadvantage when talent identification in rugby performance comes into play (Till et al., 2009). This may eventually affect the participating player's future development, opportunities and progression within the game. So you can say that the coaches and the talent scouts within the game makes assumptions when it comes to talent identification, and most of the times the benefit will be given to the players that has matured faster and is performing better based on size and physical performance within that particular age group. At the 2015 Conference of the World Rugby Science Network held at the University of Bath, Dr Kevin Till from Leeds Beckett University presented some data on maturity and the development of players which matures early versus the players that mature late. The study was conducted over a period of 3 years using three players from the age of 13 to 15; "Player 1" that was a late maturing individual, "Player 2" an average maturing individual and the finally "Player 3" the early maturing individual. In the study they measured a variety of components physical and performance wise that included; Years to PHV (Peak Height Velocity), Height, Body mass, Skinfolds, VO<sub>2</sub>max, speed over 10m to 60m and so forth.



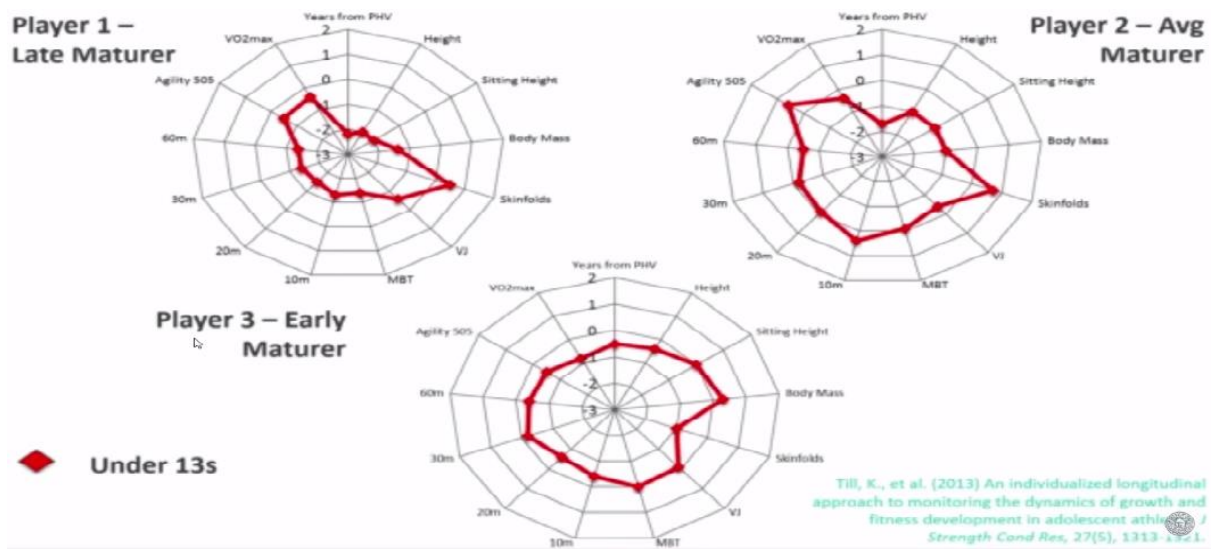


Figure 2-1 Maturation Measurements Difference age 13

As shown above in Figure 2.1 we can clearly see that Player 3 (early maturer) at the age of 13 is advanced in terms of his size and physical performance especially in comparison to the player 1 (later maturer), in comparison to player 2 (average maturer) there is not much difference between the two in a physical performance aspect but there is somewhat of a difference in size with player 3 being bigger.

So after the measuring of this data over the three-year period of the study Dr Kevin Till compared the results with each other to see how the players developed over the period of time as an individual and also in comparison to the other tested players. The results of all three years and of the different players are illustrated below in Figure 2.2.

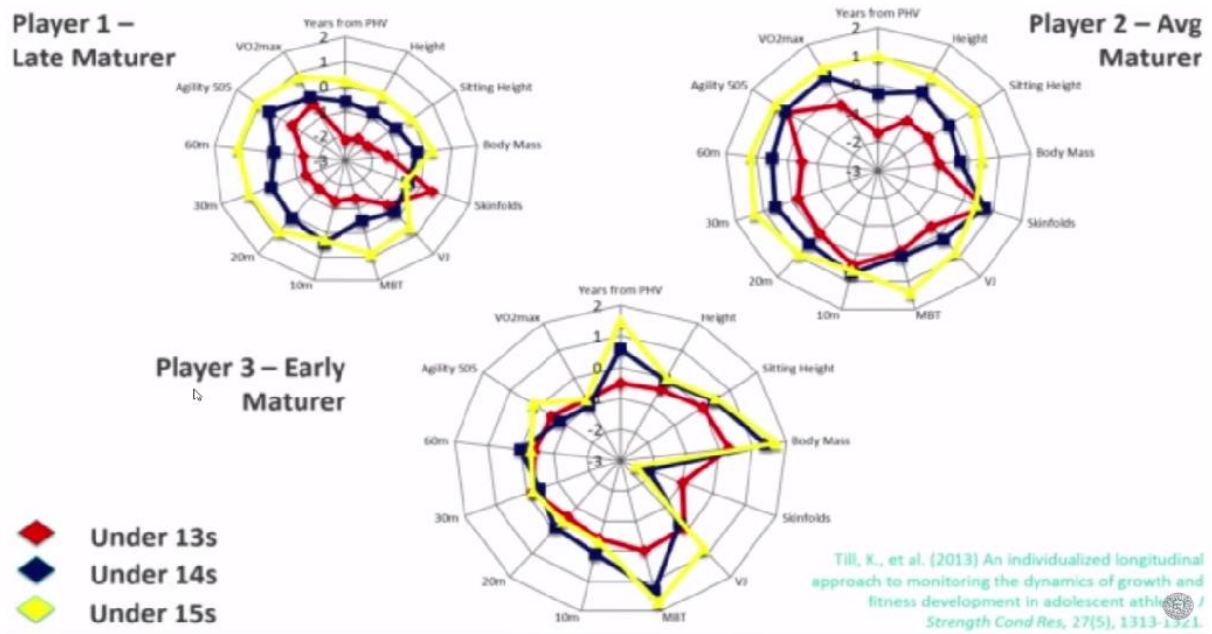


Figure 2-2 maturation Measurements Progression u/13 - u/15

As we can see looking at the results of the study, it is clear that player 1 has shown an increase in physical size but has significantly improved his physical performance in the three years. Looking at player 2 we can say that at the age of 15 he is the better athlete in comparing towards the other two players, there is not much difference between physical performance of player 1 and 2 but player 2 has a size advantage. Player 3 didn't really improve at all within in physical performance or in size although his skinfold got worse. The important thing for me in seeing these results is looking at the "years from PHV" where player 1 is still a long way from reaching his PHV, player 2 is further along with the process in reaching his PHV and player 3 has basically already reached his PHV. So in effect player 1 has more potential in the long run for becoming the better player and athlete if given the chance. So knowing the result of the study and then knowing that the rugby franchises in South Africa that has professional junior systems in place that is increasingly contracting younger players each year in the believe of being the next senior professional and international players of tomorrow. Dr Kevin Till also have conducted a study within rugby league in the United Kingdom with data dating back from 2005 till now (10 year period) to see which players went in becoming professional super league players and which of those players joined an academy at 16 years of age and which did not (Rugby Science Network, 2015). The results of

the study showed that advanced maturation doesn't result in future performance in rugby league, where the later matures actually are more successful in producing professional levels for longer (Till, 2015).

#### **2.4.2 Psychological Maturity**

In a study conducted by Dr Sean Cumming from the University of Bath on the "Underdog effect in academy rugby in the United Kingdom". In this study he had a look at it more from a psychological perspective, looking at two aspects the first grid and secondly self-regulation (Rugby Science Network, 2015). These two aspects have been shown to be the building blocks and adaptive functioning of sport. What they have found first and for most was that most of the late maturing kids was already out of the system, but the hand full of later maturing kids that was still within the system recorded a much higher level of grid (shows much higher perseverance and higher effort) and they also presented more adaptive self-regulative perseverance. With this study done it not only provides evidence that the later maturing player have the potential to become physically a better performer than the early maturing player but in a psychological perspective as well (Rugby Science Network, 2015). Most people usually say the cream will always rise to the top. I believe that the cream will rise to the top if it was given the opportunity.

Grobbelaar, Pienaar and Van Den Berg (2013) conducted a study on the biological maturity in sport psychological skill of youth rugby players, they founded that there were some differences in the sport psychological skill levels of early and average developing rugby players between the ages of 15 and 18. As the differences in biological and chronological ages became smaller, the differences in sport psychological skills became less visible (Grobbelaar, Pienaar & Van Den Berg, 2013). At a younger chronological age, the early developers had an advantage with regard to confidence and the setting of goals. The psychological skills of the average developers exhibited further improvements in certain skills, while the early developers did, however, not develop any further skills during the period from 2003 to 2005 (Grobbelaar, Pienaar & Van Den Berg, 2013). The observed differences reported in this study among young players are especially relevant to talent identification and team selection in the sport of rugby and many other contact sports. The study of Hare (1999) on 16-year-old rugby players indicated that psychological factors possess discriminant qualities, which enables differentiation between more or

less talented players. Sport psychological skills should be seen as important predictors of rugby performance, according to Hare (1999). This statement was confirmed by Andrew et al. (2007) as they indicated that successful and less successful rugby players can be distinguished on the basis of their sport psychological skill levels.

## **2.5 CHAPTER CONCLUSION**

Chapter Two focused on how the athlete in collision sport is developed from early player to professional player. Phases of athlete development as well as the long term development of an athlete were discussed. The chapter concluded by identifying the factors that impact on the identification of players in collision sport.

# **CHAPTER 3: TERTIARY SPORT PARTICIPATION SYSTEMS: AMERICAN FOOTBALL VERSUS VARSITY RUGBY**

## **3.1 INTRODUCTION**

In the previous chapter, an overview of player identification and factors impacting on player identification was provided. Chapter 3 will outline the difference between two collision sport systems, namely the NCAA (USA) and Varsity Cup (SA). The lack of focus on the athlete's academic performance in South Africa will come to light in this chapter.

## **3.2 NCAA AMERICAN FOOTBALL STRUCTURE**

The National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA) is a membership-driven organisation dedicated to safeguarding student-athlete well-being and equipping student athletes with skills to succeed on the playing field, in the classroom and throughout life (NCAA eligibility Center, 2017).

Learning at the NCAA is supported through sports by integrating athletics and higher education to enrich the college experience of student-athletes. More than 1100 NCAA members – mostly universities and colleges work together to create a framework of rules for fair and safe competition (NCAA eligibility center, 2017). The framework of rules is administered by NCAA national office staff, which also organises national championships and provides other resources to support student-athletes and the schools attended. Schools and tertiary education institutions are divided into three divisions. The divisions are structure in such a way as to create a fair playing field and to provide student-athletes with a wider range of opportunities to participate in (NCAA eligibility center, 2017).

The three divisions (Division I, Division II and Division III) have different initial-eligibility standards. Schools in Division I are generally schools with larger sport budgets and a resultant with a more extensive sport department support system. Division II schools emphasize a balance between academic endeavours and sport performance. This results in athletically gifted students to compete at a high level, whilst maintaining a traditional college or university experience. Division III schools

are academically orientated, with academics being the primary focus. Sport seasons tend to be shorter thereby allowing for a stronger focus on academic studies and other campus activities (NCAA eligibility center, 2017).

NCAA American Football consists of four levels and two subdivisions. Participation within the levels and subdivisions are dependent, on the division in which the schools are categorized in. The Football Bowl Subdivision (FBS) Level 1 and the Football Championship Subdivisions (FCS) includes levels 2-4 (NCAA, 2013). The Football Bowl Subdivision schools are division I schools and therefore have to adhere to the division I minimum requirements set out by the NCAA Eligibility Center. The Football Championship Subdivision (FCS) encompasses division II and III schools that have to comply with their respected division's minimum standards of the NCAA Eligibility Centre (NCAA eligibility center, 2017).

Initial Eligibility standards help to prepare students to succeed in the college classroom based on their high-school academic record. The eligibility process also protects the fairness and integrity of college American football by ensuring student-athletes are truly amateurs (NCAA, 2014). If a player wants to practice, compete and receive an athletic scholarship during your first year at a Division I or II school, the athlete must be certified as eligible by the NCAA Eligibility Center (NCAA eligibility center, 2017).

### **3.2.1 High School Academic requirements for eligibility to play in the NCAA**

#### *3.2.1.1 Division I academic standards*

Student-athletes must complete high school and meet the following requirements before enrolment at the start of August in order to be eligible to practice, compete and receive an athletic scholarship in the first full-time year at a division I school. Prospective student-athletes have to complete 16 NCAA core courses, earn at least a 2.0 GPA in core courses and earn an SAT combined score or ACT sum score that matches the core-course GPA on the division I sliding scale (NCAA Eligibility Center, 2017). Once the certification process has been completed student-athletes will receive a decision on their eligibility when being recruited by a Division I school. Athletes will be placed in one of the following categories; qualifier, academic redshirt, non-qualifier and an early academic qualifier (NCAA eligibility center, 2017).

- Qualifier: enables a player to practice, compete and receive athletic scholarships during the first year of enrolment at an NCAA Division I school.
- Academic Redshirt: player enrolling at a Division I school on or after August 1st. Athletes are allowed to receive academic scholarships during the first year of enrolment and may practice during the first regular academic term but they may not compete during the first year. Players must pass eight of quarter or nine semester hours in order to practice the next term.
- Non-qualifier: athletes will not be able to practice, compete or receive athletic scholarships during the first year of enrolment at a Division I school.
- Early Academic qualifier: prospective high school athletes that meet the specific criteria after six semesters.

#### *3.2.1.2 Division II standards*

High School athletes that enrol before August and wishes to be eligible to practice compete and receive athletic scholarships in the first full-time year at a Division II school. The athlete has to meet all of the following requirements, complete 16 core courses, earn at least a 2.0 GPA in core courses and earn an SAT combined score of 820 or an ACT sum score of 86 (NCAA eligibility center, 2017).

- *Qualifier*: during the first year of enrolling at an NCAA Division II school athletes may practice, compete and receive athletic scholarships.
- *Partial qualifier*: during the first year of enrolment athletes may practice and receive athletic scholarships but may not compete.
- *Non-qualifier*: they may not practice compete or receive athletic scholarships in the first year of them enrolling in a Division II NCAA school.

During the early academic qualifier, athletes maybe deemed early academic qualifiers for a Division II school, if they meet specific criteria after six semesters. The minimum SAT combined score (math and critical reading) of 1000 or a minimum sum score of 85 on the ACT and a core-course GPA of 3.0 or higher in a minimum of 12 core courses.

### 3.2.1.3 Division III standards

Division III schools do not offer any athletic scholarships and athletes are planning on going to a Division III school do not have to register with the NCAA Eligibility Center. Division III schools set their own admissions and eligibility standards. Seventy five percent of Division III student-athletes receive some form of merit or need-based financial aid. No registration with the NCAA eligibility center is necessary if one is planning to attend a Division III school (NCAA eligibility center, 2017).

In the perpetration of the academic expectations in collage the NCAA schools requires college-bound student-athletes to build a foundation of high school courses. Not all high school courses are core courses.

To be an NCAA-approved core course high school classes must meet the following conditions (NCAA eligibility center, 2017).

- Be an academic, four year college preparatory course in the following subject areas:
  - English
  - Math (Algebra I or Higher)
  - Natural/Physical science
  - Social science
  - Foreign language or
  - Comparative religion or philosophy.
- Be taught at or above a high school's regular academic level.
- Receive credit towards high school graduation and appear on an official transcript with course title, grade, and credit awarded.

### 3.2.2 Grade-Point-Average

A student's GPA is calculated on a 4.000 scale. With the numeric grades such as 95 or 83 receives symbol letters A,B,C,D that indicates in what numeric grade section the students mark falls (NCAA, 2015). Points are then assigned to each of the 4 letters with A=4; B=3; C=2; D=1. With the number of points assigned to each of the symbolic letters representing the student's numeric grade. Courses are taught throughout the year with different course lengths that are divided into; quarter terms, trimesters, semesters and year courses. Credit units are allocated for each of the



courses lengths a quarter course has a value of 0.25, trimester course = 0.34, semester course = 0.5 and a full year course = 1.0 credit units (NCAA, 2015). With the calculating of a student's GPA the points assigned to the each of the letters that represents the student's numeric grade, the points that represent each of the letters are then multiplied by the course length credit units. A student that received a numerical grade of 83% in fact will be allocated with a B symbol, which equals 3 points (NCAA, 2015), if that student course was for a period of one semester that holds the value of 0.5 credits. The total quality points of that subject will be 3points x 0.5credits = 1.5 total quality points. An A grade (4points) for a trimester course (0.34 credits); 4points x 0.34credits = 1.36 quality points (NCAA, 2015). Once a student have determined their core GPA the sliding scale for each of the Divisions can be used to determine the minimum SAT and ACT score on the applicable Divisions sliding scale.

Table 3.1 illustrates a worksheet that assists students in monitoring their progress in meeting the NCAA initial-eligibility standards for Division I school. Table 3.2 is a worksheet that helps students that is looking to attend a Division II school to monitor their academic progress in meeting the NCAA initial-eligibility standards. Table 3.3 is a Division I Sliding scale. Table 3.4 is Division I Academic Redshirt sliding scale. Table 3.5 shows the sliding scale for Division II schools where as Table 3.6 is the scalding scale fore Division II partial qualifiers.

Table 3-1 Division I Worksheet (NCAA, 2015)

Division I Worksheet					
<b>English</b> (4 years required)					
Course Title	Credit	X	Grade	=	Quality Points (multiply credit by Grade)
English 9	0.5		A		(0.5 x 4) = 2
<b>Total English Units</b>					<b>Total Quality Points</b>
<b>Mathematics</b> (3 years required)					
Course Title	Credit	X	Grade	=	Quality Points (multiply credit by Grade)
Algebra 1	1		B		(1.0 x 3) = 3
<b>Total Mathematics Units</b>					<b>Total Quality Points</b>
<b>Natural/Physical science</b> (2 years required)					
Course Title	Credit	X	Grade	=	Quality Points (multiply credit by Grade)
<b>Total Natural/Physical Science Units</b>					<b>Total Quality Points</b>
<b>Additional year in English, Mathematics or Natural/Physical Science</b> (1 years required)					
Course Title	Credit	X	Grade	=	Quality Points (multiply credit by Grade)
<b>Total Additional Units</b>					<b>Total Quality Points</b>
<b>Social Science</b> (2 years required)					
Course Title	Credit	X	Grade	=	Quality Points (multiply credit by Grade)
<b>Total Social Science Units</b>					<b>Total Quality Points</b>
<b>Additional Academic Courses</b> (4 years required)					
Course Title	Credit	X	Grade	=	Quality Points (multiply credit by Grade)
<b>Total Additional Academic Units</b>					<b>Total Quality Points</b>
Total Quality Points from each subject area/ Total Credits = Core Course GPA					
	Quality Points	/	Credits	=	Core Course GPA

Table 3-2 Division II Worksheet (NCAA, 2015)

<b>Division II Worksheet</b>					
<i>English (3 years required)</i>					
Course Title	Credit	X	Grade	=	Quality Points (multiply credit by Grade)
Enlisgh 9	0.5		A		(0.5 x4) = 2
<b>Total English Units</b>					<b>Total Quality Points</b>
<i>Mathematics (2 years required)</i>					
Course Title	Credit	X	Grade	=	Quality Points (multiply credit by Grade)
Algebra 1	1		B		(1.0 x3) = 3
<b>Total Mathematics Units</b>					<b>Total Quality Points</b>
<i>Natural/Physical science (2 years required)</i>					
Course Title	Credit	X	Grade	=	Quality Points (multiply credit by Grade)
<b>Total Natural/Physical Science Units</b>					<b>Total Quality Points</b>
<i>Additional year in English, Mathematics or Natural/Physical Science (3 years required)</i>					
Course Title	Credit	X	Grade	=	Quality Points (multiply credit by Grade)
<b>Total Additional Units</b>					<b>Total Quality Points</b>
<i>Social Science (2years required)</i>					
Course Title	Credit	X	Grade	=	Quality Points (multiply credit by Grade)
<b>Total Social Science Units</b>					<b>Total Quality Points</b>
<i>Additional Academic Courses (4 years required)</i>					
Course Title	Credit	X	Grade	=	Quality Points (multiply credit by Grade)
<b>Total Additional Academic Units</b>					<b>Total Quality Points</b>
Total Quality Points form each subject area/ Total Credits = Core Course GPA			/	=	
	Quality Points	/	Credits	=	Core Course GPA



**Table 3-5 Division II Competition Sliding Scale (NCAA, 2015)**

<b>Division II Competition Sliding Scale</b>		
Use for Division II beginning August 1, 2018		
Core GPA	SAT Verbal + Math only	ACT
3.300	400	37
3.275	410	38
3.250	420	39
3.225	430	40
3.200	440	41
3.175	450	41
3.150	460	42
3.125	470	42
3.100	480	43
3.075	490	44
3.050	500	44
3.025	510	45
3.000	520	46
2.975	530	46
2.950	540	47
2.925	550	47
2.900	560	48
2.875	570	49
2.850	580	49
2.825	590	50
2.800	600	50
2.775	610	51
2.750	620	52
2.725	630	52
2.700	640	53
2.675	650	53
2.650	660	54
2.625	670	55
2.600	680	56
2.575	690	56
2.550	700	57
2.525	710	58
2.500	720	59
2.475	730	60
2.450	740	61
2.425	750	61
2.400	760	62
2.375	770	63
2.350	780	64
2.325	790	65
2.300	800	66
2.275	810	67
2.250	820	68
2.225	830	69
2.200	840 & above	70 & above

**Table 3-6 Division II Partial Qualifier Sliding Scale (NCAA, 2015)**

<b>Division II Partial Qualifier Sliding Scale</b>		
Use for Division II beginning August 1, 2018		
Core GPA	SAT Verbal + Math only	ACT
3.05 & above	400	37
3.025	410	38
3.000	420	39
2.975	430	40
2.950	440	41
2.925	450	41
2.900	460	42
2.875	470	42
2.850	480	43
2.825	490	44
2.800	500	44
2.775	510	45
2.750	520	46
2.725	530	46
2.700	540	47
2.675	550	47
2.650	560	48
2.625	570	49
2.600	580	49
2.575	590	50
2.550	600	50
2.525	610	51
2.500	620	52
2.475	630	52
2.450	640	53
2.425	650	53
2.400	660	54
2.375	670	55
2.350	680	56
2.325	690	56
2.300	700	57
2.275	710	58
2.250	720	59
2.225	730	60
2.200	740	61
2.175	750	61
2.150	760	62
2.125	770	63
2.100	780	64
2.075	790	65
2.050	800	66
2.025	810	67
2.000	820 & above	68 & above

### **3.2.3 Academic Requirements to Remain Eligible to play in the NCAA**

Strict academic requirements have been set in place by the NCAA for College football players, to ensure that the athletes make substantial progress towards obtaining a degree. Each of the three divisions (Division I, Division II & Division III) has minimum academic requirements for remaining eligible to practice and compete in that particular division. The following minimum academic standards for each of the three divisions are explained below.

