



# BRYAN HABANA

## UNIQUE WALK WITH HIM

South African rugby legend **Bryan Habana** was a wing for the South African team that won the 2007 Rugby World Cup. Soon thereafter, Habana was named the 2007 IRB Player of the Year. During the 2015 Rugby World Cup, he tied the record of 15 career tries in World Cups. With a total of 67 career tries in international play, Habana is second all time behind Japan's Daisuke Ohata. A passionate fighter for equality among all people, Habana draws his confidence and peace from his relationship with Jesus Christ.

My father had a real passion for the game of rugby, but never forced it upon me. One day, he took me out of school and we went on a father-son trip from Johannesburg to Cape Town to watch the opening game of the 1995 Rugby World Cup, in which South Africa took on Australia.

There was so much hype around our country not just for being in a World Cup, but also hosting it after we were in isolation for a few years. Being a youngster, I didn't really understand the history of the apartheid regime, and my parents never really mentioned it as an issue. My parents brought us up with pink friends, blue friends, white friends and black friends, and there I was sitting in a stadium with black people and white people together, the South African colors painted on their faces and joining in this pride of a nation. It was a key time in our country's history.

As a family that year, we went to the quarterfinal game against Samoa and then again to the semifinal against France, which some people say we should have



lost after France missed a chance to score in the last minute. I then had the honour of going to the final with my dad. Sitting in that stadium and seeing Nelson Mandela walk up with that Springbok jersey on his back, and then watching Francois Pienaar accept that trophy, hold it aloft and say that this wasn't for just the 60,000 in the stadium, but it was for the 43 million people in South Africa — it was an incredible watershed moment in my life.

I think I engraved that on my heart that day. I wanted to do the same, and hopefully be a part of a team that inspired a new generation of people and players alike. I took up rugby the following year, and to be honest, the dream didn't quite start off as well as I thought it would!

In my first ever game of rugby, I remember my coach calling me "the little runt" because of my small stature; I was this little boy playing scrum-half. But for me, it was just fun to be able to play the game I loved with 14 other friends. Using the God-given talents I had to the best of my ability was something unbelievable.


That poor start actually culminated in me eventually becoming a Springbok and being a part of the incredible 2007 side. To be able to go back to South Africa and hear the stories of how that team had inspired a younger generation was amazing. Stories of kids running two or three kilometres to catch a bus to hopefully get a glimpse of their heroes was quite

special. All that effort, hard work and training was just amazing. I'm so thrilled I was able to have as many caps as I did for South Africa, and along the way break records and score tries. The dream has been one that I'm very grateful to have been a part of.

I just wanted to make people proud by what I could do for them on the pitch. I didn't want to be a flash in the pan. Hopefully I brought joy to those who watched me play and I inspired people of all races, genders and walks of life.

Being a professional rugby player was not always easy. But as a Christ-follower, no matter what the world throws at us, we have a way of living that makes it easier to deal with these pressures. It doesn't mean it all goes away, but the fact that Jesus laid down His life to save the world from sin puts things in perspective. Yes, there are a lot of things one has to encounter as a rugby player, but having God in your life does make it easier.

One of my favorite passages in the Bible is Psalm 139. It is quite a long psalm, but it strikes me as it talks about the fact that God knew us before we even came out of our mother's womb. It says we are fearfully and wonderfully made, and that no matter where you go, God knows the desires of your heart and where you are.

He loves us so much and our walk with Him is so unique. We can't hide from God. 

*Bryan's favorite verse:*

***"For You created my inmost being; You knit me together in my mother's womb. I praise You because I am fearfully and wonderfully made; Your works are wonderful, I know that full well."***

***— Psalm 139:13-14***



AP Photo/Themba Hadebe

# SOUTH AFRICA



SPORTSMAN

15