





MARITZBURG COLLEGE

MESSAGE FROM THE ACTING HEADMASTER

Founded in 2008, the Skonk Nicholson Rugby Festival provides an opportunity for rugby teams from all over the country to venture to our city of Maritzburg, for a celebration of schoolboy rugby, with all of its zest, verve and passion.

We welcome all our visitors to Maritzburg College, and to the visiting parents from far afield we wish you and your sons a happy stay in the capital city of KwaZulu-Natal.

Mr JM Nicholson – the great "Skonkwaan" – was a revered schoolmaster at our school from 1944-1982, and although he rightfully gained lasting fame as a schoolboy rugby coach, it was his kindness, warmth and humility that made him truly unforgettable. May these traits be an inspiration to all the young sportsmen taking part in the festival that proudly carries his name – and may they contest each match with passion, pride and the sense of sportsmanship and camaraderie that makes rugby so special to us all.

I wish all the players, coaches and supporters the very best of luck in their endeavours, and I wish you all a safe and pleasant trip home.

Manne

MM MARWICK











Maritzburg College welcomes you all to the Skonk Nicholson Rugby Festival 2022 for u14 and u16 rugby teams.

After a break of nearly two years the South African schoolboy rugby fraternity is excited to get back to normal as far as possible. It has been without a doubt a challenging period for us all with limited rugby being played at schoolboy level.

Afternoons after school have just not been the same without the sounds of boys shouting and screaming, coaches and the shrill blast of their whistles. 2022 is the reboot of schoolboy rugby and the Skonk Nicholson Rugby Festival. The boys and coaches have all worked hard to get back on the field to enjoy this game we all love so dear. The aim of the week is to have fun, rekindle old rugby relationships and play some good rugby in the process.

Thank you to the staff at Maritzburg College for their efforts in making the Skonk Nicholson Rugby Festival a reality in a very short time.

Enjoy the week with us and we hope to see you back in 2023!



Hein Kriek Director of Rugby











About the great "Skonkwaan" Maritzburg College's beloved "Mr Chips"

Mr JM Nicholson (6 February 1917 - 27 February 2011)

James Mervyn Nicholson (the Skonk came later) was born in Underberg, and grew up on the family farm in that district. His father was a great friend of the legendary DHS Head Master, Mr AS "Madevu" Langley, and so young Mervyn was sent to DHS, rather than to Maritzburg College, which was also a family school. He enjoyed a remarkably successful stint at DHS, and matriculated in 1935 in a blaze of glory: he was Head Prefect, captain of the First XV, the First XI and the athletics team, captain of the Natal (now KZN) Schools' XV, and Senior Cadet Officer. It was as a young standard five (grade 7) boarder at DPHS that he earned his famous nickname of "Skonk": the future Head Prefect of "School", MCF Bennett, recognised young Nicholson's spirited nature, referring to him as "Skonkwaan", which was the name of a bull on the Bennett farm in Mooi River, meaning "tent-peg". This was in due course shortened to "Skonk", and so it remained. (Only his wife ever called him Mervyn!)

Having completed his studies cum laude at the old Natal University College (NUC) in Pietermaritzburg, Skonk served as an instructor (sergeant-major) during World War II, before being demobilised out of the SA Army in 1944 due to injury.

Much to the disappointment of the redoubtable Head Master of DHS, Col "Betsy" Martin MC (himself an Old Collegian), Skonk was in that year sent to Maritzburg College, where he for the next two generations taught Geography and coached the First XV (1948-1982). Indeed, in 1944 the youthful Skonk found himself the subject of a heated dispute between Col Martin and the equally pugnacious Headmaster of College, the famous Mr JW "John-Willie" Hudson, who also wanted to enjoy the services of the talented young master. "Boy!" the redoubtable John-Willie boomed at the youthful schoolmaster, "you are staying at College." And so it was.