Division I players have to complete 40% of coursework of the total amount of credits that is required for any given degree by the end of the second year. Sixty percent of course work must be complete by the end of the third year, with 80% of course work completed by the fourth year (NCAA, 2013). Division I players are allowed 5 years to graduate whilst receiving athletically related financial aid. All players must earn at least six credit hours each term to be eligible for the following term. Players have to adhere to the minimum grade-point average (GPA) requirement, which relates to an institution's own GPA standards for graduation. Teams in Division I schools are also subjected to the Academic Progress Rate (APR), a standard that measures a team's academic progress by assigning points to each individual student-athlete/player for eligibility and retention/graduation (NCAA, 2013).

Student-Athletes attending Division II schools have to complete 24 credit hours each year. Eighteen credit hours have to be earned between the start of fall classes and the end of spring classes. Six credit hours can however, be completed during the summer (NCAA, 2013). Student-athletes in division II schools are also required to earn six credit hours to remain eligible for competition the next term. A 1.8 cumulative GPA must be achieved after earning 24 credit hours. After 48 credit hours a 1.9 GPA had to be obtained, with a further 2.0 GPA after 72 credit hours. Student-athletes are permitted 10 semesters of full time enrolment (5years) to use their 4 seasons of competition, provided they maintain eligibility. The 4 competition seasons must be completed within the given 10 semesters of full-time enrolment (NCAA, 2013).

Division III schools have no minimum national standards for establishing or maintaining eligibility. Student-athletes must be in good academic standing and make satisfactory progress towards a degree. Student-athletes must be enrolled in

at least 12 semester or quarter hours, regardless of an institutions own definition of full-time enrolment (NCAA, 2013).

Institutions in all of the division schools have to take it upon themselves in determining and certifying the academic eligibility of each student athlete who represents the school on the field of play.

### **3.2.4 NCAA Amateur Status**

The following section will focus on the effect of amateur certification on the various school divisions. The bedrock principle of university sport and the NCAA is of pure amateur competition (NCAA, 2014), to preserve an academic environment in which acquiring a quality education is the first priority. In achieving this, it is therefore crucial for the NCAA to maintain amateurism. Ensuring that students' priority remains on obtaining a quality educational experience, amateur rules had to be adopted. Determining the amateur status of prospective student-athletes presents a challenge with global recruiting becoming more common. This results in all student-athletes to become certified as amateurs. All student-athletes, including international students are required to adhere to NCAA amateurism requirements to remain eligible for intercollegiate competition. Athletes will be asked a series of questions about their sports participation when they register with the NCAA Eligibility Center, to determine the amateur status of athletes. General NCAA amateur requirements do not allow contracts with professional teams, salary for participating in athletics, prize money above actual and necessary expenses, play with professionals, try-outs, practice or competition with a professional team, benefits from an agent or prospective agent and agreement to be represented by an agent (NCAA, 2014).

Amateur certification began in the fall of 2007 (NCAA, 2014). In previous years, it was the responsibility of each individual school for determining that prospective student-athletes met NCAA amateurism requirements. The Oxford dictionaries define the word amateurism as “a person who engages in a pursuit, especially sport on an unpaid basis (noun)”, “engaging or engaged in without payment; non-professional (adjective).”

### **3.3 SA VARSITY CUP**

In 2008 the Varsity Cup competition was introduced in South Africa with the primary function of rebuilding the image of university rugby in the country (News24, 2008). Providing rugby players who, first of all want to better themselves academically and that was not given the opportunity of receiving a professional contract at a South African Rugby union, with the opportunity and necessary exposure to become a professional player. The Varsity Cup re-plagued with controversies around the use of professional players. The use of young professional, contracted players within the competition. This is in stark contrast to the competition's original intention.

Varsity Cup has developed extensively since its introduction and launch in 2008. Varsity Cup started with only eight universities, namely North West University-Pukke, University of Johannesburg, University of Pretoria, University of Stellenbosch, University of Cape Town, Nelson Mandela Metropolitan University and Tshwane University of Technology - competing in a single round followed by an Easter weekend rugby festival in George. The festival in George included the semi-finals and final of the competition (News24, 2008). In 2009 the Varsity 'Koshuis' (translated as hostel) championship was introduced alongside the Varsity Cup. In 2012 Varsity Cup introduced two more 'divisions' in launching the Varsity Shield (second tier competition) and the Young guns competition for u/20 players who is registered students from the universities that compete in the Varsity Cup (Varsity Cup, 2012). With the launch of the Varsity Cup competition in 2008, the competition was open as the rules consisted of not much. As the years past rules was introduced as form of eligibility in the aim of making the competition more and completely student based. The rules of the competition dictate that students need to achieve 60 credits in the previous academic year in order to be deemed eligible (Varsity Cup, 2016, b). Varsity Cup also state that the competition is based on the very popular NCAA system that is used to govern tertiary sport within the United States of America.

#### **3.3.1 Player Eligibility**

The eligibility requirement for players to participate in the Varsity Cup has been altered in order for the competition to remain on amateur level. Requirements includes academic and age requirements. The year of 2015 saw that all 23 players that compete on match day must be a bona fide registered student at the university



for which they are playing (Varsity Cup, 2016, b). 2015 also saw the inclusion of the rule that universities are only allowed to play with 4 first year students in the Varsity cup and Varsity Shield match day 23. All 4 of the player's representing these universities as first year all have to be under the age of 22 (may become 22 years in the year that they play). The rule regarding the 4 first year player's within the match day 23 has changed, resulting that only 1 out of the 4 first year students playing in the match day 23 may not be a black person (Varsity Cup, 2016, b). Universities will, in addition, be allowed to play with an additional 3 first year students on the condition that all 3 of the additional first year students must have been in Grade 12 in one of the previous 2 years.

Varsity Cup regulations allows any player 25 years and younger, as provided in clause 5.2 of the Varsity Cup by-laws (Varsity Cup, 2016, a). Players must be registered players of the club they are playing for to be eligible to participate. With players required to be bona fide registered students to be eligible to participate in Varsity Cup competition a definition of a bona fide student as per clause 4.2 of the Constitution of the Varsity Cup club had to be developed (Varsity Cup, 2016, a). Varsity Cup rules state that students must be registered at a university or a higher educational qualification registered on the NQF, with a SAQA identity number for a program of at least 120 SAQA credits on a NQF 6 level (Varsity Cup, 2016, b). Students may also be registered at a university for a bridging course. The bridging course must be registered with the Matriculation Board of HESA, having obtained a NSC (National Senior Certificate) endorsed for higher certificate, diploma or degree study (Varsity Cup, 2016, b). Students will only be allowed one year to complete the bridging course, which will provide students access to qualifications on at least NQF level 6. Students enrolled in such a bridging course must not follow a year where the student was enrolled for a formal qualification at any university (Varsity Cup, 2016, b). Students will also be deemed eligible when registering at a comprehensive university or a university of technology for an articulation program that the institution has in place for students who wish to articulate, (after at least one year of successful study, but usually after completing a qualification) from one qualification (higher certificate or diploma) to another (e.g. to a degree stream) and for one year only (Varsity Cup, 2016, b). Occasional students may apply to be declared eligible by Varsity Cup as an occasional student, providing that a NSC endorsed for diploma or

degree study which is registered at a university for at least 120 SAQA credits can be provided. A one year only eligibility period are allowed for occasional students with Varsity Cup in its sole discretion declaring occasional student's applicants eligible if it deems them bona fide students (Varsity Cup, 2016, b). Such a request to be declared an occasional student by Varsity Cup must not follow a year where the student was enrolled for a formal qualification at any university. Member University student's that was enrolled for a course in the year 2013, that had qualified to play Varsity Cup or Shield as a bona fide student at the time of registration, inclusive of the Young Guns and Koshuis league will be allowed to play as if they indeed satisfied the definition of a bona fide student. All other eligibility prerequisites to play, will still apply, in terms of clause 8.7 of the Varsity Cup By-laws (Varsity Cup, 2016, b).

University Sport South Africa (USSA) Regulations, according to article 3.4.1, determines that *"Only a bona fide student registered with a club of a member institution of USSA may participate in a USSA tournament"* (Varsity Cup, 2016, b). A bona fide student is defined by University Sport South Africa as a person who is: An officially registered student at a higher educational institution recognized by the appropriate national academic authority' (Department of Higher Education and Training) for a program of at least 120 SAQA credits on NQF level 6 that is approved by that institutions senate (Varsity Cup, 2016, b). Bridging courses are included at the same level although only one attempt is permitted for completing any bridging course at any institution. Students who are enrolled for short courses or registered for courses modules or units of study that is less than 120 SAQA credits will not be included or deemed eligible as a bona fide student. Students have to be actively involved in pursuing his/her academic career, i.e. attending lectures, submitting assignments, writing tests and examination in order to be promoted to the next level of study.

Players will not be allowed to participate in the competition during the following year if a player has played for any other club during a specific calendar year, whether it was in a friendly or in a league match. Players that played Varsity Cup, Varsity Shield or Young Guns and have played for any other club than the University for which they have played Varsity Cup, Varsity Shield or Young Guns in the same year that they have played Varsity Cup, Varsity Shield or Young Guns (Varsity Cup, 2016,

b). Players will not be allowed to play in the competition at all if they have not passed Grade 12 at school, or an equivalent qualification and therefore do not have a grade 12 senior certificate. No player that is an enrolled bona fide student at a Member University may play for another Member University (Varsity Cup, 2016, b). Referring to Clauses 3.1 and 3.2 of the Varsity Cup Bye laws no student that registers as a student at any Varsity Cup (Varsity Cup, 2016, a), Varsity Shield Member University or have played for any representative team at any Member University during a particular year will be allowed to play for a team of another Member University in any of the competitions in the following year unless they are a newly enrolled post-graduate student at the University for which they want to play. Players that get paid for playing rugby at the club will not be allowed to play in the Koshuisrugby Championship Competition (Varsity Cup, 2016, b).

Players that have played four or more Super rugby and/or Heineken Cup games or in a rugby test match for South Africa, or any other IRB (International Rugby Board) Tier 1 country at senior level will not be allowed to play in the competition (Varsity Cup, 2016, b). Players which was included in any official provincial 22 man squad over a particular weekend will not be allowed to play in the competition the following Monday (Varsity Cup, 2016, b).

Only players that have passed a sufficient amount of subjects in their last year of studies will be regarded as a bona fide student for the purpose of clause 4.1 to obtain an amount of 60 SAQA credits. At any time is the Exco entitled to do or to delegate to a third party to do an audit at a member University to ensure that all bona fide student-players have complied with the prerequisite for being a bona fide student (Varsity Cup, 2016, a).

### **3.4 CONCLUSION**

Chapter Three focused and investigated the difference between two university, collision sport systems NCAA and Varsity Cup. Several factors between the two sporting codes were looked at during the chapter such as player eligibility rules. With the conclusion of the chapter, it is clear between the two tertiary collision sports the NCAA have a much more student-athlete approach than that of the South African Varsity Cup.

# **CHAPTER 4: FROM AMATEUR TO PROFESSIONAL PARTICIPATION: AMERICAN FOOTBALL VERSUS SA RUGBY**

## **4.1 INTRODUCTION**

The previous chapter investigated the difference between several factors within the NCAA and Varsity Cup. Chapter four provides an in-depth look into both American football and SA rugby history. As the chapter unfolds the two sporting codes pathways to becoming a professional athlete is investigated to identify possible factors which can impact an athlete career.

## **4.2. HISTORY OF AMERICAN FOOTBALL**

Football - or American football as it is known today - developed from the sport of Rugby in the late 1800s, as it gained favour with the major eastern schools over soccer (NFL, 2017). In 1876 the first rules for American football was written, the same year saw Walter Champ the father of American football getting involved with the game for the first time. At the close of the 1800s, Pudge Heffelfinger became the first person to be paid to play football. Heffelfinger were paid \$500 by the Allegheny Athletic Association (AHA) to play in their rival match against Pittsburgh Athletic Club (PAC) (Pro-Football, 2018). Three years after Heffelfinger were recruited, John Brallier was the first player that openly turned pro by accepting \$10 and expenses to play for the Latrobe YMCA against the Jeanette Athletic Club (Pro-Football, 2018).

As the 1800s came to a close the Latrobe Athletic Association football team became the first team to play with only professional players for an entire season (Pro-Football, 2018). The new Century brought several changes to the sport. The touchdown which used to be four points changed to five points. The field goal changed from five points to four points and then again from four to three points five years later. The touchdown then got increased from five points to six as it is today in 1992 (NFL, 2017). William C Temple became the first individual club owner when he took over the team payments for the Duguesne Country and Athletic Club in 1900 (NFL, 2017). The start of the 20<sup>th</sup> century also brought the first World series of pro football contested between five teams.

Pro football were left in a state of confusion in 1920 due to three major problems: dramatically rising salaries; players continually jumping from one team to another following the highest offer; and the use of college players still enrolled in school (Gilbert, 2018). A league in which all the members would follow the same rules seemed to be the answer. At an organised meeting held on 17 September 1920, teams from four states introduced the new league named The American Professional Football Association. The American Professional Football Association changed their name to the National Football League on June 24, 1922 and fielded 18 teams. On April 23, 1927 a special meeting was held where it was decided to secure the NFL's future by eliminating the financially weaker teams and consolidating the quality players onto a limited number of more successful teams. This restructure saw the new-look NFL dropping to 12 teams from the original 18 teams (Gilbert, 2018).

Bert Bell proposed an annual draft of college players, which were adopted by the NFL in 1935 (NFL, 2017). The annual draft that was adopted by the NFL began in 1936, with teams selected in an inverse order of the position in which they finished in the last season (NFL, 2017). The first player ever selected in the NFL draft was that of, University of Chicago halfback and Heisman Trophy winner Jay Berwanger that were selected by the Eagles (Pro-Football, 2018). Berwanger never played pro football as the Eagles traded his rights to the Bears. The number-two pick, Riley Smith of Alabama who were selected by Boston became the first player to actually sign with a team after the draft (NFL, 2017).

The first Commissioner of the NFL, Elmer Layden, was named in 1941. Free substitutions were withdrawn in 1949 with substitutions limited to no more than three men at a time. The NFL adopted the free substitution rule again on January 20, 1949 for one year. The following year 1950, after the adopted one year free substitution rule brought on the rule of unlimited free substitutions, opening the way for the era of two platoons and specialization in pro football (NFL, 2017). On December 23, 1951 the NFL Championship Game was televised from coast-to-coast for the first time (Pro-Football, 2018). The American and National conferences had name changes on January 24, 1953 changing then to the Eastern and Western conferences. Three years later in 1956 the NFL Players Association was founded (Gilbert, 2018). Another seven years after the NFL Players Association was founded, the NFL properties, Inc. got established in 1963, which served as the licensing of the NFL

(NFL, 2017). On February 15, 1965 the NFL teams pledged not to sign college seniors until completion of all their games, including bowl games (Pro-Football, 2018). In the case of any team was to violate the pledge, the commissioner was empowered to discipline the franchise up to as much as the loss of an entire draft list. The same year saw sports fans chose professional football 41% as their favourite sport, overtaking the 38% of baseball for the first time, according to a Harris survey (NFL, 2017).

The war between the AFL and NFL reached its peak in 1966, when the leagues spent a combined \$7 million towards the signing of their 1966 draft picks (Pro-Football, 2018). This resulted in a series of secret meetings regarding a possible AFL and NFL merge. On June 8, 1966 the merge was announced under the agreement that the two leagues would combine that lead to an expanded league, with 24 teams that would increase to 26 in 1968 and 28 teams in 1970 or short thereafter (NFL, 2017). All existing franchises would be retained, and no franchises would be transferred outside their metropolitan areas. The two leagues maintained separate schedules through 1969, an annual AFL and NFL World Championship took place during January 1967 (NFL, 2017). Official regular season play would start in 1970 when the two leagues would officially merge to form one league with two conferences as Congress also approved the AFL and NFL merge in 1966 (NFL, 2017).

The NFL Players Association and the NFL Management Council ratified a collective bargaining agreement extending until 1982, covering five football seasons while continuing the pension plan-including years 1974, 1975, and 1976-with contributions totalling more than \$55 million. The total cost of the agreement was estimated at \$107 million. The agreement called for a college draft at least through 1986; contained a no-strike, no-suit clause; established a 43-man active player limit; reduced pension vesting to four years; provided for increases in minimum salaries and preseason and postseason pay; improved insurance, medical, and dental benefits; modified previous practices in player movement and control; and reaffirmed the NFL Commissioner's disciplinary authority (Pro-Football, 2018). Additionally, the agreement called for the NFL member clubs to make payments totalling \$16 million, the next 10 years to settle various legal disputes.

In 1990, the NFL announced revisions on its draft eligibility rules; they made a change so that college juniors became eligible, but had to renounce their collegiate football eligibility before applying for the NFL Draft (NFL, 2017). The NFL expanded to 30 teams in 1993, these two teams however was only to be included into the 1995 season only. Unanimously the NFL clubs approved an expansion team for Cleveland in 1998, to fulfil the commitment to return the Browns to the field in 1999 (Pro-Football, 2018).

At a special league meeting in 2001 hosted by the city of Dallas, NFL clubs approved additional league-wide revenue sharing. The teams (clubs) agreed to pool the visiting team share of the gate receipts for preseason and regular-season games and divide the pool equally starting 17 January 2002 (Gilbert, 2018). NFL owners unanimously approved a realignment plan for the league starting in 2002 (Pro-Football, 2018). With the addition of the Houston Texas, the league's 32 teams will be divided into eight four divisions. Seven clubs change divisions, and the Seattle Seahawks changing conferences moving from the AFL to the NFL. A new scheduling format ensured that every team meets every other team in the league at least once every four years.

At the start of 2002 the NFL and NFL Players Association agreed to a fourth extension of the 1993 Collective Bargaining Agreement through 2007 (NFL, 2017). The Collective Bargaining Agreement was yet again approved by the NFL clubs in 2006 for another extension through to 2012. The creation of USA football was announced by the NFL and NFLPA in 2002, the first national advocacy organization representing all levels of amateur football (NFL, 2017).

#### **4.3. SA RUGBY**

From the time of the mid-17<sup>th</sup> century the Dutch began to settle in the Southern tip of Africa. The Southern tip of Africa (South Africa) began to prosper economically with cultural and political power growing with the arrival of permanent British control in 1806 (van der Berg, 2011). As the British Empire extended its influence into the region a wide range of British cultural practices were introduced during the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century, including sporting activities like football, rugby and cricket.

Reverend George Ogilvie has been credited with introducing football/rugby to South Africa, after he was appointed as Headmaster of the Diocesan College at Rondebosch (van der Berg, 2011).

The actual game that was taught by Ogilvie was that of the Winchester football variety that was played with a soccer ball but it included rugby like scrum with the object being to kick the ball over your opponent's goal line (Winchestercollege.org, 2012). As the young men of Cape Town soon jointed in and played, a local press reported a series of football matches between scratch sides (Coetzee, 2017). On 21 August 1862, the first game took place between the army and the Civil service (Pinsky, 2014). The mid 1870's saw rugby football being played in the Cape colony as the Hamilton RFC was formed in 1875, which opted to play the Winchester game (Coetzee, 2017). The Western Province and Villagers clubs were formed the following year. The former adopted the rugby rules, while the latter opted for the Winchester code. In 1876, the leading two clubs Hamilton's and Villagers opted to play the game of Winchester football against each other. If it was not for William Henry Milton that arrived in Cape Town in 1878 the history of football in South Africa might have been very different (Coetzee, 2017).

Rugby football was very much battling to survive against that of the Winchester football code by the late 1870's, with the Western Province club ceasing to exist due to the lack of support. William H. Milton turned the tide in the favor of rugby with his arrival in Cape Town in 1878 (van der Berg, 2011). Milton, who had played for England only a few years earlier in 1874 and 1875, joined the Villagers club where he started playing and preaching the rugby code (Pinsky, 2014). Milton's influence was so great that the football playing fraternity in Cape Town had all but abandoned the Winchester game in favor of the rugby football variety. The Western Province Rugby Football Union (W.P.R.F.U) organized the first club competition for a cup, known as the Grand Challenge Cup in 1883 (History.com, 2007). The Stellenbosch club was formed also around 1883 with the young Boers/Afrikaners from the farming belt taking it like ducks to water. By the end of 1883 rugby was established right across the coastal belt of the Cape colony and expanding in popularity, as a number of British regiments started the game around the same time it began in Cape Town (History.com, 2007). With the expanding of the game rugby founded its way to Kimberley in 1886 forming Griqualand West Rugby Union. Whilst the men from



Cape Town introduced the game of rugby to Pretoria and Johannesburg, it also expanded into the Western Transvaal towns of Klerksdorp and Potchefstroom (Pinsky, 2014). The Transvaal Rugby Football Union was formed the year following the inter-town matches between Pretoria and Johannesburg in 1888. Rugby took a little longer to get a foothold in Natal with association football being introduced earlier than rugby in the region. However, Pietermaritzburg, the capital and headquarters of the British army and Durban had formed clubs by 1890 (Pinsky, 2014).

The South African Rugby Football Board (SARFB) was established in 1889 to link up and govern the various unions. "They held their first tournament the same year at Kimberley where Western Province, Transvaal, Griqualand West and Eastern Province competed. Western Province won the tournament and went on to win the next eight (History.com, 2007)." Mr. J. Richards, a member of a well-known Cape Town brotherhood, negotiated the first British representative team arrival in 1891. All of the financial responsibilities were taken over by Cecil Rhodes, then prime minister of the Cape colony (van der Berg, 2011). A total of 19 matches were played by the British team, with them winning all of them racking up 224 points to 1. Within the 19 matches three actual test matches was played that produced a combined score of all three tests, was only 10 which was a tremendous effort. The British captain brought with him a gold cup which had been a gift from the late Sir Donald Currie, the founder of the Union Castel Steamship line to South Africa. He instructed the British captain to give the cup to the center putting up the best game during the tour (History.com, 2007). After a game played at Kimberley the cup was presented to Griqualand West, which they immediately handed over to the South African Rugby Board so that it was to become a perpetual floating inter-center trophy, known as the Currie Cup today.

The Stellenbosch rugby club invited the British touring team to a match, which was accepted and on 7 September 1891 the Stellenbosch club became one of the very few club teams ever to play an international touring team (Pinsky, 2014). A second British team visited in 1896 and in a final match between the British team and South Africa played in Cape Town saw the South African team beating the British 5-0 to record South Africa's first international victory (van der Berg, 2011).

The South African Colored Rugby Football Board (SACRFB) was represented with a trophy by Cecil John Rhodes in 1886, for their domestic competition that was played

for in Kimberley in 1889 for the first time when Western Province won it (Pinsky, 2014). The British third visit to South Africa was becoming less successful as they only won 11 matches, lost 8 and drew 3. The historical green jersey of the South African rugby team was first used in the last of the three test matches against the British at Newlands in 1903. Prior to that last test the use of white jerseys or the jersey of the union /club hosting the match was used, white jerseys being the alternative jersey color still today for the South African team (History.com, 2007).

The famous New Zealanders made their tour of the mother counter in 1905 with tremendous success and this spurred the South Africans on to do the same. In 1906, the first international tour to the United Kingdom was organised with the team captained by Paul Roos and vice-captained by H.J. Carolin. Regarding the Springbok badge, the manager of the 1906 tour John Cecil "Daddy" Carden observed that it existed when the team left South Africa. In a letter to the author of the history of SA Rugby Ivor Difford, Carden quoted an article published by the London Daily Mail on September 20, 1906, as follows: *"The team's colours will be myrtle green jerseys with gold collar. They would wear dark blue shorts and dark blue stockings and the jersey would have been embroidered in mouse-coloured silk on the left breast with a springbok, a small African antelope"* (History.com, 2007).

The name Springboks, an anglicised version of the Afrikaans word Springbokken, was the brainchild of skipper Paul Roos, vice-captain Carolin and manager Carden, as the latter recalled: *"No uniforms or blazers had been provided and we were a motley turn-out at practice at Richmond. That evening, I spoke to Roos and Carolin and pointed out that the witty London Press would invent some funny name for us, if we did not invent one ourselves. We thereupon agreed to call ourselves 'Springboks' and to tell pressmen that we desired to be so named. I at once ordered the dark green, gold-edged blazers and still have the first Springbok pocket badge that was made"* (History.com, 2007). The 1906 touring team played 28 matches of whom they won 25, lost 2 with only one draw. During the tour four test matches were played against Scotland, Ireland, Wales and England. Paul Roos and the Springboks managed to win two of the test matches played only losing to Scotland and drawing to England in the last test at Crystal Palace. The 1906 tour Springboks team also played an unofficial test against the French in Paris; the test match being one sided with the Springboks demolishing the French XV 55-6, to end the tour in the most

satisfying style. The Springboks followed with another successful tour in 1912-1913, where they got the better of the Scottish team that beaten them the previous tour, they also recorded wins over Ireland, Wales, France and England at Twickenham handing England their first defeat at Twickenham since it opened in 1909. The Springboks became a formidable force in international rugby as they did not lose any home test match series until 1974 (van der Berg, 2011).

During the apartheid era, which started in the 1940's when the Afrikaner National Party was able to gain a strong majority, following the independence from England. Apartheid was invented as a means to cement the National Party's control over the economic and social system within the country. One of the most divisive issues during the apartheid era was the Afrikaners who dominated the sport of rugby although it was a British public school invention that was played by the cream of the colonial Anglo Saxon society (van der Berg, 2011). For the Afrikaners the game of rugby was more than just a game – it was an expression of resurgent Afrikaner nationalism, an opportunity for mauling, rucking, and physical revenge against an old political foe.

Rugby had a different meaning to black South Africans; it was a white man's game and a brutally hard one at that, the sport of the apartheid police, the apartheid army and the apartheid government. This made for every time a South African rugby team ventured abroad, it had to run a gauntlet of booing and egg-flinging protesters as the theme was taken up across the world. Apartheid did not mean that non-white didn't play the game of rugby; white missionaries used sport as a way to encourage respectability in the emerging non-white middle class during the 19<sup>th</sup> century (Pinsky, 2014). This included a variety of sports like Cricket, Tennis, Croquet, Soccer and Rugby. In places like the Cape colony and the Eastern Cape rugby in fact dominated the non-white sports scene, particular through to the late 1960's (Coetzee, 2017). But rugby organisation and teams were kept segregated with discrimination against black and coloured players and little government funding.

The New Zealand rugby team toured South Africa in 1919, 1928, 1949 and 1960 with the SARFB stipulating each time that no player with Maori blood should be included in the side (van der Berg, 2011). The exclusion of the New Zealand Maori players resulted in people around the world objecting to this unfair practice.

The SACRB chose a team to go on an internal tour in 1939, the team lost only two matches of the 9 that was played. The team colours was green and gold and with their blazer badge carrying a leaping springbok with the words '1<sup>st</sup> National team 1939' as the team was also called the springboks (van der Berg, 2011). The SACRB's hopes of sending the team abroad were dashed with the start of the Second World War.

Amongst the black players school rugby with annual tournaments was an important feature of the game. With the first annual inter-schools tournaments being played in 1943, with the last tournament being played in 1964 (van der Berg, 2011). The apartheid era not only separated coloured rugby from white rugby, as there was also conflicting interest amongst the black and coloured controlling bodies. That led to the establishment of the South African Rugby Football Federation in 1959 when Western Province (the largest part of SACRB) opted to break away from the SACRB (van der Berg, 2011).

Criticism of apartheid grew steeply from 1960 in the wake of "The wind of change" speech by the Prime Minister, Macmillan (Pinsky, 2014). The Springboks from onward was perceived as prominent representatives of the apartheid within South Africa, which lead to increasingly international isolation. In 1966 the South African Coloured Rugby Board became the South African Rugby Union (SARU) (Pinsky, 2014). At the end of the 1970's non-white players and coloured teams began to face white sides as attitudes in South Africa's rugby hierarchy were beginning to welcome players of colour (Pinsky, 2014). The Commonwealth signed the "Gleneagles Agreement" in 1977 shortly after the Soweto riots in 1976. This agreement discouraged any sporting contact with South Africa and led to the cancellation of the planned Springboks tour to France in 1979, as the French government announced that it was inappropriate for the South African teams to tour France (Coetzee, 2017).

With the amount of conflict between the black and coloured rugby controlling bodies, it resulted in the formation of four different unions in 1981: SARFB, SARU, SARA and SARFF (History.com, 2007). The International Rugby Board (IRB) banned South Africa from international competition after the 1981 Springbok tour to New Zealand. The banning by the IRB was to be until such time as to when apartheid ended, which continued for a good ten years thereafter. Between the banning of 1981 to 1992 the national team only played 10 test matches, missing out on two World Cups and the

proposed Lions (British team) tour of 1986 (Pinsky, 2014). The non-racial South African Rugby Union and the South African Rugby Board merged on March 23, 1992 to form the South African Rugby Football Union (SARFU) (Pinsky, 2014).

After the country's first democratic election in 1994, South African sport was no longer in isolation. South Africa hosted the 1995 Rugby World Cup only one year after their first democratic election (Bolligelo, 2005). The Springboks won the 1995 Rugby World Cup on home turf showing how sport has the power to heal old wounds like no other South African institution. Around the world, hearts melted when newly elected President Nelson Mandela donned the No 6 shirt of the team's captain Francois Pienaar, a white Afrikaner, as the two embraced each other in a spontaneous gesture of racial reconciliation (Bolligelo, 2005). The South African Rugby Football Union persevered in making rugby a game for all, mainly through an active development programme throughout the country (later known as the Quota system). The name of the South African Rugby Football Union changed in 2005 to the current South African Rugby Union (SARU) (Coetzee, 2017). The Springboks won their second Rugby World Cup at the 2007 Rugby World Cup in France, beating England in the Final 15-6. The next year became a significant one when Peter de Villiers became the first non-white Springbok coach when he was appointed in 2008 (Coetzee, 2017). The year 2009, one can describe as the Springboks' last year of real significant achievements, with the Springboks winning their last Tri-nations to date and beating the British Lions in a three test match series 2-1. The 2011 rugby world cup came with a lot of pressure to the Springboks as they were defending champions, unfortunately the Springboks were eliminated from the tournament in the quarterfinal round by the Australian team (van der Berg, 2011). With a struggling couple of years for the Springboks, between the 2011 rugby world cup and the 2015 rugby world cup, not managing to win any title of significance. The opening match for the Springboks in the 2015 rugby world cup made history as it became one of the biggest upsets in sporting history as the Springboks were defeated by the team from Japan (Coetzee, 2017). The Springboks managed to make the semi-finals when they went down to defending champions New Zealand. Alistar Coetzee became the Springboks' second coloured coach when he was appointed in 2016.

#### **4.4 THE PROCESS OF HIGH SCHOOL AMERICAN FOOTBALL TO PROFESSIONAL FOOTBALL**

The dream and ultimate price for every high school American football player is firstly to be recruited by a Division I NCAA school, representing that school in their respected conference competition and then after three years of hard work in their academics up holding the NCAA academic standards and playing their heart out on the field to be drafted by the NFL Draft that takes place every year in April.

As mentioned in chapter 3 on how the NCAA structure works and all of the eligibility rules and academic standards of all three Divisions within the NCAA, turning the attention to getting drafted by the NFL Draft to one of the 32 NFL franchises. Players have to be out of high school for at least three years to be eligible for the draft (NFL, 2017). They also must have used up their college eligibility before the start of the next college football season. Requests can be made to the league's approval to enter the draft early by underclassmen and players who have graduated before using all their college eligibility (NFL, 2017). Only in the year after the end of their college eligibility players can be deemed draft-eligible.

NFL Player Personnel staff members have to then confirm the eligibility of all draft prospects. In the case of the 2016 draft that meant more than 3000 college players in 2015. To verify the information for all prospects the NFL Players Personnel work with NCAA compliance departments at schools across the country. They also have to review all of the player applications that were submitted to enter the draft early. These players (mostly underclassmen) have until January 18 to declare their intentions to do so. NFL Draft 2016 saw 96 underclassmen being approved and 11 players that graduated without using up all their college eligibility (NFL, 2017).

##### **4.4.1. NFL Draft**

The NFL Draft takes place each spring over a three days period. The draft consists of 7 rounds spread over the three days with the first round taking place on the Thursday, second and third round on Friday followed with round 4-7 on the Saturday (NFL, 2017). Each of the 32 franchises currently receives one pick in each of the 7 rounds. The draft order is determined by the position that the franchise ended at the previous season. With the standing of the previous NFL season the order of the

picks is reversed giving the team with the worst record the opportunity to pick first, barring any trades between franchises (NFL, 2017).

Draft slots 1-20 are assigned for those teams that did not make the playoff rounds, the standings at the end of the regular season determines the order they are allocated their picks. This means that the club team with the worst record picks first and the team with the best record is rewarded with the 20<sup>th</sup> pick in each round. Slots 21-32 are assigned to teams that did qualify for the playoff games. Results of the previous year's postseason play determine the draft picking order of the teams (NFL, 2017).

- Slots 21-24 are allocated to the four teams eliminated in the wild card round, in reverse order of their final regular season records (NFL, 2017).
- Slots 25-28 in the draft are filled with the four teams eliminated in the divisional round pick, in reverse order of their final regular season records (NFL, 2017).
- Picks 29 and 30 goes to the two teams that lost in the conference championship games, in reverse order of their final regular season records (NFL, 2017).
- The 31<sup>st</sup> pick is allocated to the team that lost the Super Bowl match, with the 32<sup>nd</sup> and last pick in each of the draft rounds belonging to the Super Bowl winning team (NFL, 2017).

Determination of the draft position is decided by strength of schedule in situations where team's finishes the previous season with identical records. Strength of schedule is the aggregated winning percentage of a team's opponents (NFL, 2017). Thus the higher pick will be awarded to the team that played the schedule with the lowest winning percentage. Records against common opponents in their division or conference are applied if teams have the same strength of schedule. In the case of this happening the tie will be decided by a coin flip to determine which team will receive the higher draft pick (NFL, 2017).

#### *4.4.1.1 Compensatory Picks*

The league can also assign as many as 32 additional compensatory free agent picks, under the terms of the NFL's collective bargaining agreement. Compensatory free agent picks allow clubs that have lost free agents to another club to use the draft

to try and fill the void these compensatory picks that are awarded takes place at the end of the third round through the seventh round (NFL, 2017). The NFL Management Council developed a proprietary formula in which the compensatory free agents are determined. The formula takes a player's salary, playing time and postseason honors in consideration. A maximum of four compensatory free agent picks of equal value to the net loss of the teams compensatory free agent, are awarded to a team after the compensatory free agents gained or lost by each team is totaled. Compensatory pick can't be traded between clubs (NFL, 2017).

#### *4.4.1.2. Trading of Picks*

Each pick in the draft is seen as an asset to all 32 clubs. This means then that once teams are assigned their draft positions, executives of the 32 clubs can decide to either select a player or trade the pick with another team (NFL, 2016). Trading between teams is normally made to improve their position to pick higher in the draft so that the team receives a player that fills a void that the team experienced in the previous season. On the other hand of trading pick is that it better a team's future picks when teams trade for better positions in the current draft. In 1999 and 2000 the New Orleans Saints traded a total of eight future picks to Washington to be able to draft Ricky Williams the 1998 Heisman trophy winner (NFL, 2017).

### **4.5. BECOMING AN NFL ATHLETE**

So what does it take to become an NFL athlete and what is the real change of making it to that million dollar contract? According to the NCAA approximately 1,071,775 high school athletes participate in football yearly. Players going on to play football in college are only 5.7% of that what played in high school with 0.8% of that moving on to the NFL (Turner II, 2010) This means that only the best of the best will receive the opportunity to play with in the NFL.

Robert Winston Turner II did a study where he draw upon the experiences of high school and college athletes who trained at Test Sports Clubs in the winter of 2008 to gain a deeper understanding of how football shapes the lives of young men who dreams of playing in the NFL. Turner followed two high school athletes at one of the Test Sport Clubs, one of them being a blue chip and a highly sought after athlete Nyshier Olivier and Cody Bohler a 17 year old 265-pound freshman (Turner II, 2010).



Cody, who was a late blooming lineman realised that he had to work hard if he wanted to compete with more mature players.

Over the period that Turner spend with Cody it became more relevant that the stress of being scouted by a University football program, and in Cody's case being recruited by the school he has set his sights on playing for, the University of Notre Dame. This whole process becomes more stressful as Bowl Champion Series Schools like Wake Forest begins their recruiting process with well over a 1000 prospects and then only actively recruiting 40-50 prospects to their football program after following these athletes performance over a 24 month period. These schools then knowingly will only sign 15-18 athletes to scholarships thereby giving the recruiting process in football the uncanny ability to play mind games with the athletes (Turner II, 2010).

On the opposite site of the High school football player spectrum Turner turned he's attention to Nyshier Olivier a 5'11, 175 pound running back/defensive back. The deference between Cody and Nyshier is as wide spread as can be from playing positions to body size. Cody being a white kid from a working class town in central Jersey with Nyshier being a African-American which was primarily raised in the densely populated city of Newark Jersey. Cody fighting for the attention of the college scouts while Nyshier is being considered as an elite blue chip athlete. During the time that Turner spent with Nyshier, it came to that a whole bunch of colleges was interested in including him in their football programs. With so many young athletes playing football now a day nothing can be taken for granted as the game requires all athletes submitting to a strict code of conduct.

#### **4.5.1. The College years**

In the pursuit of an athletes' NFL dream athletes will have to learn to conquer the many minefields which college football will through at them. With only a select few pushing through and finding their way to gain a shot at the next level. Further into the study done by Turner he turned he's attention to that of two college players which were participating in the 2008 (Matt and Moe) football Academy NFL Combine Training (Turner II, 2010).