Under Skonk's leadership, College came to be one of the rugby powerhouses in SA, producing 10 unbeaten First XVs and a further 12 that lost only one match, and countless KZN and SA Schools' players during his 35 seasons at the helm. Nearby to the Kent Pavilion at College, overlooking Goldstone's, stands the Nicholson Arch, which was erected in 1982, the year of Skonk's retirement. It is a cherished tradition for each First XV player, as he steams onto the pitch, to reach up and touch the apex of the arch, in mute tribute to College's own legendary 'Mr Rugby'.

A most beloved of gentlemen, Skonk died on 27 February 2011, only three weeks after his 94th birthday. In 2020, during the COVID restrictions, a clip was released on Youtube by a respected rugby scribe on the "Top 10 School Rugby Coaches of All Time". No guessing who came up as #1.

Maritzburg College Archives



WEDNESDAY - DAY 1 30 MARCH 2022

SNOW'S - u14

| 9:00 | Potchefstroom Volkskool | VS | Midlands Development |
|-------------|-------------------------|----|-----------------------|
| 10:15 | Sasolburg | VS | Maritzburg College XV |
| 11:30 | Zwartkop | VS | HTS Middelburg |
| 12:30-14:00 | Lunch | | |
| 14:00 | Maritzburg College | VS | Garsfontein |
| | | | |
| 15:15 | Dr. EG Jansen | VS | Pretoria Boys High |

GOLDSTONE'S - u16

| 10:15 | Zwartkop | | VS | Potchefstroom Volkskool |
|-------------|--------------------|-------|----|-------------------------|
| 11:30 | Sasolburg | | VS | HTS Middelburg |
| 12:30-14:00 | | Lunch | | |
| 14:00 | KZN Ibutho | | VS | Dr. EG Jansen |
| 15:15 | Maritzburg College | | VS | Garsfontein |



| THURSDAY - | DAY: | 2 |
|------------|------|---|
| 31 МАРСН | 2022 | |

| SN | O | N'S | - (| u1 | 4 |
|----|---|-----|-----|----|---|
|----|---|-----|-----|----|---|

| 9:00 | Garsfontein | VS | Midlands Development |
|----------------------|------------------------|----------|--|
| 10:15 | Maritzburg College XV | VS | Potchefstroom Volkskool |
| 11:30 | Dr. EG Jansen | VS | Sasolburg |
| | | | |
| 12:30-14:00 | Lunc | h | |
| 12:30-14:00 14:00 | Lunc HTS Middelburg | ch vs | Maritzburg College |
| | | | Maritzburg College Pretoria Boys High |

GOLDSTONE'S - u16

| 10:15 | HTS Middelburg | | VS | Maritzburg College |
|-------------|----------------|-------|----|-------------------------|
| 11:30 | Garsfontein | | VS | Sasolburg |
| 12:30-14:00 | | Lunch | | |
| 14:00 | Dr. EG Jansen | | VS | Zwartkop |
| 15:15 | KZN Ibutho | | VS | Potchefstroom Volkskool |

SATURDAY - DAY 1 2 April 2022

SNOW'S - u14

| 8:00 | Midlands Development | VS | Maritzburg College XV |
|-------|----------------------|----|-------------------------|
| 9:15 | Pretoria Boys High | VS | HTS Middelburg |
| 10:30 | Garsfontein | VS | Potchefstroom Volkskool |
| 11:45 | Dr. EG Jansen | VS | Maritzburg College |
| 13:00 | Zwartkop | VS | Sasolburg |

GOLDSTONE'S - u16

| 9:15 | KZN Ibutho | VS | Sasolburg |
|-------|-------------------------|----|--------------------|
| 10:30 | Potchefstroom Volkskool | VS | HTS Middelburg |
| 11:45 | Zwartkop | VS | Garsfontein |
| 13:00 | Dr. EG Jansen | VS | Maritzburg College |

Rugby at Maritzburg College

Rugby has been played at Maritzburg College (popularly known as "College") since October 1870, when the school (then the Pietermaritzburg High School) took on Hermannsburg in the old Market Square in the first recorded 15-a-side football match played in the Colony of Natal. Although rugby enjoyed great prestige in the first few decades of the 20th Century, the appointment as First XV coach in 1948 of Mr JM "Skonk" Nicholson was the great catalyst for future success. Skonk's effect was immediate: his 1948 side lost only to old rivals, Durban High School, and in the following year Skonk produced his first unbeaten team. He retired in 1982, after 35 seasons as the coach of the First XV. During that time, 22 of his teams were unbeaten or lost only one match.