Being part of two of college biggest football programs Matt Hewit and Moe had to endure a number of tests, not only mental and physical but emotional as well. Matt played he's college football in the South Eastern Conference (SEC) for the Arkansas

Razorbacks (Turner II, 2010). The South Eastern Conference has arguably been considered the best conference in college football for perhaps the better part of the past ten years. But playing for an SEC powerhouse doesn't guarantee that the NFL will come calling (Turner II, 2010). Matt understood that when eight of his team mates were recruited to the 2008 NFL pre-draft scouting combine, while he was left out in the cold. Turner retraced Matt's steps from high school through junior college on to the university of Arkansas, to help him better understand Matt's situation. Matt explained that his first two years in high school cost him dearly (Turner II, 2010), as he was running with the wrong crowd of friends. He then started concentrating, on his football as too much bad stuff had happened during the first two years. Running with the wrong crowd the first two years of high school contributed that Matt went in to he's high school senior year with a GPA of only 1.8. With Matt's poor transcripts in his senior year at high school left him junior college as his only option. He attended the University of Maryland's football camp for QB's at the end of his junior year (Turner II, 2010). The coach just walked away after asking Matt about his grades which Matt replied with "It's a C average". At the end of Matt's senior year he started to learn how to study seeing him improving his GPA to a 2.3, "too late though" he said (Turner II, 2010). This meant that Matt was required to graduate from junior college before he could accept any scholarship offers, as a result of NCAA rules.

Receiving a last minute scholarship offer from the Razorback's, with the time Matt spend with the Razorbacks he had to change playing positions three times, with him playing his last season as a strong Safety (Turner II, 2010). As he turned in a string campaign in his last season as he was selected as a 2<sup>nd</sup> team Associated Press All Southeastern Selection. With Matt having had a shaky academic start in high school, he matured as a student where he then was on the University of Arkansas Ton Farrell Academic Honor Roll for the fall of 2016 (Turner II, 2010).

Turner interviewed, a defensive back from Virginia Tech, asking his opinions about playing major college football. He explained *"People have no idea how difficult it really is," "It isn't that we are only trying to get by, it's just that we don't have enough energy we can't put our all into class, because when we put our all into class, we're slacking on the football field, which is our main focus for being there"* (Turner II, 2010). He then later said that, *"Without all of that, without football a lot of people wouldn't have even been in school"* (Turner II, 2010). There can be many factors,

which could have an impact on a college student academic process (Turner II, 2010).

As the conversation shifted to maintaining academic eligibility during the season, Moe mentioned his mom telling him that “C’s get degrees” when he left for collage (Turner II, 2010). As the conversation came to an end Turner tried to summaries what was said, Moe feeling that as soon as you sign the scholarship you become a “slave”, whereas for Tierre it felt more like a “boot camp’ for the four to five years you are enrolled in college. As you have to do whatever they say if you want to play or risk losing their scholarship (Turner II, 2010).

Turner also tried to understand why, these athletes in spite of the nearly insurmountable odds against them, stay so committed to the idea that all they need is a chance. Is Tierre maybe this driven due to unspoken pressure by he’s family legacy of great athletes, or is it perhaps the undying faith which Matt developed from watching his older brother’s NFL career get cut short by a devastating knee injury. Out of the 25 athletes that Turner interviewed 6 graduated from college, while most other were at least fifteen credits short of graduating. Two NFL prospects who did graduate said that it was crazy for someone not to graduate when the college is providing a free education to athletes (Turner II, 2010). But for most of those who did not graduate before making themselves eligible to be drafted by the NFL were too pre-occupied with making it to the NFL then them graduating.

Although today’s athletes are acutely aware of the emotional and true cost of a football scholarship, with the responses that Moe and Tierre offered in regards to big time college football with them having the feeling of it being like slavery or boot camp. With Moe summing it up the best by saying, *“Why do we put up with all this? Because you love the game; it’s what you do to make the NFL”* (Turner II, 2010).

#### *4.5.1.1. Early entry in the NFL*

Kaforey (1999) found that the number of high school and college athletes coming out early to make a living in professional sport has been increasing every year. The early entry to the draft is majorly impacted by the temptation and lure of big contracts, which directly have a big impact on the decision of entering the draft early. Football has set itself apart from the rest of the professional leagues for years now, in not entering athletes into the pro game straight after high school. By setting up rules and

agreements with the NCAA professional football not only discouraged young athletes from entering the draft rather it is trying to reinforce the importance of athletes spending four of five years in college to mature.

The NFL received a petition in 1989 from Barry Sanders to allow him to enter his name in the draft because of “hardship” reasons. With the request of Sanders being allowed it opened the doors for athletes to do the same. This saw the NFL agreeing to allow all juniors to petition their rights to enter the draft in 1990. According to Kaforey (1999), 271 juniors have declared themselves eligible for the draft since the inception of the early entry petition, yet only 170 have been selected, thus creating an uncertainty in the minds of potential petitioners whether to stay in college or to try and leave early. During the study, eligible collegiate student-athletes were interviewed where half of them decided to leave early and the other half deciding they would rather stay and finish their degree. Many factors contributed to each athlete’s decision as information from transcripts suggested. Factors included confidence, relationships, pressure and the fear of obtaining a critical injury.

Kaforey (1999) discussed each theme in terms of the factors that contributed to its strength. The confidence theme emerged within the ability to draw upon past experiences in life with making important decisions with self-assurance. Within the themes of relationships and pressure, the desire for wanting a professional sport career and the opportunities it could provide were associated with participants. The four participants that stayed argued that the NFL could wait one more year, and that obtaining a degree will be more important for them in the future and for their families. The theme concerned with fear, losing money and marketability due to injury was a concern within the mind of the participants that decided to leave early. Wanting to remain and finish something they had started was more important than an NFL career for those participants who stayed in college.

Deciding whether to enter the professional draft or to stay in college, all of the participants agreed upon and believed that maturity was a valuable factor in that decision. Further in the study of Kaforey (1999) it provides that each participant made their decision in that time of their career without regret and without outside influences by claiming ownership to their decision. Therefore, in this instance at the end the decision solely laid with the Athlete in deciding to stay in school or to give up their college eligibility in leaving early by entering the Draft early. Both sides of the

argument have levied beneficial and negative stories with opinions going hand in hand with each other.

## **4.6. CASE STUDIES**

### **4.6.1. Peyton Barber Motivated by Homeless mom**

One of the more unexpected entrants in to the 2016 NFL Draft was that of underclassmen Peyton Barber the former Auburn running back. Equally surprising to the fact that he was entering the Draft early and giving up two years of college eligibility that he had left, was his motivation for the unexpected decision (ESPN.com, 2016). Barber said *“My mother is homeless right now, right now she’s staying with her sister. It’s her and her three kids staying in an apartment back home”* (ESPN.com, 2016). The 2016 NFL Draft saw Barber going undrafted that left him to sell him-self as a free agent as he was not allowed to go back to college ball with the NCAA rules prohibiting that (Philipse, 2016). Barber managed to get signed as an undrafted free agent to the Tampa Bay Buccaneers during the offseason (Philipse, 2016). Barber will be paid for his participation in the preseason and if he make the team’s roster or practice squad he will be bringing home a significantly bigger pay check. This significantly bigger pay check however hangs in the balance of the word “if” he make the team roster of “if” he gets included in the practice squad. Yes it’s hard to think that anyone will be able to understand the decision that Barber had to make although he decided to leave early. Wouldn’t it have been more beneficial if Barber decided to stay in college finished his degree, that would take care of himself and his mother and possible future family for long after his football career that started out undrafted and in the balance of his preseason training and the backing of the coaches that in the first place skipped on the opportunity to Draft him earlier the year. Only the future will know and tell us if Barber maid the best or worst decision to leave early.

### **4.6.2. Patrick Willis**

Patrick Willis the San Francisco 49ers Pro Bowl linebacker shocked the NFL world in 2015 when he announced that he was retiring at the early age of 30 (Emerick, 2015). NFL pro bowl football however did not come easy for Willis, in fact most players that had to grow up the way Willis did wouldn’t have played a minute of college ball never mind being one of the best linebackers in the NFL.

Willis grew up in a rural Bruceton Tennessee trailer park, with his two younger brothers and sister. When Willis was only four years of age his mother walked out on the family leaving her four children in the care of their father which were a part time logger at the time (Feldman, 2006). At the age of only ten Willis started working in the summer break chopping cotton on the other side of the county, that earned him blisters the size of bottle caps on his hands for a merely \$110 a week to help out his dad in paying the bills (Feldman, 2006). The ten year old Willis doing all he can in providing for his younger siblings, as their father Ernest Willis was a struggling alcoholic, drug user and abusive single father at the time (Feldman, 2006). Willis took it upon himself to look out for three younger siblings and that they were doing their homework. By the age of seventeen he'd had enough and turned to school counselors as the abuse mend of he's siblings had become too much to bear. Authorities moved the Willis children to live with Patrick's high school basketball coach (Feldman, 2006). As a kid he honed his football skills in the Tennessee backwoods, as he could not afford to pay the league entry fees. As Patrick had to go through all of that which was going on at home he also became the first person in State history to be nominated for the Mr. Football award on both defense and offense (Feldman, 2006).

After high school Willis received a full athletic scholarship at the University of Mississippi (Old Miss). He had to wait until his junior year to break into the starting lineup (Jones, n.d.). After being nominated for numerous national rewards alongside All-American selection in 2005, Willis chose to wait for his chance at entering the professional ranks by returning to Old Miss for his senior campaign (Jones, n.d.). After Willis junior year of college football which many would have seen as above average season, Willis was projected as a third round draft pick. Knowing that you could be an early round draft pick in the NFL, will make it hard for anyone to pass up on the sort of financial stability it would bring making the temptation of leaving early so much more. Willis had a variety of reasons for passing on the opportunity to leave early. Willis said *"I just wanted to enjoy this senior year as a student and as a college football player. I've enjoyed playing football with my teammates again. After not having a healthy season like I wanted to last year and also being projected as a third round draft pick, I felt like I was better than that. I hope when it's all said and done this year that I can prove that"* (Jones, n.d.).

Earning his college degree was one of the main factors why Willis decided to return to Old Miss for his senior year. Willis who was at that time enrolled for a Bachelor's degree in Criminal Justice was on track to graduate in May with just being three credits shy of graduating a semester early in December. Willis said that *"Academics was one of the main things (Jones, n.d.). Although I love to play this great game of football, but it's not guaranteed that I'm going to go pro after this, and it's not even guaranteed that I'm going to have tomorrow to play another down of football, so you have to have something to fall back on, and we all know the big thing in the world today is having an education, a degree to fall back on, That was one of the most important factors"* (Jones, n.d.).

After Willis decision to go back to school after his junior year to finish up his college degree and to play another year of college ball at Old Miss in his senior year (2006). Willis entering in the 2007 NFL Draft after his final college football game at Old Miss. Willis was a projected third round draft pick after his junior year at Old Miss, but after his senior year at Old Miss in 2006 saw the NFL Draft Commissioner calling out *"with the eleventh pick in the 2007 NFL Draft the San Francisco 49ers select Patrick Willis"* (Olemisssports.com, 2007). As Willis joined the 49ers he made 48 straight starts and led in the amount of tackles made at the 49ers in all three of those seasons. After the stunning three season campaign for the 49ers Willis received a \$50 million contract extension in 2010 (Patrick Willis, 2011).

In March of 2015 Willis stepped to the podium for the last time as a member of the San Francisco 49ers at his farewell press conference after the announcement that he will be retiring of the game of football (Emerick, 2015). The 30 year old Patrick Willis retired from professional football after eight standout seasons that saw him reach seven pro bowls. In a later interview Willis said *"honestly, I pay attention to guys when they're finished playing, walking around like they've got no hips and they can't play with their kids. They can barely walk"* (Emerick, 2015).

#### **4.7. PROCESS OF SA HIGH SCHOOL RUGBY TO PROFESSIONAL RUGBY**

Sport, which once was an amateur activity, has transformed into a multi-billion rand industry during the past two decades. Along with this transformation came several changes which are in stark contrast to what sport once stood for. During the days of the Ancient Olympic which occurred at a time when sport was an amateur activity,

values such as physical well-being, education through better understanding, harmony, peace, respect for others and sportsmanship were important (Schaaf, 2004 ). The evolution of sport from amateur ideals into full blown commercial enterprise as a result of improvement in technology and societal demands has had a major impact on the commercialization process of sport. According to Schaaf (2004), the commercialization of sport has resulted in sport having a greater worth than the food and electronics industry. The commercialized environment of sport events means that players have to live up to the pressures of society, the pressures from the coach and of course the pressure from themselves to live up to their standards that they believe they should be playing at (Hodges et al., 2014)”

#### **4.7.1. High School Years**

In South Africa children participating in youth sports are grouped according to their age to supposedly ensure equal and fair opportunities for all (Grobber, Shaw, and Coopoo, 2016) A growing body of research shows that children are grouped in a biased manner, according to various physical and psychological characteristics dependent on the distribution of their birthdate (Muscha and Grondinb, 2001). This is because children separated by less than 12 months may have significant physiological differences in size, strength, power and skill levels. This effect is better known as the Relative Age Effect (RAE). In South Africa they use a chronological annual age grouping that starts at the 1 January and ends on 31 December of the particular age group year (SARU, 2014) up until the age of 17, with under 14, u/15 and u/16 categories. Players that falls in the age categories of u/17, u/18 and u/19 play in the open teams for example the 1<sup>st</sup>, 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> teams. The following provincial, junior or schools weeks will be held annually during the June/July school holiday (SARU, 2016):

- Coca-Cola Under 18 Craven week
- Coca-Cola Academy Under 18 week
- Coca-Cola Under 13 Craven week
- Coca-Cola Grant Khomo Under 16 week
- LSEN (Learners with Special Educational Needs) schools week.



#### **4.7.2. After High School**

As players move from high school rugby there are certain pathways and competitions for players to compete in. These competitions and tournaments include Varsity Cup, Gold Cup, Age group Currie Cup, SuperSport Challenge and Currie Cup. These competitions and tournaments will be briefly discussed below.

##### *4.7.2.1 Varsity Cup*

“(Laureano, Grobbelaar, and Nienaber, 2014) Stated that there is a need to optimize student-athletes transition from high school to tertiary institutions. (Laureano, Grobbelaar, and Nienaber, 2014) found that generally students in South Africa leave their family homes to pursue their tertiary studies in a different geographical location, resulting in changes in their support structures. According to (Laureano, Grobbelaar, and Nienaber, 2014) this creates additional strain for young rugby players. As schoolboys, they are accustomed to a structured school sport environment, and enter the typical club-rugby system only after leaving high school. Marshall (2005) found that U/19 academy rugby players, living away from home for the first time, miss the structure and support of their high school and home environment. (Laureano, Grobbelaar, and Nienaber, 2014) noted that student-athletes need to balance their athletic, academic and social responsibilities and learn how to handle success and failures with emotional stability, while building new relationships with coaches, teammates and friends. Failure to do so might adversely affect their sport performance and general well-being. It also increases the risk of burnout when they experience high levels of competitive stress.

The Varsity Cup rugby tournament, which is an example of the commercialization of varsity rugby, was founded in 2008, featuring the rugby teams of eight universities. It is viewed as South Africa’s version of the Super Bowl in the United States of America (USA). The competition was introduced by the founders Duitser Bosman and Francios Pienaar in order to promote the game of rugby at amateur level so that a pool of potential players could be identified by the South African Rugby Union (SARU) for possible selection to the higher ranks in rugby, such as Super Rugby and National squads.

Sururjal, J.,Serra, P.,Tarr, M.D.,Keyter, A.K and Hodges, S.L. (2014) found it interesting that while the participants in this study cited reasons such as

socialization, participation and keeping fit as motives for playing rugby, the qualitative results indicated that the lucrative contracts and fame associated with participation were the major reasons for playing rugby. As illustrated by the results from the interviews conducted by Hodges et al, money is seen as a significant lure for the players, as there is more at stake than the love of the game. For those who already have contracts running in the team, career progression becomes a key issue (Hodges et al., 2014).

#### *4.7.2.2 Gold Cup*

The Gold Cup consists of twenty teams made up as follows: the best non university clubs from each of the fourteen provincial unions also including the best non university club from the Limpopo Province. The previous years' Gold Cup winners received automatic inclusion into the Gold Cup. The best non university clubs from Namibia and Zimbabwe will also participate in the competition (SARU,2016).

The player eligibility rules for the Gold Cup states that players that are contracted in writing to rugby bodies, excluding clubs, shall not be eligible to play in the Gold Cup. Players have to be registered with the club that participates in the Gold Cup. Players that have been transferred or loaned to a participating club have to be available to play at least half (50%) of the total league matches for the club, excluding semi-finals/or finals during the year the Gold Cup takes place. A player is ineligible to play in the Gold Cup in the same year in which that player has been named in the match-day squad in any Varsity Rugby competition i.e. Varsity Cup, Varsity Shield, Young Guns, Koshuis League, Varsity 7's (SARU, 2016).

#### *4.7.2.3 Junior Currie Cup*

Junior age group Currie Cup competition is played at under-19, under 20 and under 21 level. The Junior Currie Cup under 19 competition consist of provincial under 19 teams from six SARU franchises (Blue Bulls, Eastern Province, Free State, Golden Lions, Sharks U19 and Western Province) and a team from the Leopards (SARU, 2016). A player's eligibility to play under 19 includes the year in which he turns 19. The Under 20 Junior Currie Cup Competition will consist of the following seven provincial under 20 teams (Boland, Border, Griffons, Griqualand West, Pumas, South Western Districts and the Falcons) plus a team from the Limpopo Blue Bulls. Including the year in which the player turns 20 that player will be eligible to play

under 20 Junior Currie Cup. Under 21 teams from six SARU franchises (Blue Bulls, Eastern Province, Free State, Golden Lions, Sharks U21 and Western Province) and a team from the Leopards will make up the Junior Currie Cup under 21 Competition (SARU, 2016). A player is eligible to play in the Junior Currie Cup under 21 Competition up to, and including, the year in which he turns 21.

#### *4.7.2.4 Currie Cup*

The Currie Cup competition is the first of the senior professional structure within South Africa, although there are a number of juniors (still under 21 years of age) playing within the competition. The number of junior players playing within the Currie Cup competition increased significantly with the introduction of the Currie Cup qualifying round that includes all fourteen (14) SARU provincial teams/unions and a team from Namibia. The qualifying round is played during the first half of the season named Super Sport Challenge with each team playing seven (7) home matches and seven (7) away matches. After the qualifying round the Currie Cup gets divided into two (2) separate tournaments the first being the Currie Cup Premier Division that is made up by the four (4) Super Rugby Franchise and the Cheetahs who competes in the Pro 14 (primarily a Northern hemisphere competition before the inclusion of the Cheetahs and the Southern Kings of South Africa). The final two teams playing within the Premier Division are the two teams which obtained the most log points during the Super Sport Challenge (Griekwas and Pumas 2017) making the Currie Cup Premier division a seven (7) team competition during the 2017 rugby season. The eight teams remaining including the team from Namibia played in the Currie Cup First Division Competition. 2018, brought yet another change to the format of the Currie Cup as the competition moved away from the traditional two round format, with the teams now playing only a single round before heading into the playoff games.

## **4.8. CONCLUSION**

Chapter Four provided an in-depth discussion on the history of American NCAA football and South African Rugby. An overview illustrating the two pathways to becoming professional athletes highlighted the factors that affect an athletes' career. Chapter Five will describe the research methodology used within this study.

## CHAPTER 5: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

### 5.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter describes the research methodology used in this study. Methodology can be described as the overall framework within which research is conducted (Gratton & Jones, 2010). Babbie (2008:6) takes defining methodology a step further by stating that, as subfield of epistemology, methodology might be called the “*science of finding out*”. Research methodology can also be described as the procedures used to collect and analyse data (McMillan & Schumacher, 2010) required to answer the research question posed by the study (Clark *et al*, 2014).

The primary aim underlying this study was to identify whether the NCAA American football and NFL Draft systems can be applied to the South African rugby system.[A] To achieve this aim the study was approached from a qualitative perspective with data collected by using semi-structured interviews, participant observation and document analysis.

The objectives of the study included:

- to explore how the current system for rugby players work/operate in SA
- to identify how the NCAA system work/operate
- to recommend possible ways in which the SA system can adopt the NCAA and NFL Draft system

This chapter provides an overview of the research design, data collection and data analysis used in the study. It includes information on the research design, population, sample and sampling techniques, research instruments used in data collection as well as data analysis procedures.

### 5.2 RESEARCH DESIGN

Research is a systematic process of collecting and logically analysing data for a specific purpose (McMillan & Schumacher, 2010). Research design is described by Gratton and Jones (2010:287) as “*the overall blueprint that guides the researcher in the data collection stages in terms of what data to collect, from whom, and when*”. Research design is not only concerned with the production of data required to answer the research question, but are also focused on how the collected data will be

processed and analysed in order to generate potential answers and to produce the evidence to prove the validity thereof (Clark *et al*, 2014).

The study adopted an exploratory ethno-graphic qualitative research design.

Qualitative research was especially appropriate for this study as an underlying assumption of qualitative paradigm involves the relationship between the researcher and the researched. The researcher in qualitative research is not perceived as separate from the researched. Because the researcher is part of the reality under study neutrality is impossible. The goal for this study was to be aware and conscious of personal biases and prejudices (Babbie, 2008). According to the characteristics of qualitative research include that (Kumar, 2005:12; Jones & Kottler, 2006:83; Bogdan & Biklen, 2007:3-8; 40-41; Ivankova et al., 2007:257; Creswell, 2009:175-177; Leedy & Ormrod, 2010:94-97; Kumar, 2001:13,20,104-105):

- It is usually conducted in natural settings. Natural settings (such as classrooms, schools and sport fields) are the overwhelming preference for qualitative studies.
- The extensive use of descriptive data. Qualitative researches are likely to describe a phenomenon with words, rather than with numbers.
- The emphasis is on process rather than on product.
- It is often based on inductive logic: going from the specific to the general.
- The search for meaning is often evident. The search for meaning focuses in qualitative research on how people try to make sense of their lives. How it is may be nearly as important in a qualitative study as how the participants think it is.

An ethno-graphical design was utilised as research design framework as ethno methodology, as an alternative approach to the study of social life focuses on the discovery of implicit and usually unspoken assumptions and agreements within a social network.

The primary strategies for gathering data in ethnographic studies have been observation over a long period of time, interaction and interviews with members of the research population and analysis of documents and artifacts. (McMillan and Schumacher, 2009).

For ethnographic research, I recommend the following three aspects of data analysis: description, analysis, and interpretation of the culture-sharing group. (Creswell, 2012)

(Creswell, 2012) emphasized that the most important requirement for an ethnographic approach is to explain behavior from the “native’s point of view” and to systematic in recording this information using note taking, tape recorders, and cameras. This requires that the ethnographer be present in the situation and engage in constant interaction between observation and interviews. These points reinforced in Spindler and Spindle’s nine criteria for “good ethnography.

Content analysis will be the research instrument used for data collection. Content analysis is a flexible method for analyzing text data, this data will be sampled in verbal, print and from electronic sources such as online articles, books or manuals (Hsieh, 2005). Using content analysis as my qualitative research technique will best provide knowledge and understanding of how the two sporting systems work and the applicability of the NCAA system on the SA tertiary sport system when looking at the sport of rugby in the SA context.

### **5.2.1 Research population**

Long (2007) defines the research population as including all the people within a specific category being investigated. For the purpose of this study, the research population refers to a diversity of rugby players that are currently involved in tertiary rugby as well as on senior level; rugby players who have previously been involved on tertiary level but have dropped out of the system; rugby coaches and administrators within South Africa.

### **5.2.2 Research sample**

The study utilised a non-probability purposive key informant sampling approach, in which participants and documentation were chosen on the basis of the specific experience of knowledge or information possessed (Gratton & Jones, 2015). Cresswell (2009:178) describes the idea behind qualitative research as “*to purposefully select participant or site (or documents) that will best help the researcher understand the problem and the research question*”. The samples for this study was purposely selected from rugby players that are currently involved in tertiary rugby as well as on senior level; rugby players who have previously been

involved on tertiary level but have dropped out of the system; rugby coaches and administrators.

### **5.3 DATA COLLECTION**

Data collection could be described as “*an attempt to learn about the world*” (Babbie, 2008) and typically follows from the research question (McMillan & Schumacher, 2010). Creswell (2013), however, warns against the notion to simplify the process of data collection to the actual types of data as data collection involves various interrelated activities that range from the location of research participants, gaining access and establishing a rapport, collecting data, exploring field issues and storing collected data.

This study relied on multiple data sources which included semi-structured interviews and documentary analysis to explore whether the NCAA American football and NFL Draft systems can be applied to the South African rugby system. Stated data collection instruments are qualitative in nature and are consequently compliant to collect data that represent multiple realities. The table below provides an overview of data collection methods that will be discussed in more detail.

The study will utilise a qualitative data collection methods and process. The methods and techniques that is integrated by qualitative research include the observing, documenting, analyzing and interpreting characteristics, patterns, attributes, and meanings of human phenomena under study. The multiple forms of qualitative data collection typically require the examination of documents, observing behavior and interviewing participants.

**Table 5-1 An overview of data collection methods used in the study**

<b>Organization</b>	<b>Data Collection Method</b>
NCAA American Football	Documentary sources in public domain
NFL	Documentary sources in public domain
Varsity Cup	Documentary sources in public domain  Semi-structured interviews with rugby players that are currently involved in tertiary rugby as well as on senior level; rugby players who have previously been involved on tertiary level but have dropped out of the system; rugby coaches and administrators.
South African rugby	Documentary sources in public domain  Semi-structured interviews with rugby players that are currently involved in tertiary rugby as well as on senior level; rugby players who have previously been involved on tertiary level but have dropped out of the system; rugby coaches and administrators.

### **5.3.1 Semi-structured interviews**

One of the main strategies in qualitative data collection is the interview. This approach can take several forms including a structured-, semi-structured or unstructured interview. This study made use of a semi-structured interview format as it allowed the researcher to gather in-depth data on the roles and expectations of change agents involved in providing sport and recreation opportunities as tool to achieve social inclusion in marginalised communities. The semi-structured interview provided a more flexible approach than the structured interview and allowed the researcher to formulate new questions during the interview, where appropriate, in



response to answers given by the research participants (Clark *et al*, 2014). Appointments for semi-structured interviews were made via e-mail and telephone, and were scheduled at a time and venue convenient for the research participant.

Research participants were briefed on the purpose of the research before the day of the actual semi-structured interview; however, the informed consent form was signed on the day of data collection. The semi-structured interviews were conducted in a conversation-like format during which the researcher established a general direction for the conversation and pursued specific topics raised by the respondent (Babbie, 2008). The informal interaction between the researcher and the research participant allowed the research participant to relax and resulted in more personalised responses, which consequently opened up new areas of inquiry that emerged from the participant rather than from the researcher's preconceptions (Clark *et al*, 2014). The researcher approached the semi-structured interview with the assumption that the research participants possessed specific information. As some of the information that research participants possessed was not transparent, the researcher adopted the role of what Babbie (2008:317) calls "*the socially acceptable incompetent*" which allowed the researcher to not only be perceived as part of the system of sport and recreation provision in marginalised communities, but to be seen as someone who does not really understand the particular reality from which the research participant operate and therefore needs to be informed.

A semi-structured interview schedule was developed for this study. From the content analysis, data collection and of what was preserved of personal experience, a series of open-ended questions were designed for the use of the semi-structured interviews. Based on data collection during participation observation and document analysis certain themes were selected in advance; however, the sequence and wording of the questions were determined by the interview situation.

Topics pursued in the semi-structured interviews included:

- The interviewed perception on how the South African rugby system develops talent.
- Accommodating late bloomers in South African rugby.
- Perception whether the Varsity Cup competition is living up to their initial aim that it was created for.

- Perception of the current South African rugby system in how players go on from high school rugby to professional rugby.
- Effect that the NCAA American football and NFL Draft system could have on the South African rugby system.

The interview is a managed verbal exchange (Ritchie & Lewis, 2003 and Gillham, 2000) the effectiveness heavily depends on the communication skills of the interviewer. The ability to clearly structure questions, listen attentively, probe or prompt appropriately and encourage the interviewee to talk freely is some of the characteristics of a good interviewer. Semi-structured interviews are open, allowing new ideas to be brought up during the interview as a result of what the interviewee says in response to the questions. The questions in a semi-structured interview is less rigorous than that of a structured interview. This allows the interviewee to speak more freely in the sense to get a better understanding and can lead to more questions in getting a better understanding of the structure or surroundings. With the use of semi-structured interviews in the study the design of open-ended questions will be used to explore various change agents within the different rugby structures from the players and managerial point of view.

### **5.3.2 Documentation**

Documentary data are data that have been produced by others independently of the researcher but are available for analysis. Documents may involve texts and images, or both, and may be public or private (Clark *et al*, 2014). Documentary data are abundant in organisations and can take many forms. These documents describe functions and values and how various people define an organisation. Documents used for external communication are those produced for public consumption and include newsletters, reports, public statements, news releases and information available on the internet. Existing documentary data are usually readily available to the researcher (McMillan & Schumacher, 2010). Documentary data used in this study were available in the public domain and are presented in Table 5.2 on the next page.

**Table 5-2 Documentary data sources used in the study**

Source	Documentary data
NCAA Eligibility Center	2015-16 Guide for the College-Bound Student-Athlete (NCAA, 2015)
Varsity Cup	VC WAY Content 2016 (Varsity Cup, 2016c)  Competition rules of FNB Varsity Cup presented by Steinhoff international 2016 (Varsity Cup, 2016b)  VARSITY CUP BYE LAWS AFTER SGM 25 January 2016 (Varsity Cup, 2016a)

#### **5.4 DATA ANALYSIS**

A Critical Analysis approach was utilised as data analysis approach to investigate the applicability of the NCAA American Football and NFL Draft system on the South African rugby system.

“Data analysis in qualitative research consists of preparing and organizing the data (i.e., text data as in transcripts, or image data as in photographs) for analysis, then reducing the data into themes through a process of coding and condensing the codes, and finally representing the data in figures, tables, or a discussion.

Qualitative data analysis is non-statistical and its methodological approach is primarily guided by the concrete material at hand. The qualitative study will be the analyzing the semi-structured interviews, data gathered through articles. The semi-structured interviews will also be of qualitative data analyses, in the process of getting a deeper understand within the study (Schirato, Danaher & Webb, 2012).

#### **5.5 CHAPTER CONCLUSION**

Chapter five investigated the specific research methodology for this particular study. As the chapter unfolded it, become known that the study adopted an exploratory ethno-graphic qualitative research design. Further, this chapter looked at the

particular research population utilised in this study as well as data collection methods, which includes semi-structured interviews and several documentation. The chapter concluded with the data analysis taking up a critical analysis approach to investigate the studies research question.

## CHAPTER 6: RESULT AND INTERPRETATION

### 6.1 INTRODUCTION

Chapter Five presented an overview of the research methodology that was used in the study. Chapter six will start by providing the results of data collected followed by an objective specific interpretation.

### 6.2 RESULTS

To ascertain whether the principles of NCAA American Football can be applied it was essential to ascertain the core characteristics of the two participation models. The results of documentary analysis are provided in Table 6.1 and 6.2.

**Table 6-1 Varsity Cup**

Purpose of Varsity Cup	To rebuild the image of university rugby in the country (News24, 2008) and at the same time providing an opportunity and 'exposer' to rugby players who first of all wants to better themselves academically.
Competitions (Divisions) Hosted by Varsity Cup	Varsity Cup (tier 1 competition) launched 2008 (News24, 2008). Varsity Koshuis (league contested by each of the competing Varsity Cup universities respected Res league winner) introduced 2009 (Ikeys, 2009). Varsity Shield (Tier 2 competition between universities with smaller athletic budget support) launched 2012 (Varsity Cup, 2012). Young Guns (U/20 Competition between the same universities competing for the Varsity Cup (Varsity Cup, 2012).
Player Academic Eligibility Rules (Varsity Cup, Varsity	When launched in 2008 the rules did not really consist of much and was open to everybody to compete. 2015 all 23 players competing had to be bona fide registered students at the university for whom they were playing. Players will not be allowed to play in the competition at all if they have not passed Grade 12 at school, or an equivalent qualification

<p>Koshuis, Varsity Shield &amp; Young Guns).</p>	<p>and therefore do not have a grade 12 senior certificates (Varsity Cup, 2016, b).</p> <p>Only players that have passed a sufficient amount of subjects in their last year of studies (regardless whether it was at the University for which they want to play or at any of the member Universities) will be regarded as a bona fide student for the purpose of clause 4.1 to obtain an amount of 60 SAQA credits (Varsity Cup, 2016, a).</p>
<p>Bona Fide Student</p>	<p>Must be registered at the university of a higher educational qualification registered on the NQF, with a SAQA identity number for a program of at least 120 SAQA credits on a NQF 6 level (Varsity Cup, 2016, b).</p> <p>Players may also be registered at a university for a bridging course which must be registered with the Matriculation Board of HESA, having obtained a NSC (National Senior Certificate) endorsed for higher certificate, diploma or degree study (Varsity Cup, 2016, b).</p> <p>Players will only be allowed one year to complete the bridging course.</p> <p>Students will also be deemed eligible when registering at a comprehensive university or a university of technology for an articulation program for students who wish to articulate (after at least one year of successful study, but usually after completing a qualification) from one qualification (higher certificate or diploma) to another (e.g. to a degree stream) and for one year only (Varsity Cup, 2016, b).</p>
<p>Player Participation Eligibility Rules (Varsity Cup)</p>	<p>Varsity Cup allows any player 25 years and younger, as provided in clause 5.2 of the Varsity Cup By-laws (Varsity Cup, 2016, a), these players must be a registered player of the club they are playing for to be eligible.</p> <p>Universities are only allowed to play with 4 first year students in the</p>

	<p>Varsity cup and Varsity Shield match day 23</p> <p>All first year students have to be under the age of 22 (may become 22 in the year that they play).</p> <p>Universities are also allowed to play with an additional 3 first year students, on the condition that all 3 of the additional first year students must have been in Grade 12 in one of the previous 2 years(Varsity Cup, 2016, b).</p> <p>Players that have played four or more Super rugby and/or Heineken Cup games or in a rugby test match for South Africa, or any other IRB (International Rugby Board) Tier 1 country at senior level will not be allowed to play in the competition (Varsity Cup, 2016, b). Players which was included in any official provincial 22 man squad over a particular weekend will not be allowed to play in the competition the following Monday (Varsity Cup, 2016, b).</p>
<p>Player Participation Eligibility Rules (Varsity Shield)</p>	<p>Varsity Shield adheres to the same participation eligibility rules as that of the Varsity Cup; however within Varsity Shield there will be no number restriction on the rule of first year students that were in Grade 12 in one of the previous two years.</p>
<p>Player Participation Eligibility Rules (Varsity Koshuis)</p>	<p>Varsity Koshuis (Hostel) rugby Championship abbeys alongside that of the Varsity Shield with the exception that players that gets paid for playing rugby at the club will not be allowed to participate in the Varsity Koshuisrugby Championship (Varsity Cup, 2016, b).</p>
<p>Player Participation Eligibility Rules</p>	<p>The Young Guns Championship have no first year students rules for eligibility; first year students have to be registered at the university of a higher educational qualification registered on the NQF, with a SAQA identity number for a program of at least 120 SAQA credits on</p>

(Young Guns)	<p>a NQF 6 level (Varsity Cup, 2016, b).</p> <p>Being enrolled for a bridging course which must be registered with the Matriculation Board of HESA, having obtained a NSC (National Senior Certificate) endorsed for higher certificate, diploma or degree study, at one of the registered member universities (Varsity Cup, 2016, b).</p>
<p>Player Participation Eligibility Rules (Moving Across Universities)</p>	<p>Players will not be allowed to participate in the competition during the following year when a player has played for any other club during a specific calendar year, whether it was in a friendly or in a league match. Players that played Varsity Cup, Varsity Shield or Young Guns and have played for any other club then the University for which they have played Varsity Cup, Varsity Shield or Young Guns in the same year that they have played Varsity Cup, Varsity Shield or Young Guns (Varsity Cup, 2016, b). Referring to Clauses 3.1 and 3.2 of the Varsity Cup Bye laws no student that registers as a student at any Varsity Cup (Varsity Cup, 2016, a) Varsity Shield Member University or have played for any representative team at any Member University during a particular year will be allowed to play for a team of another Member University in any of the competitions in the following year unless they are a newly enrolled post-graduate student at the University for which they want to play.</p>

**Table 6-2 NCAA American Football**

<p>About NCAA</p>	<p>Is a membership-driven organization dedicated to safeguarding student-athlete well-being and equipping them with skills to succeed on the playing field, in the classroom and throughout life (NCAA eligibility center, 2017).</p>
<p>Divisions</p>	<p>“Currently schools are divided into three-divisions that are structured in such a way that it creates a fair playing field for like-minded schools and provide student-athletes a wide spectrum of opportunities to participate” (NCAA eligibility center, 2017).</p>



Division I	Schools in Division I are generally being schools with larger athletics budgets with a more extensive athletics department support system (NCAA eligibility center, 2017).
Division II	Division II schools emphasize a balance between academic endeavors and sport performance. This results in athletically gifted students to compete at a high level, whilst maintaining a traditional collegiate experience (NCAA eligibility center, 2017).
Division III	Division III schools are academically orientated, with academics being the primary focus. Sport seasons tend to be shorter thereby allowing for a stronger focus on academic studies and other campus activities (NCAA eligibility center, 2017).
NCAA American Football Participation Levels	<p>Consists of four levels and two subdivisions.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Football Bowl Subdivision (FBS) level 1 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Division I Schools</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Football Championship Subdivisions (FCS) that includes levels 2-4 (NCAA, 2013). <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Division II &amp; Division III Schools</li> </ul> </li> </ul> <p>Participation is relined on the division in which the schools are categorized in, division I schools have to adhere to the division I minimum requirements set out by the NCAA Eligibility Center. Division II and III schools that have to comply with their respected division's minimum standards of the NCAA Eligibility Center (NCAA eligibility center, 2017).</p>
Initial Eligibility Standards	<p>Based on your high-school academic record. The eligibility process also protects the fairness and integrity of college American football by ensuring student-athletes is truly amateurs (NCAA, 2014).</p> <p>To practice, compete and receive an athletic scholarship during your first year at a Division I or II school, the athlete must be certified as eligible by the NCAA Eligibility Center (NCAA eligibility center, 2017).</p>

<p>Division I Initial Eligibility Academic Standards</p>	<p>Must complete high school and meet the following requirements before August 1 2016.</p> <p>Complete 16 NCAA core courses, earn at least a 2.0 GPA in your core courses and earn an SAT combined score or ACT sum score that matches your core-course GPA on the division I sliding scale (NCAA eligibility center, 2017).</p> <p>Enrolling After August 1 2016, also complete 16 NCAA core courses, complete 10 core courses, including seven in English, math or natural/physical science, before the start of your seventh semester, earn a GPA of at least 2.3 in your core courses (NCAA eligibility center, 2017), earn a SAT combined score or ACT sum score that matches your core course GPA on the division I sliding scale for students enrolling after the August 1<sup>st</sup> 2016 deadline.</p>
<p>Division II Initial Eligibility Academic Standards</p>	<p>Enrolling before 1 August 2018 have to complete 16 core courses, earn at least a 2.0 GPA in their core courses and earn an SAT combined score of 820 or an ACT sum score of 86 (NCAA eligibility center, 2017).</p> <p>High school athletes that enrol after 1 August 2018 will need to Complete 16 core courses, earn at least a 2.2 GPA in their core courses and earn a Sat combined score or ACT sum score that matches your core course GPA on the Division II competition sliding scale (NCAA eligibility center, 2017).</p>
<p>Division III Initial Eligibility Academic Standards</p>	<p>Division III schools do not have to register with the NCAA Eligibility Center as they do not offer any athletic scholarships. Division III schools set there admissions and eligibility standards.</p>
<p>Division I Academic Requirements to Remain Eligible</p>	<p>Student-Athletes have to complete 40% of coursework of the total amount of credits that is required for any given degree by the end of the second year. 60% of course work must be complete by the end of the third year, with 80% of course work completed by the fourth</p>

	<p>year (NCAA, 2013).</p> <p>All Student-Athletes must earn at least 6 credit hours each term to be eligible for the following term. Student-Athletes have to adhere to the minimum grade-point average (GPA) requirements that are related to an institution's own GPA standards for graduation.</p> <p>Teams are also subjected to the Academic Progress Rate (APR) which measures a team's academic progress (NCAA, 2013).</p>
<p>Division II Academic Requirements to Remain Eligible</p>	<p>Student-Athletes have to complete 24 credit hours each year. Eighteen credit hours must be earned between the start of fall classes and the end of spring classes. Six credit hours can however, be completed during the summer (NCAA, 2013).</p> <p>Student-Athletes are also required to earn 6 credit hours to remain eligible for competition the next term.</p> <p>A 1.8 cumulative GPA must be achieved after earning 24 credit hours. After 48 credit hours a 1.9 GPA must be earned, with a further 2.0 GPA after 72 credit hours (NCAA, 2013).</p>
<p>Division III Academic Requirements to Remain Eligible</p>	<p>No minimum national standards for establishing or maintaining eligibility. Student-athletes must be in good academic standing and make satisfactory progress towards a degree. Student-athletes must be enrolled in at least 12 semester or quarter hours, regardless of an institutions own definition of full-time enrollment (NCAA, 2013).</p>
<p>Bedrock Principle of NCAA (Amateur Status)</p>	<p>NCAA is of pure amateur competition (NCAA, 2014), to preserve an academic environment in which acquiring a quality education is the first priority. All students-athletes to be certified as amateurs.</p>
<p>General Amateurism Requirements</p>	<p>NCAA does not allow the following (NCAA, 2014)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Contracts with professional teams.</li> <li>• Any Salary for participating in athletics.</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Prize money above actual and necessary expenses.</li> <li>• Play with professionals this also include try-outs, practices or competitions with a professional team.</li> <li>• Benefits from an agent or prospective agent or any kind of agreement to be represented by an agent.</li> </ul>
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Players, coaches and administrators were questioned on their perceptions of the current South African rugby system ranging from school level to professional level. Participants were asked which factors impacted on their initial involvement in rugby. Responses are shown in Table 6.3 and include factors such as parental and family involvement in rugby, and that it was a normal part of growing up.