A stand-out player in the early years was strapping farm boy, Philip Nel, who was the First XV captain and all-powerful head prefect of the school in 1921. Nel captained the side on the all-conquering tour of Australia and New Zealand in 1937. Such was the quality of the play of his imperious team that it was given the tongue-in-cheek accolade of being "the greatest team to leave New Zealand's shores". On the ship returning home, Nel formally announced his retirement from Springbok rugby by throwing his trusty old rugger boots into the sea. Like Alexander the Great, he had no more worlds to conquer.

Stand-out teams in the last five decades include the 1972 First XV, which supplied 10 Craven Week players and conceded only one try in 19 matches; the 1978 First XV, which won all of its matches; the outstanding 1985 team, which won all of its 18 matches, including a 44-0 triumph over Bishops and a 10-4 win over a Grey College side brimming with five SA Schools caps; the 1987 side that included SA Schools' captain Brenton Catterall and three other SA Schools' players; and the 1988 First XV, which won all 15 of its fixtures.

Despite the retirement of the much-loved Mr Nicholson in 1982, that decade was a period of almost unbroken triumph for Maritzburg College rugby, and from 1981-1990 losses were suffered only against Glenwood (twice), Hilton and DHS (once each) among KZN schools.

This rugby success continued into the 1990s, with the 1994 team delivering an unbeaten season against all South African teams, losing only to Gisborne BHS in the final of the World Schools' Tournament in Bowral, Australia. Another highlight of the decade was the unbeaten 1995 side, which enjoyed wins over Ermelo, Selborne, Grey High and Paul Roos Gymnasium, and big wins over Glenwood (61-13), Westville (62-6) and Kearsney (43-3).

By 2022, the explosion of professional rugby around the world meant that the number of Old Collegians playing the sport on the international stage had increased dramatically, and Maritzburg College alumni have in the last 30 years won caps for the Springboks (including Joel Stransky, Butch James, Peter Grant and Jesse Kriel), England, USA, Italy, Germany, Cyprus and Spain.

Maritzburg College First XVs have continued to play with pride and old-fashioned guts, and all 30 of the school's rugby teams play with fire, passion and some skill. Long may that continue.



The 1900 First XV, captained by AS "Madevu" Langley, with its prized silver-ware – the Murray Cup. The dapper figure on the right is the headmaster, Mr RD Clark (MA) (Oxon).



Three Old Collegians appeared in the 1924
Springbok team to take on the touring
British Lions: Bertram Vanderplank (front
row, second right), Walter Clarkson
(middle row, far left) and Bill Payn
(middle of the middle row).

Skonk Nicholson poses with some of the senior members of his unbeaten 1963 Centenary XV, which included a record 10 Natal Schools' players, was unbeaten in a 17-match season, and set many records. The players are (from left to right) Andre Bruyns (future provincial cricketer), Anthony Egner (future Natal flyhalf), Colin Marsh (future MD of Shell SA), Andrew van der Watt (future Springbok winger) and David Anderson (captain).





For decades, the school's redoubtable Chief Induna, Zablon Kwelha, was a loyal supporter of the First XV. He travelled widely by bus with the Maritzburg College boys to watch them play, often taking bets on their success with his contemporaries at DHS and Glenwood. An unofficial adviser to his great friend, Mr Nicholson, he fervently held the view that each College First XV should contain at least one redheaded player – "For extra fire!"



It's a College try, and the bashers fly high!



Future Springbok, Jesse Kriel, attempts to barge his way through the Affies defence, during the teams' 2012 clash on Goldstone's.







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