**Table 6-3 Factors that impacted on initial involvement in rugby**

Parental or family influence	<i>"I started about at the age of 6 or 7, my dad is a big lover of rugby and he introduced me to the game and I soon started also to appreciate the game"</i>
	<i>"I started to play as a young boy in the garden with my father and at the Primary School Impala we play started to play at the age of 7 years. I can still remember the day when I went on that field"</i>
	<i>"I started about at the age of 6 or 7, my dad is a big lover of rugby and he introduced me to the game and I soon started also to appreciate the game"</i>
Part of growing up	<i>"It was something that I grew up with so it wasn't really my motivation... but as I got older my motivation changed quite a lot"</i>
	<i>"It was part of growing up. I mean, it is not something that was selected; it was just natural to do. My dad and his friends did it. I grew up in a family where it everyone was passionate about rugby. I never chose between different sports as rugby was always there. It was nr. 1. I mean, it was the culture in our area"</i>

	<i>it was drilled into me from when I was little.</i>
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Several factors were identified by participants as motivators that sustained participation in rugby during primary and high school. Factors are presented in Table 6.4.

**Table 6-4 Factors that impacted on sustained involvement in rugby during early school years**

Rugby as important sport at school	<i>"To be quite honest my motivation for starting rugby would probably be that I went to quite a rugby school...Competition was quite a big thing... There are certain things that effect what decision you make in life"</i>
Loved the game	<i>"The inspiration when I got started was that I loved the game. I love playing with the ball"</i>
For the enjoyment of it	<i>"The whole recreational perception that I had of rugby – you have to enjoy the game..."</i>
Being an 'early bloomer'	<i>"...early developers which it identified and the late bloomers get discouraged or they stop playing rugby after matric (high school)"</i>
Professional teams	<i>"My motivation was that I watch the Cheetahs play rugby and every boy has a dream to play there one day"</i>

The decision to continue with rugby as a possible professional career is an important step that is influenced by a number of factors which are presented in Table 6.5. Factors can either positively contribute on the decision to pursue a professional career or negatively which will result in the decision to play as amateur or to quit playing.

**Table 6-5 Factors that impact on the decision on pursuing rugby as professional career**

Factors that contribute to pursuing a career as professional rugby player	
Future as professional rugby player	<i>"There's a certain stage in high school when things started to get serious when I started to perform and start thinking about my future in rugby. I thought I could make</i>

	<i>it as a professional rugby player my motivation definitely changed”</i>
Choice of career	<i>“It was definitely almost a career I want to follow. It was career based decision I wanted”</i>
Be the best	<i>“just always my motivation was to be the best and try to be the best”</i>
Maturation	<i>“At grade 11 I was still in the rugby thing. In grade 11 I thought maybe rugby can be a career. At under-16 I played C and B team so rugby wasn’t in the mix really to make a living out of rugby. Then in grade 11 something happened and I played 1<sup>st</sup> team for Grey College. Obviously that is when I started to know maybe I can make a living out of it”</i>
Factors that impact on the decision not to pursue a career as professional rugby player	
Choice of career	<i>“At the end of my matric year I got accepted to do dentistry and it is quite a tough study field to go in...It is not something that is going to last forever. So you play in your time when you can”</i>
Training like professional players at school level	<i>“It gets tiring to players like me that came from a rugby school, we trained three a day in the mornings and in the afternoon we have two sessions. It gets rough. It is probably also a thing that took my motivation away because you burn yourself out”</i>
It’s all about the money	<i>“The motivation changed to money. It is all about money”</i>
Late bloomers lose interest as result of early	<i>“As a result of the early contracting of players by unions, the players lost interest because he knows he will never</i>

contracting	<i>make it through the current system. The players rather stops playing”</i>
Physical built	<i>“Time is limited and like I am not the biggest guy - a lot of critics say to you that you’re too small - and that made me decide that it is not going to pay the bills”</i>
Limited time for academic career	<i>“I think rugby has a lot of favorites in the system and I just made the decision to go more academically orientated because nobody’s is over you when you have a degree”</i>

Various factors impacted on research participants’ realisation that they can pursue a career as professional rugby player. Table 6.6 provides an overview of the factors identified by research participants.

**Table 6-6 Factors that impacted on the realisation that player can play a professional players**

Coaches	<i>“There was a couple of coaches throughout my rugby career so far that had told me that there may be an opportunity to someday play big rugby”</i>
Scouts	<i>“I actually had two of them. When I was playing rugby over in Scotland, an Australian coach came to me and said he wanted to speak and want my information and everything and send forms and everything through but the subjects or degree that I wanted to study wasn’t available where he wanted to go. Also there was a guy from Holland last year, he came to me and spoke to me, but I never heard from him again”</i>
	<i>“I have experience of scouting people at Craven Week. It is basically a scout week and not a Craven Week. From my personal experience I got approached two or three times. They promise you the world, I think they make empty promises just to get you there and when</i>

	<i>things come to push those were just words...</i>
	<i>"At the age of eighteen when the Bull's scout came up to me"</i>
Interest from professional coaches	<i>"In Grade ten and eleven guys like the Western Province coaches, like Rassie Erasmus, they come to your school on a Saturday when a rugby match is on. They come to your school and they might just say something to you like 'we're watching you...' which is a strong motivation and you start thinking that you can actually get somewhere in rugby. You work hard. In matric we played in the Wildeklawer tournament and Wynand Strydom phoned me after I have been in a match on television. He wanted to see me. They tested me at the gym. It's not like they are giving you false hope, but they make you excited about a possibility".</i>
For the love of the game	<i>"When I went overseas, the New Zealand guys – that culture is different to ours. They actually play for the love of the game which brought back my love of the game"</i>

One research participant explained the process of being scouted at high school: *"The way they scouted was basically that after a game they will approach you and say what your agents name and if you don't have an agent they will contact you. Then they contact me and then I went to see them and they promise you. After one Craven Week match the Cheetahs scout approached me and he was like he really sees a future for me in Cheetah Rugby and if I just stick with him he can make me one of the best and there is a real future in rugby for me..."*. When asked to reflect on why this opportunity did not culminate in a professional rugby career he explained that his focus on his studies did not bide well with the coach and administrators: *"Then when I think things got hot when I said I want to go into my study field as well because I think that is important they just were not into it"*. Table 6.7 summarizes the research participants' perceptions of the current South African rugby talent identification and draft system.



**Table 6-7 Perception of South African rugby talent identification and draft system**

Loss of players due to the current system	<i>"No for sure, there are a lot of structures in place getting guys professional, but as I said I don't think there are enough guys. I think we are losing a lot of guys through the grapevine"</i>
Misperception among young players	<i>"To be quite honest I think the scouting ways that we have now is we are not making the economic system better because people and every boy of 19 thinks he is going to make it"</i>
The system is not supporting players to be the best they can be	<i>"I don't think the system supports people to achieve and be the best they can be. I feel they concentrate to hectic on rugby at an early age"</i>
The need for a quota team	<i>"In South African Rugby you get a black player is maybe playing for Grey or Dyle of Queens. The Bulls, because they have not produced a black player of talent themselves they will sign up or they will make a promise to him that if he comes they will pay for the development or whatever it is at the institute and pay him giving him some spending money which is essentially giving him a professional contract but it is more just a promise or something"</i>

Possible barriers within the system of talent identification include a lack of progress; recruitment based on maturation and not talent; players recruited too early; and lack of finances. Table 6.8 provides an overview of barriers identified by research participants.

**Table 6-8 Possible barriers in the system of talent identification**

Wrong mentality	<i>"I think our mentality in rugby at the moment is not the right mentality"</i>
Lack of progress	<i>"We are still stuck in the old game and I think our rugby hasn't evolved yet to the level that other teams are"</i>

	<i>playing at the moment”</i>
Recruitment based on maturation and not talent	<i>“The thing is I think the guys gets into a pattern and a structure and they don’t get freedom to play and I think that might be a big factor why this happens”</i>
	<i>“People at school got recruited which I think is completely incorrect for all the reasons that you have mentioned, late bloomers... guys at Paarl Gym, Paarl Boys High”</i>
	<i>As I say it a privileged to become a professional sportsman and in South Africa we almost give to a guy at 16 or 17 that it is a right that he is going to be a professional sportsman.</i>
Recruited too early	<i>When I started in 2003 already that’s when they started at that point already. They contracted the guys when they are 15 to 16 years of age. The recruiters go and look at the junior Craven Week teams to see and try to earmark them at that the age of 13 already. So I think they recruit to young.</i>
	<i>“The fly-half [name removed] was spoken to when he was very young at about the opportunity of going to the Bulls. I think it is very difficult to see whether a guy can come through at the top level at that age group. I think it should not be allowed. Actually I think it should be banned. I don’t think it should be allowed to contract schoolboy players”</i>
	<i>Still playing at school level and gets a lot of money and he is immediately rated above his team mates. At school level we must still develop.</i>

<p>Inflated egos of players recruited too young</p>	<p><i>“Now at 15 he thinks he have arrived basically and selected by the Free State or the Bulls of Western Province or whoever selected him an immediately he thinks he has arrived. They come here with the attitude that they are already there, they are the best and they are already everything in their mind. I it all because they get contracted. What do they have to work for if they are already contracted at the age of 15. There is nothing to work for and it shows in the work ethic that I find in some of the guys here”</i></p>
<p>Neglecting to develop players holistically</p>	<p><i>“I don’t think the system really cares about that. To be honest, the system in top sport I don’t think they develop the person as a whole. They will say that if you speak to some of the CEO’s of the Rugby Company. But I don’t think that it is their priority... The system does not necessary want to develop the person as a whole even if they do say that. They just want to win at all cost...”</i></p>
<p>Lack of funding</p>	<p><i>“SA Rugby does not have the nerve to make that call that no one can be contracted to early. The other thing is South African Rugby in bankrupt and there is shortage of money. All these players have to be paid astronomic amounts of money. If you take out all the junior players you will save all that money. They are harming themselves by not forcing this process”</i></p> <p><i>“Maybe the time have come, Western Province is already bankrupt, like most other unions”</i></p>
<p>Lack of central coordination</p>	<p><i>“In South Africa everybody do as they want to do. The governing body, SA Rugby, has no control and does not have the nerve to force down changes...there are too many people in the system getting paid from a too early</i></p>

	<p><i>stage”</i></p>
	<p><i>“Our contracting is not centralized”</i></p>
Over-contracting	<p><i>“The basis of players is very small. Some players are contracted but do not play games. They simple hang around and how on earth will develop if they don’t play games. The unions are over-contracting players”</i></p>
Too much money at a young age	<p><i>“...giving guys money in standard eight (grade 10)...”</i></p> <p><i>“Now you get players contracted at junior level...at 15 or 16 years of age they get contracted. He is at school and get contracted meaning he gets paid or his dad get paid or whoever gets the money but he gets money because he was identified as a player with potential. He is 15 years of age and I mean what do you know at 15 you know nothing. You think you know everything because you are a teenager and they got all the answers but they don’t know anything yet... The change that I do see in some of the guys is like similar players at the age under 19 when I speak to them they are the best in everything ...If I see them three four years down the line and they have been dropped at the professional Rugby Union , but they still get paid but they’re not playing Super Rugby and they’re not a Springbok and they’re not even playing Currie Cup Rugby at that point in time at the senior level then some of them try and push a bit harder. They put in the work, they put in more work ethic, and they try to get better”</i></p>
Emphasis on short term ‘winning’	<p><i>“The main thing is winning. It is winning at all cost. That is basically what it comes down to. That is what top sport is about. They sugarcoat it and say a lot of things”</i></p>

During data collection it came to light that early maturity affects how players are scouted at high school level. To better understand the link between maturity, talent development and the South African rugby draft system the research participants were asked how they perceive the selection of players based on early maturation. Table 6.9 presents the responses of research participants.

**Table 6-9 Talent development and maturity of players**

<p>Lack of development in SA</p>	<p><i>“I think they [American Football players] are overall developed much better than us. I think the coaching, I don’t know, may not be in place but I definitely think they are developed overall much better than we do”</i></p>
	<p><i>“I think we don’t develop any men to make rugby stronger in South Africa”</i></p>
	<p><i>“There is no system that we can say the new guys will come through, we’re busy developing them. I don’t think there is any development. I think it is basically what your school makes of you that is what you end up to be. The money is to bid too early”</i></p>
<p>Overseeing late maturers</p>	<p><i>“The late developer gets so blown off at the under 19, under 20 and under 21 level that at the end of the time it is really just individuals that can really come through. We see maybe one or two there...If you don’t peak at 20 you get lost and the guys gets so demotivated to work hard and keep on going because if you are 24 or 25 and you’re actually peaking and is good enough, there is a 20 year old guy that runs on his name and they are going to give him the chance rather than the guy that has gone through the ranks”</i></p>

	<p><i>“They might be talented at 15 or 16 years of age and they might be really big and the guy that is big at 16 years of age will probably play under 19 even under-21. He might do quite well but they usually don’t go further than that. Other guys that mature a bit later don’t get the opportunity to play as much is the biggest problem because at 16 years of age he is maybe small and he is not as fast yet and has not the psychological capacity to play the game. He does not get the same amount of game time as that another guy would get. Some of them would try and strengthens themselves but it is my area and I get a lot of junior players from similar schools and the come from 15 to 16 and wants to become stronger and want to become bigger and if you look at the mentality that they come and talk to me with what the coaches are looking for they just want to become bigger and stronger. They hit the gym really hard but they don’t become more skilled. They don’t get the game time because the other guys that are bigger get the game time. The players need to get the game time”</i></p>
<p>Unpredictability of maturity</p>	<p><i>“Firstly I think the big problem there is you get a really big 15 year old boy. Sometimes you get a 13 year old boy that is really big. Most likely you can’t, you have a good idea how he is going to look like when he is 21 or 25, but al lot of the time you can’t really predict how big he will be, how fit he will be, what he’s limb length will be. At a young age you can’t know exactly how you would look like 6 or 8 years down the line...the other thing is take rugby for an example every position needs a specific body type for most of the positions. It is not like your prop forward has the same body type as a lock forward. Some flankers and lock forward might have the same</i></p>

	<p><i>body type but your lock forward is a specific body type that you are looking for and the ideal flanker and open side flanker is a different body type. Your eighth man is similar but a different body type. The hooker, scrumhalf there is a very specific body type that is suited for specific positions. So with rugby there are extreme variety of body position and body types that work in different positions. So when the guys are recruited at a young age you not necessary knowing what you are going to be getting when he is 21, 22, 23, 24 or 25. Now you contract him and you box him into a specific position already and that in itself will slow down development immediately. And then I think if you are looking at the level in South Africa now our level of junior competition might also I mean school level competition, high school level of competition and even after under 19 and under 21 it is too competitive almost, it is too competitive. So what we got now is a 19 year old, he is bigger than everyone else, he is stronger than everyone else, but he hasn't necessary fully matured physically, he's bone ends hasn't, his growth plates hasn't closed properly 100% yet. At that specific age he might have grown taller but the width of certain structure in the body still needs to mature. Body density plays a big roll. You get a lot of under 19 boytjies, you can see that they are not hard. They still have a like a child body almost. It big and strong but it is a child body still, it is not a man's body and if your going to play competitive you got to have that man's body to play at such a high level as the guys are playing at the moment I think it is almost too much"</i></p>
<p>Over specialisation at a</p>	<p><i>"A lot of the junior players that we see coming through the ranks is ridiculous. You see guys come here from</i></p>

<p>young age</p>	<p><i>professional unions and they have three shoulder operations and they are not even 21 yet or broken legs of whatever the case may be. Not necessary ideal to have at that young age if you play in collision sport. Under-21 to have already have two or three shoulder operations it might happen but it is not the ideal thing if you want to have a longer career and if you maybe only going to peak at age 24 to 25. So you are not even at your peak yet. So it is not the ideal thing if it happens”</i></p>
<p>Not allowing for anthropometry adaptation when progressing too quickly</p>	<p><i>“...early developers will always be bigger but it also takes time for certain anthropometric adaptation to take place. So muscle three weeks, tendons six weeks, bone 18 months. If you repeatedly hit a bone or hit a joint at a specific angle or a specific velocity or with specific forces the bone and the joint starts if it is not braking it is going to adapt and if you give it time to recover it starts to adapt. You will find that rugby players that plays test rugby has much higher bone density than in any other sport. So collision sport guys have thicker, harder and more density in their bones because their body gets exposed to repeated collisions and contact and hits at specific angle and specific levels. So if you progress too fast the anatomy of the body it is kind of a set time of how long it is going to take”</i></p>
<p>Not allowing time for players to get stronger as peak height velocity is reached</p>	<p><i>“...with regards to collision sport, when you get them at 18 they have gone through...what they call peak height velocity. So peak height velocity is the point where in terms of height they are growing the fastest. So it is like obviously the velocity of which they grow as the name basically say peak height velocity. Let’s say for example a guy get his peak height velocity - say at fourteen and a half to fifteen. At that point is it like the growth spurt that</i></p>



	<p><i>he grows through. There is a big risk for injury coming through that. Now after they have gone through that they usually they are just over eighteen. Most guys believe they will grow much taller. Some guys are still growing a bit taller. But most guys have reach their height but basically like that is where the bone marrow is growing and the skeleton that is in that point of time you get to a time where that is kind of settled... At 18 years a lot of guys does not get taller anymore, the bone does not necessary get any longer but what happens is the ends of the bone grow thicker, some of the bones gets more width but they do not necessary get taller or longer in specific limbs or bones... So he also gets in collisions so it is kind of breaking down recovery and breaking down recovery and if the break down is more than the recovering it is where the problem is coming in. It is crucial at that point I believe that you give the guys proper time to develop whether he is able to play at test level at a World Cup for example whether he's got the ability"</i></p>
<p>Monitoring specific criteria over and above the physical development</p>	<p><i>You have specific criteria for strength, speed, power and explosiveness over and above the actual physical development. So yes we know that an ideal prop-forward weighs about 115 to 120 kilograms and his height is anything from 1.85 to 1.9 meters. So let's say for example you have a junior player with those physical parameters then you can look at his broad jump. He is supposed to have a 2.7 to 2.8 meter broad jump. He have to deadlift two and a half times his body weight, squad twice his body weight, power clean one and a half times body weight, bench press one and a half times his body weight, shoulder press 0.9 time his body weight, pull up half his body weight and so on and so on ... So</i></p>

	<i>you want to use that time off to get him closer and stronger and get his body more resilient, this will also add up to bone density if you do it properly with enough recovery making sure that his body is physically ready for the next season coming through because the strength and conditioning is not about breaking down it is about building up”</i>
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Taking into consideration the barriers within the development of players in South African rugby, it was important to understand how progression of players from school to professional level is viewed by research participants.

**Table 6-10 Progression of rugby in South Africa from school level to professional rugby union**

Basic progress	<i>“He is going to have to play under 16 Grand Khomo, that will be his first step of first goal. Then he will be aiming for Craven Week, SA School’s under 18, then you hope for a scout to see you and you get a contracted from the junior from the Bulls or Western Province or whatever. If you are in the junior ranks you just have to work your way up to the senior ranks”</i>
	<i>“the normal pathway of someone playing at school is that he will play for a club after school and from the club he gets recruited into the system as under-19 or under-21 or senior player. That is the summary of less than 4% of players in our country... “</i>
University pathway	<i>“You also access the system via university and the Varsity Cup... I think the analogy is one of a person first being a rugby player and then a student. In more than half of the cases this is correct”</i>
School to franchise	<i>“a player can be recruited from school directly into the different union academies. He then follows this path to the under-19; under-21; SuperSport Challenge; Currie</i>

	<i>Cup and Super Rugby”</i>
Big name young bigger opportunity further	<p><i>“There is not a really big change in the team from SA School to Under 20. I think the system rely on who played well in matric and after school they just fade into 1<sup>st</sup> year life and they just fade in their rugby ability, but they still get there on their name. I think from under 19, under 20 to maybe under 21 you just run under your school name and what you did on TV for a high sport school is what determines where you play. There is obviously one or two or three guys that didn’t have any name at school that makes it through but you don’t see that, if you see young guys that have made it, it is the guy that had the name and I think the guy that has the name gets a lot more privileges that the guy that is really working hard and can be at the same level”</i></p> <p><i>“To be quite honest...I think it is a whole different system from under 20. I don’t think we take baby steps in creating the best players from under 20. If we have good players we just throw them into the deep side, there is no creating them to become better senior players. We just throw them in there with nothing to do and they just need to swim. So I don’t think the connection or the steps, there is no staircase between under-20 to international. It is just that they throw you into it”</i></p>
No set SA system	<i>“No it is the draw of the luck, the name you run to in high school you went to. There is no system that they need to go through. I think every player has his own system. Every player gets treated differently. There is no system for everybody - if I am 19 I have to go to be the 20 year old player and then to be the 21 year old player then to be the professional player. There is no set system”</i>

<p>No room for the late-maturer</p>	<p><i>“He is maybe not at his best, but they do see the potential and they recruit him. It is highly unlikely if he is recruited at a big club or rugby union that he will get game time. If he is not the number one choice because they recruit two to three guys in a specific position he is also not going to get game time. The other problem what we find is we do get the guys who don’t get game time then they also don’t get developed”</i></p>
<p>Lack of information to young players on how to access the system</p>	<p><i>“I believe most of the guys out on this side think they have to be selected to come and play for Tuks. Because you see them playing on television for the young guns and you speak to some of the guys and most of the guys played for the Bulls as the case may be when they are purely selected. They don’t think they can just pitch up for practice or for the trials and come and play here. So he came in and I introduced him to one of the coaches. He played under 19 this year quite regularly. He was the captain for the under 19 side and he played for our senior side in the second team on the bench in one of the games. So definitely a late bloomer but for him if he didn’t know the right people and if his mom wasn’t so persistent in phoning me and getting an appointment with me to come and train and help him out, and if he didn’t speak to me... This is a perception problem, but it is one of the things I believe in which guys will be coming in for the teams. There is probably a lot of other juniors as well from school who would love to play for Tuks as well but they have no idea that they can come and play centrally for Tuks. They think they have to play for the hostels they get seen if they do something special and then they get pulled up to Central Tuks teams. A lot of boys probably think that way...”</i></p>

Research participants expressed the belief that the 'normal' process of playing as professional player is to be scouted to a university or to a rugby academy which usually have their young players play for a university. The tertiary phase of development as rugby player is therefore crucial as can be seen from research participants' responses in Table 6.11.

**Table 6-11 Perceived changes of South African player to play at professional level if tertiary level is omitted**

Low chance	<i>"It depends on what club you play, but I would say also around like four of three [out of ten] maybe"</i>
Highly unlikely	<i>"With regards to late bloomers, it is not impossible to get to the highest level as a late bloomer but it is highly unlikely you are going to get to the top as a late bloomer in our country with regards to rugby"</i>

The event, Varsity Cup, was initially construed as opportunity for the first rugby teams of universities in South Africa to compete against each other. This event was initially limited to legitimate students who are registered at a university but various controversial situations have been associated with this event. Research participants presented their perception of the function of Varsity Cup in the South African Rugby system as illustrated in Table 6.12.

**Table 6-12 Purpose of Varsity Cup in the South African Rugby System**

Talent identification	<i>"I think maybe it was established for that reason so that they can get the young guys through the system and see what talent the guys got. That has definitely had a reason to do with it"</i>
Provision of opportunities for late maturers	<i>"I think the main goal of the Varsity Cup was to bring players through that was actually try to study but was not contracted in matric. They are not contracted players but to give them the opportunity to make it at a professional level and for those boys to be seen by a bigger Union and maybe get the opportunity to play contracted rugby"</i>

	<i>“The Varsity Cup was obviously started for students who were not contracted to a Union. There are a lot of players who are good but there is also players who play Varsity Cup but who do not proceed. But playing Varsity Cup can make you visible. Take for instance [name removed] who now plays for the Leopards. He made it. Varsity Cup is for amateur players. It is supposed to be nice rugby... but it is presented as a professional set-up...”</i>
Develop player, not ‘throwing away’ talent	<i>“Definitely to develop players and don’t throw away talent”</i>
Player exposure	<i>“I think by the time the guys get use to University I think what is happening at the Varsity Cup level gives young players exposure but the Varsity Cup is not actually doing what is was supposed to do which was it was supposed to be just for Varsity students and to create a rugby competition that was televised but not with young professional players who wanted more exposure on television so they go and join a University”</i>

The role of Varsity Cup, and therefore of tertiary rugby participation was identified by players as way to be identified as professional players. This important event in tertiary rugby players’ calendar was explored from the perspective of research participants. Table 6.13 provides a summary of responses to the question.

**Table 6-13 Varsity Cup as platform from amateur rugby players to be identified as professional players**

Excellent platform to be identified	<i>“I think the Varsity Cup is an excellent platform for amateur guys to get noticed and to get their break through into professional senior rugby. I mean there are countless guys already who are playing for not only national but international clubs because of Varsity Cup. So I think it is a great platform”</i>
Athlete-student emphasis	<i>“If you have a look it is guys that study maybe three or</i>

	<i>four subjects. They're not studying to get a degree. That is not their goal to get a degree, where I thought the main aim to guys who wants a degree but can still play rugby but now it is just guys that just wants to get a shortcut through the system to still play Varsity Cup is to get enough credits"</i>
A professional event disguised as opportunity for amateur players	<i>"If you watch the Varsity Cup it is basically the same guys that is already contracted players that already playing on contracted level"</i>
An event trying to emulate a bigger event	<i>"To be quite honest that is the biggest thing I am fighting with is that the Varsity Cup is a complete disaster for me. I think it is basically a Currie Cup under-21 played in February. So I feel definitely not living up to standards. So I don't think it all"</i>
Passage to professional rugby	<i>"I believe so. I can say 70 % I can say so because I can see a lot of players come through Varsity Cup to play Super Rugby"</i>
Varsity Cup lost the ethos of Varsity Rugby.	<i>"We lost the ethos of Varsity Rugby. The actual ethos was a noble thing that Francois Pienaar started. It was accepted unbelievably well at first. If you look at the opening match between Tukkies and Maties where they draw the game at 34 each. The amount of tries that were scored at the Danie Craven Stadium in Stellenbosch. The quality of rugby that were played in the semi-final. Basically all the players were students that were studying. We have lost the ethos especially when big sponsors came in, and you need them to sponsor the competition, but money started playing a roll and the unions got involved. At present the Unions use the Varsity Teams as stepping stones of contracting systems for their Currie Cup teams. They force the</i>

	<p><i>players to study. The players don't pass the exams and every year they try a new course. It simply does not work. The whole ethos and the noble intention do not exist anymore. The unions are involved and the unions are contracting the players. How many of the Varsity Cup players play for the Varsity club for the rest of the year in the Carlton Cup league and in other provinces. In think they should go back to where they have started in the first place”</i></p>
<p>Unions ‘hijacked’ the Varsity Cup to benefit only them</p>	<p><i>“The Vodacom Cup does not exist anymore. The junior players must get game time. There is no Vodacom competition anymore and it was in any case a sub-standard competition and only costed a lot of money. The correct observation is that the Unions hijacked the Varsity Cup competition to the Unions benefit. This is not a win-win situation for both parties. It is a loose for the varsities and a win for the unions. It is totally one sided. I cannot understand that the Rectors do not realise what is happening. You must develop the players mentally and physically. The whole idea went out of the back door”</i></p>

From the responses gathered in the semi-structured interviews it became apparent that the Varsity Cup is not merely an event for students. With that in mind the researcher asked the research participants how they feel about professionally contracted players playing in the Varsity Cup. Table 6.14 provides an overview of responses.

**Table 6-14 Professional players playing in the Varsity Cup**

<p>Positive – you need the best player as the aim is to win</p>	<p><i>“It is a difficult question because you can't keep that guy out of the team just because he is professionally contracted. I understand that there are guys that come through the system also needs a chance but at the end of the day you want the best player in the</i></p>
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	<i>position. Whether he has a contract or not”</i>
Players are not professional if they play in the Varsity Cup	<i>“Guys who already have a contract or even a junior contract are still trying to make a breakthrough into a professional career. So I see them as amateur because without this opportunity they will only play at club level ... so for them it’s a make or break situation... they are not professional yet”</i>
	<i>“Not at all. I believe Varsity Cup has given opportunity for many students to play rugby and achieve that purpose or that dream that they want”</i>
It should be for students but it is semi-professional with professional players	<i>“It is totally wrong. I mean, Naas Botha said this a while ago on television. Varsity Cup was started for players who want to make it – it is amateur rugby and is supposed to be enjoyed by students. Not to get exposure because you’re a signed player. When you are a signed player you are a professional player. That is how it is. You signed a contract and you earn money. You are a professional player”</i>
	<i>“If you watch the Varsity Cup it is basically the same guys that are already contracted players that already playing on contracted level. So I don’t think it is for students anymore”</i>
	<i>“I think out of the 22/23 I think 18 to 20 people are contracted players. There is also no chance for people like us that is not part of the Blue Bulls system to get to the Varsity Cup squad. I mean if you’re not part of the Blue Bulls system you’re not in the run for the Varsity Cup at all”</i>
A Change in the system	<i>“It is a difficult situation. That is why I say our structures are not in place because we definitely need something of</i>

is needed	<i>some way to get those amateur guys who only plays rugby into the top level because there is talent going to waste”</i>
When you’re paid to play you are professional	<i>“all 23 players gets money allowance per month to play. They definitely not playing for just to play rugby which was the initial goal”</i>

The emphasis of South African tertiary level rugby is on the athlete and not on the student as emphasised by research participants. When asked whether they would recommend a change in emphasis to student-athlete as is the case in the NCAA American Football research participants reacted that this will be a positive change. Whereas NCAA requires a certain grade point average in the academic course this is not the case in South Africa.

**Table 6-15 Impact of academic requirements on playing rugby at tertiary level**

Improve academically	<i>“If I knew that I had to improve myself academically to achieve my dream one day of becoming a pro rugby player I would have worked harder or putting more effort in”</i>
Force players to be respectful and to pay attention	<i>“Definitely I think I can make some examples. There are some of our guys that if they sat in class they can pick up the phone, walk out because they get more allowance at school already than the teacher that gives the class. If they were said that they must get to a College or University or a Technicon for instants for a few years before they can perform at a professional level they will need to work harder to achieve marks to do that. Otherwise there is no system you can go into to achieve your goal that you want to. But now it is too easy to not study at all on school level and not wanting a degree because you already making money”</i>

<p>Motivation to pursue a career after rugby</p>	<p><i>“Of course. I will work my hands to bits because that will be a motivation and then there is a bigger picture that if a player does not make it in professional sport they can always go back in the corporate world”</i></p>
<p>Be more knowledgeable about what to study</p>	<p><i>“I would have been a lot more knowledgeable about what I wanted to do if I had to go to varsity”</i></p> <p><i>“Yes, because I think it is the motivation of a degree make it realistic for the player”</i></p> <p><i>“If I studied my marks would have been better. Then I would have been able to qualify for what I wanted to study. I would definitely have studied something else”</i></p>
<p>Psychologically stronger</p>	<p><i>“I think in the modern setup the players conditioning maybe better and physically they can do it but I am not sure that they are psychologically able to play international rugby at the age of 19 or 21. The players, who study, play top rugby Varsity Cup and writing test and exams are psychologically much stronger to make decisions. They are more matured whilst the player that only plays professional rugby only plays rugby and don’t develop psychologically as they should. They earn a lot of money, drive around in smart cars, keeps them busy with play stations all day. Their brains don’t get develop”</i></p>
<p>Change in mind set to focus on career after rugby</p>	<p><i>It would have changed my mind set... if I have been told that I have to complete my degree before I can be contracted to a union I would have focused more on my studies – both at school and at university. Now it is too late”</i></p>

	<i>"It would definitely have changed my mind about academics. But how Varsity Cup works at the moment is that players are thrown into degrees that they don't want to do"</i>
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Research participants were of one mind when asked whether players being contracted at the age of 18 are mature enough to make decisions that will affect their futures. Participants expressed the opinion that an 18 year old is definitely not mature enough to make life decisions. Players may be physiologically matured but not psychologically ready yet.

**Table 6-16 Ability to make decisions about future at age 18 years**

Not mature enough	<i>"Definitely not"</i>
	<i>No, definitely not. No, I don't think any player is ready to make these decisions after school. You don't know anything yet. You think you know, but you don't"</i>
Psychologically not matured to deal with the life of a professional player	<i>"Not at all. I think that guys that don't know of any money and suddenly as a nineteen year old boy, he is into the student life, into the partying and everything, and if you get R10000.00 per month you don't know what to do with that money. Most of them don't have to pay for anything because it is paid for them. They don't make any psychological up to scratch decisions. Their decisions are very much based on social, not really life decision but more popularity decision in spending everything"</i>
Physiologically matured	<i>"...there is a few guys that probably can make it. I have seen some of the boys at 20 years old physically they are big enough"</i>

Possible changes to the current draft system were suggested by research participants in reflecting on the NCAA American Football system that will allow players with a better opportunity to perform at both rugby and academic studies.

**Table 6-17 Possible changes to current systems**

<p>Option to skip tertiary education</p>	<p><i>"...you are going to get guys that have excellent natural talent in rugby that don't want to do anything academically. So you are going to lose at the end of the day talent in rugby. So it is a win/win, win/lose situation"</i></p>
<p>Allowing more time</p>	<p><i>"If there is a set system of three years that guy is going to walk out with a degree firstly and secondly his is going to walk out with an opportunity to play at the correct psychological and physical level. If there is injuries or anything what happens it so easily take one match to put his whole career out. If he has something to go back on he does not have to sell houses for the rest of his life"</i></p>
<p>Allow players to physically and intellectually mature</p>	<p><i>"So I think that the majority of people and I can use myself as an example. When I was fifteen I played fullback because I was five foot seven and I played for under 15A at fullback...So to recruit a guy when he is 16 or 17 you are missing so many people who could firstly physically mature later but you also missing people who have the intellectual ability to be and the competitiveness which goes in ally to your physical skills to makes you a really good rugby player...then you can also see what his end physical position is going to be because at 21 you are virtually there as a male. I think the American system seems to do that. The American system allows the guys to go into University and they get recruited out of University. They sort of made if half rugby and they also have to pass exams as well. I don't think that we have to reinvent the wheel, we just have to look at systems that have worked in professional sport. America has a system that works very well"</i></p>
<p>Introduce a parallel</p>	<p><i>"I think in fact what I really want to see would be a</i></p>

<p>competition for amateur players who are not university students</p>	<p><i>University that Varsity Cup going back to being simply a recreational competition between top students and that we should also have a club competition running parallel to it for players who aren't able to go to University"</i></p>
<p>Players need to have a voice</p>	<p><i>"There are two things that can happen, the South African Rugby becomes weaker and weaker because we lose our best player overseas because the guys says the system is not working for me I rather not play Super Ruby I rather go and play in Japan or in France where I can make three times as much money and then South African Rugby becomes weaker and weaker and then people stop going and sponsors stop paying and that could be one reason why it is forces to change. The other one obviously is through the players taking the decision to force that changes through by I don't now strike action, the players union getting together and say we prefer to play in South Africa but the way in which South African Rugby is structured at the moment doesn't give us the best chance to compete against New Zealand and Australian teams and we are playing one third of what we would if we go overseas. If the players got together with the players union and went on strike it can be another way in which it can be changed"</i></p>
<p>Strength and conditioning ideal for preparing for upcoming season</p>	<p><i>"Only strength and conditioning with is no rugby session and rugby skills for eight to twelve weeks. Then only working in the gymnasium on strength or whatever you want to improve on or getting better. It is kind of like rebuild a machine and build up the engine and get the frame stronger and those kind of things. After eight to twelve weeks you can begin with more rugby work like running and fitness and that will depend on when the players will start playing games. Anything from eight to</i></p>

	<i>twelve weeks for pre-season should be more than enough including the friendly games. Six to eight week is more than enough to prepare a player for any tournament. If you have longer than that I would suggest you do just the strength part instead of getting them into fitness putting in individual skills or positional skills or rugby specific work”</i>
Better people make better athletes (perform better under pressure)	<i>“You will definitely be a better athlete if you are better developed and trained especially in situations where you are under pressure. If the pressure is up in the last 10 minutes of a World Cup final or Currie Cup final of Super Rugby final it is the players who are psychologically stronger who will pull through. The players who had it easy will not perform as they should and in South African Rugby most of the guys had it too easy. When they are under pressure they just can’t perform”</i>
Junior players need to play more club/varsity rugby.	<i>“The player will play club rugby for six months and play Varsity Cup and then move on to provincial teams. It will be a building process to a higher level. Unfortunately it does not happen. If SA Ruby wants to solve problems to address rugby issues this has to be implemented. Under 19 level must play club rugby and under 21 must start later on. The players must start at club rugby level and must not be paid. They must play as amateurs. From under 21 the players can be contracted. They will save lots of money and much better players will come through the system”</i>

In exploring whether research participants believed that the South African system can be similar to the NCAA American Football system a participant replied that *“It is a bit controversial for me. I believe I wish we can go to a type of NFL structure, but I know it is not going to happen. For now to get the players’ hope and dreams from out of school and the motivation behind it, I think it is not bad”*.

## **6.3 INTERPRETATION OF RESULTS**

Results were interpreted according to the objectives as stated in Chapter One.

### **6.3.1 The current rugby draft system in South Africa**

In 2008 South African rugby saw the introduction of the Varsity Cup with the purpose of rebuilding the image of university rugby in the country and giving development opportunities for students to better themselves academically. With the successful hosting of the tournament the first year saw the introduction of Varsity Koshuis Competition the following year in 2009. Three years later brought another two competitions under the mantle of the Varsity Cup, the first being Varsity Shield which is a second tier competition to that of the Varsity Cup with smaller rugby universities competing against each other. The Young Guns competition being the second competition introduced in 2012 which is a U/20 competition between the Varsity Cup competing universities.

The first year of the Varsity Cup in 2008 saw the competition not really consisting of much and was almost open for everyone to play. 2015 was the first year in which all 23 players competing on match day had to be bona fide registered students at their representative university. Players will only be eligible if they passed Grade 12 of an equivalent qualification. Further academic eligibility rules were set in place for bona fide students, as players would have to obtain 60 SAQA credits during the previous academic year at one of the member universities. Varsity Cup requires a player to be registered at a university for a high educational qualification with a SAQA identity number on a NQF level 6 with at least 120 SAQA credits to be seen as a bona fide student. Players can also be registered for one year to a bridging course which must be registered with the Matriculation Board of HESA.

Player participation rules differ from each other between the four different competitions. Varsity Cup requires all players to be 25 years of age or younger they may only play 4 first year students which have to be 22 years or younger. Varsity Cup universities are allowed to play with three additional students given that all three students were in Grade 12 the previous two years. Most of the other competitions adhere to the same eligibility rules with minor differences. Varsity Shield having no restrictions on the rule of first year students who finished grade 12 in the previous two years. Varsity Koshuis has the same rules as that of Varsity Shield although



players may not be paid for playing rugby. The Young Guns competitions has no first year student rules but have to comply with all of the academic eligibility rules of the Varsity Cup.

### **6.3.2 The NCAA American Football system**

The National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA) which have been the governing body for university and college sport in the United States of America and primarily used as a transition period/level from high school to that of professional sport. The NCAA is dedicated to safeguard the well-being of student-athletes for them to succeed on the playing field in the classroom and throughout life.

NCAA American Football is divided with in three divisions depending on how big the school athletic budgets are. Division I schools having larger athletic budgets then the other divisions. Division II schools aims to maintain a traditional collegiate experience for students-athletes whilst allowing athletically gifted players to compete at a high level. Division III Schools have a more academic approach as academics are the primary focus. Collegiate American Football consists of 4 levels and two subdivisions; Football Bowl Subdivision (level 1) where division I schools compete against each other, the Football Championship Subdivision (level 2-4) sees Division II and Division III schools competing against each other.

Each division have to abide towards their divisions minimum requirements set out by the NCAA eligibility center. Initial eligibility has to be met based on the student-athletes high school academic record. Division I and Division II athletes must be certified as eligible by the NCAA Eligibility Center for them to be allowed to practice, compete and receive an athletic scholarship during their first year. Division I athletes enrolling before 1 August 2016 needs to complete a number of NCAA core courses and needs to obtain a set GPA of 2.0 in those core courses. Players within Division I enrolling after the date of 1 August 2016 will also have to complete 16 core courses having a GPA of at least 2.3. The players then needs to earn a SAT combined score or ACT sum score which matches their core course GPA on the Division I sliding scale.

Division II players initial eligibility academic requirements works on the same basis as that of Division I schools with the difference being that of the GPA score differing from each other, Division II schools also have their own sliding scale in which there

SAT and ACT scores have to match their core GPA score. Division III schools doesn't have register with the NCAA Eligibility Center as the schools set their players admission and eligibility standards. Players competing in Division I and Division II Schools, needs to keep performing academically during the season and year to remain eligible to practice, compete and keep athletic scholarships.

The NCAA Eligibility Center have set out guidelines for Division I and Division II players which they need to meet regarding a minimum GPA and amount of credit hours players have to complete. The NCAA Eligibility Center also has to monitor the bed rock principle that all student-athlete are amateur as all players needs to be amateur certified by them. The NCAA Eligibility Center does not allow players having contracts with professional teams, receive any salary for participation in athletics of prize money above actual and necessary expenses, having try-outs, practices or compete with a professional team; players may not receive any benefits from an agent or prospective agent.

### **6.3.3 The South African Rugby system as perceived by research participants**

Research participants identified the influence of parents and family as major impact on their decision to participate in rugby from a young age. Rugby seems to be a sport in which participants see participation as part of growing up in their Primary School years. This phase was portrayed as an overall positive experience as it was still done just for the love of the game. When asked about the factors that impacted on their decision to sustain involvement throughout their Primary and High School career, participants focused on the fact that rugby was an important sport in the school that they attended, the fact that they loved playing rugby and that they derived enjoyment from participation, and, being inspired by a professional team. An interesting observation indicated that maturing at a young age also played a role in the decision to pursue rugby during the High School years. Participants identified that maturation during the latter stages of high school contributed towards them pursuing a career as a professional player where others motivation being a career choice which they wanted to follow and being the best and always giving their best. Participants who decided not to pursue a career as a professional rugby player no more highlighted factors such as it being a career choice as they got accepted to study dentistry and being academically orientated, some of the participants included training to intensive on a school level with late bloomers losing interest as a result of

early contracting or with them coming to realisation that they didn't consist of the physical built to play at a level which will pay the bills.

When participants were asked when they got to a point of realisation of them possibly becoming a professional player, participants replied that the interest of professional coaches, coaches seeing talent and encouraging them to pursue rugby as a career. Research participants reported that scouts contacting and approaching players on numerous occasions during youth weeks across the country or competing abroad made players feel valuable which aid to their believe of becoming a professional rugby player could become a reality. One participant said that the love for the game which he rediscovered while playing in New Zealand brought him in believing that he could make it as a professional rugby player.

In discussing the rugby system in South Africa it became clear that participants perceive the current system in place as too severe, with a misperception among young players on their eligibility to pursue a career in rugby. Some research participants also believed that the system is not supporting players to be the best they possible can be as they felt the system concentrated to extensively on rugby at an early age which discouraged player's motivation and enjoyment levels towards the game.

Possible barriers in the system of talent identification were identified by participants who emphasised that recruitment happened too early. Recruitment was based on maturation and not talent which brought up the discussion of the system having the wrong mentality towards talent identification with the system lacking of progress and funding came to light. Some of the participants believed a lack of central coordination with in the South Africa rugby system resulted in over-contracting of players seeing that everybody can do as they wish, which is leading to players receiving too much money at a young age according to participants.

As maturity became part of the conversation participants were asked about talent development and the role that maturity plays with in that process. Participants had a strong opinion that SA lack development within their rugby structures not developing any men but rather playing with boys. Some argued that they don't believe there is any development as it was up to what your school made you to be. This led to participants to point out that the system oversees the late maturers and that

development are only for the few which matured faster than their counterparts. As participant pointed out the unpredictability of maturity as a player at the age of 15 can be big and perform better than the rest, but that no one really could say how he is going too far at the age of 23 when his counter parts maturity status caught up with them. A surprising concern from participants was that as talent identification was done on a young age that over specialisation at that young age did not do the players any good in developing their rugby ability and passion for the game. One participant pointed out that the talent development process in SA does not allow players to anthropometrically adapt as players progress too quickly. This could be a result of players not getting enough time to get stronger as peak height velocity is reached. Lastly the participants pointed out that the system should rather monitor specific criteria of players over and above the physical development.

With the variable barriers within the development of players in South African rugby expressed by the participants the understanding of how player's progress from school level to the professional level was discussed with participants. Participants mentioned that the basic process was for a player to play under 16 'Grand Khomo' then moving on and playing Craven Week with the hope of being contacted by a scout offering the player a junior contract. The "Normal pathway" was described as playing at school, then playing at club level where players then gets recruited into the u/19, u/21 or senior provincial system, the participant also mentioned that less than 4% of players reach the professional level this way. Participants also said that one can go from school to a respected union directly with the participants feeling that if a player has a big name during school in the rugby circles that he would have bigger opportunities further in his career. Some of the participants believed that there are no set systems in how a player goes from playing at school to becoming a professional player. The path way of playing for a university was discussed with participants for becoming professional, with the university pathway to professionalism the question was asked what would be the chances of a player to become professional if this tertiary level was skipped; participants replied with answer of players having a low chance three or four out of ten, or that it will be highly unlikely.

The Varsity Cup competition was discussed with participants and was asked what they believe the purpose of the competition was. Participants believed that the purpose of the Varsity Cup was to identify talent and to provide opportunities for late

maturers. When participants were asked how the Varsity Cup was as platform for amateur rugby players to be identified as professional players, answers for it being mixed with some claiming it an excellent platform to be identified by and serve as a passage to professional rugby, others believing that it has become a professional event disguised as an opportunity for amateur players with it being an u/21 Currie Cup played in the beginning of the year as the unions “hijacked” the competition to benefit only them. Research participants where asked about whether professional contracted players should play in the Varsity Cup mixed responses were shared with a couple of participants believing that if one competes in the Varsity Cup that they are not professional even if they do get paid by a union and that the aim is to win and that the best players need to play. Conversely, participants strongly felt that the Varsity Cup should only be for students without professional contracts and that a change in the system was needed.

The data illustrated that the emphasis of the South African tertiary rugby is on the athlete and not the student. Participants believed that the introduction of a compulsory grade point average requirement would change the mind set of players towards academics and the impact which such requirements would have. Feedback from participants were positively with them believing that would see players improve academically sooner as it will provide a chance in mind set for them to pursue a career after rugby with one replying “*I will work my hands to bits because that will be a motivation. . .*” Participants believe that will allow players to be more knowledgeable about what to study, with it leading to be psychologically stronger.

Research participants were of one mind believing that players of that age are definitely not mature enough, especially not psychologically matured to deal with the life of a professional player. Physiologically matured there could be players but only a selected few which consist of the physical ability. At the end of the interviews the research participants were asked about possible changes they would suggest to the current South African rugby system. A few research participants mentioned that the system should allow more time for players to physically and intellectually mature whether it be through a longer non-professional university system or the introduction or an parallel competition for amateur players who are not university students, providing players on both sides to develop in to better people which one research participant believe make an individual a better athlete.

#### **6.3.4 Suggested changes to the current player development and –selection system in South African rugby**

Research participants were in agreement that a change to the current South African player development system is needed. Suggested changes included the introduction of a second stream in post-school player development in which a player do not have to attend a university. Not all rugby players have the academic ability to complete a tertiary qualification and by forcing players through the university system can be seen as an active process of excluding players. In the instance that a player wants to attend the university, it is believed that players should have a year extra to complete a degree as a rugby commitment takes up a lot of time.

The provision of more time was a recurring theme during data collection. Research participants believed that players should also be provided with more time to physically mature. Players are identified early in their high school careers – a process which excludes players who may mature later on. Additional time is needed for players to mature both physically and intellectually.

Research participants emphasised their belief that players within the current system do not really have a voice in how the system operates. They believe that payers should be allowed to voice their concerns on a range of issues. Mechanisms should be introduced that will allow players to voice their opinions in a respectful, organised way.

#### **6.3.5 The extent to which the student-athlete model of the NCAA American Football system can be applied to the South African Rugby system**

Results of the study indicated that research participants believe that the academic, student-centred approach of the NCAA American Football is an aspect that should be incorporated into the current tertiary level rugby system. By introducing a specific grade average that must be maintained in order to play for a university team will result in players being more serious about the study area that they select and it would also result in players being more attentive and respectful in classes. Participants emphasised that the current system does not promote a future perspective of a career after rugby thereby making the South African tertiary rugby system inherently athlete-student focused. This has a direct negative impact on how players view their studies.

An important aspect that was highlighted by players include that players are not mature enough at the age of 18 to make decisions about their future. It is important that the universities and Rugby South Africa ensure that players complete a degree in order to have something to fall back onto in the event of an injury or not being selected for a team. Players who focus on their studies are also perceived by research participants to be psychologically stronger. It can therefore be concluded that research participants believe that a focus on academic performance as promoted in the NCAA American Football system, should be introduced in the South African tertiary rugby system.

#### **6.4 CONCLUSION**

Chapter six focused on data analysis from data collected during the study, with specific objective interpretations to answer the research question at hand. Chapter seven will conclude the document with a comprehensive conclusion from the previous six chapters. Chapter seven will also provide certain recommendations and limitations within the study for future research purposes

# CHAPTER 7: CONCLUSION, RECOMMENDATION AND LIMITATIONS

## 7.1 INTRODUCTION

With the onset of the study the following research question was asked: *“To what extent the NCAA American football and NFL Draft system could be applied to the South African rugby system?”* With South African rugby, gradually slipping down the international rankings there is an alarming need for change within the SA rugby system. Several themes and factors were investigated within each chapter to provide a possible answer to the research question asked at the start of the study. These themes included:

- Development of a professional Athlete in a collision Sport
- NCAA American football vs Varsity Cup Rugby
- Amateur to professional participation American football vs SA rugby.

The concluding chapter will reflect on the above-mentioned themes, and will provide recommendations and possible limitations towards further study.

## 7.2 CONCLUION

The phases of athlete development (Participation levels) were looked at from both the American football and SA rugby side. It became clear that both collision-sporting codes offered an introductory phase for athletes as young as seven years old. American football have the “instructional” phase and SA rugby that of TAG rugby. The difference between the two, however, is the age grouping and competitiveness within this introduction phase. As the instructional phase of American football ranges from under 7 to under 9, with TAG rugby in SA only being played at the under 8 level. Competiveness was the other significant difference as the American football instructional phase was non-competitive as the opposite was the case with TAG rugby that prioritises winning.

As the study further investigated, the phases of athlete development a major difference between the participation at youth level arise with both the AYF and NFHS having scholastic requirements to participate (academic eligibility). The study concluded that this ensures the individual development on a mental and physical



spectrum, as for the SA rugby side having no such academic eligibility parameters for participation neglecting the importance of academics and intellectual development until Varsity Cup participation where academic requirements becomes a priority for participation.

Long-term athlete development became an important thing in modern day professional sport as every organisation tries to find tomorrow's next super star. The effectiveness of a long-term athlete development plan or process within collision sports can be questioned, as maturity plays such an important role when it comes to identifying talent. Both maturation studies, physical and psychological investigated, provided evidence that within rugby the longer the talent identification period gets prolonged the better chance one have of identifying real talent, instead of early maturing individuals. This begs the question why SA rugby franchises still insist on making contact and recruiting individuals at the under 16 level, with American football not allowing any contact from professional franchises with athletes until they are at least three years out of high school. This means that tremendous emphases are placed on tertiary American football programs to develop players leaving high school.

As the process between the two collision sporting codes were investigated – i.e. in how athletes move from amateur participation to being a professional athlete - it came to light that American football heavily depend on the NCAA College football programs to develop athletes leaving high school. As for South African rugby most athletes get contracted straight out of high school to a hand full of rugby franchises across the country. With Varsity Cup introduced in 2008 for various reasons such as development and improving the image of university rugby in SA.

The study investigated both tertiary collision sports, divisions of play and participation eligibility. Several major differences came forth between the two systems even though Varsity Cup claims that the competition is based on the popular NCAA system. Both the NCAA and Varsity Cup require academic eligibility to compete. The biggest difference however being that of amateurism, athletes wanting to compete within any NCAA American football competition has to be amateur certified by the NCAA, with the Varsity Cup having no amateur rule for participation in place. This allows for athletes contracted at SA rugby franchises and unions to compete within the Varsity Cup competition. With no amateurism rule in

place for Varsity Cup as with the case of the NCAA it opened the door for rugby franchises and unions to hijack the Varsity Cup competition as one of the interviewees mentioned, with the majority of the Varsity Cup teams being made up with professional contracted players mainly. In some way, this is a form of “cross contamination” of identified players within SA rugby; over playing them as most of these players have to move from Varsity Cup straight into provincial competitions. This provided clear evidence that the NCAA was more truly a student-athlete based competition than that of the Varsity Cup which has become a warm up season for rugby unions in SA.

In the quest for answering the research question the study investigated both American football and SA rugby history to get a better understanding of how the two sporting codes has evolved through the years. Both sporting codes started around the same time in their respected countries. American football got its origin from that of rugby and rugby being introduced by the British in Southern Africa at the close of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. American football though was the sport that made the turn to professionalisation first as the 20<sup>th</sup> century started with rugby only professionalising at the end of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. American football having the clear head start towards the professional sporting world to that of rugby, did not mean that it was always smooth sailing for professional American football. The professional side of American football found themselves at a crossroad around 20 years after the sport turned professional with three major problems, with salaries dramatically increasing, players jumping continually from one team to another chasing the highest offer and the use of college players still enrolled in school. As for the professional side of rugby and rugby in SA being fully professionalised for around 20 years the study found that rugby in South African are facing to an extend exactly the same three problems American football did a hundred years ago.

Rugby within South Africa can thus benefit from applying how American Football addressed the situation regarding these three major problems arising in the professional era. American football illustrated how certain changes can be enforced in the attempt to eliminate the problems identified, which is almost identical to what rugby is facing within South Africa now. In dealing with these three major problems identified, American football reduced the number of teams within the league eliminating the financially weaker teams; they also introduced an inverse order draft

between the teams for optimizing competitive balance with professional teams not allowed to play any player still enrolled in school. These rule changes American football introduced, gave the sport a sort of blue print towards how players have to proceed from the introductory phase of American football to ultimately being a professional NFL player whether they were a first round pick in the draft or got signed as a free agent to one of the NFL franchises.

SA rugby on the other hand, which have several development pathways mentioned have no real “blue print” for the way professional contracting is done leaving the wealthier rugby franchises and unions to over contract young talent. The problem with that found by several interviewees is that a lot of young talent never makes it past the training field and results in their flaming passion for the game slowly goes out. Yes, the Gold Cup (club development) system provided an exposing opportunity for players but as one interviewee mentioned that less than 4% of top players come through the club system in SA. This can also be link to the fact that the top rugby club teams in SA competes with players previously contracted at smaller unions or which got let go after their junior contract with one of the franchises.

As the study showed that the two investigated sports have a lot in common with the phases of athlete development, the physical and mental parameters within the game itself and the challenges the professional era has brought to each of them. With SA rugby being at a crossroads and searching to get a firm grip on the world-rankings list, the study provided enough evidence to persuade one to rather not reinvent the wheel but to learn from a similar sporting code that have been at the professional game for the better part of a century.

### **7.3 RECOMMENDATION**

The study provided evidence that the two collision sports compared sharing many characteristics. The principles inherent in NCAA American football and NFL Draft can be applied to that of SA rugby to a certain extent. With so much similar characteristics between the two comparing collision sports learning from each other especially from a SA rugby point of view towards American football which have been in the professional era for more than a 100 years. The following recommended policy changes for both SA rugby and Varsity Cup will briefly be discussed with possible benefits it may hold. The policy changes are:

- SARU policy changes
  - Not allowing SA rugby franchises and unions to contract rugby players under the age of twenty – *SARU policy change*.
  - Discontinuing/Cancelling the u/19, u/20 and u/21 age group provincial competitions – *SARU policy change*.
  
- Varsity Cup Policy changes
  - Excluding players which are contracted at a SA rugby franchise or union
  - Excluding players receiving a salary for participating in rugby.

### **7.3.1 Not allowing SA rugby franchises and unions to contract rugby players under the age of twenty**

The policy changes of not allowing SA rugby franchises and unions to contract rugby players under age of twenty. This will provide a better chance allowing the necessary time for SA rugby franchises and unions to differentiate between talented players and those who mature early. The study providing significant evidence in supporting the fact, that the longer the process of talent identification gets delayed within a collision sport such as rugby the better the chance is of selecting the best talented players not only on a physiological level but on a psychological level as well. As the filtering of young talent will be delayed throughout SA rugby with such a policy change, there will be less differentiation between players having a contract and those that do not, encouraging more players to remain within the sport after high school pursuing their passion.

### **7.3.2 Cancelling the u/19, u/20 and u/21 age group provincial competitions**

With the provincial age group competitions on u/19 level to u/21 stopped, should bring a hold to the wealthier SA rugby franchises and unions, which are over contracting junior players. This will also make more funds available for bigger contracts for talented senior players within these rugby franchises keeping them from chasing bigger contracts abroad. This will not also save money for franchises and unions but for SA rugby not having to facilitate these tournaments. With the Varsity Cup overshadowing, the provincial age group competitions on popularity with the majority of the players represent their respective franchises or union already playing within the Varsity Cup. Allow the best SA rugby talent to move from high school to a

tertiary institution as the American football system does, possibly bringing more interest from investors not just to the Varsity Cup but also towards member university rugby programs as in the case of the NCAA.

### **7.3.3 Excluding players, which have a contract with a SA rugby franchise or union**

Excluding players which are contracted to a franchise or union will place a hold on the “cross contamination” of players, over playing young players not allowing for holistic development at a crucial phase. This again will probably keep the pool of rugby players after high school bigger as more time and opportunity for those players maturing later will be made available.

### **7.3.4 Excluding players receiving a salary for participation in rugby**

Such a policy change within Varsity Cup will allow the participation of the competition to move more towards student-athlete participation than the athlete-student base it is at present. Tertiary institutions, which are members of the Varsity Cup, will be able use the money they now spend on paying players thousands of Rand a month to run bigger rugby programs and investing more in the development of the player and programs.

## **7.4 CONCLUSION**

In reflection on the process of this study, the author believe that SA rugby is in desperate need for change, not as much at senior level but rather at the phase where players leave organised high school rugby. The Varsity Cup can be utilised in the same way in which the NCAA American Football model is being used within the US, as a stepping-stone from high school football to the NFL.

Concentrating and spreading the top high school rugby talent within SA evenly across the 16 competing universities will increase the pressure and level of play for the talent to turn into exceptional talent. Providing more opportunity for top high school talented players the chance to develop in to exceptional world class players the better the chance is that such players will emerged from this development phase. The opportunity exists for universities to empower rugby players with educational qualifications that will benefit the future of the players.

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