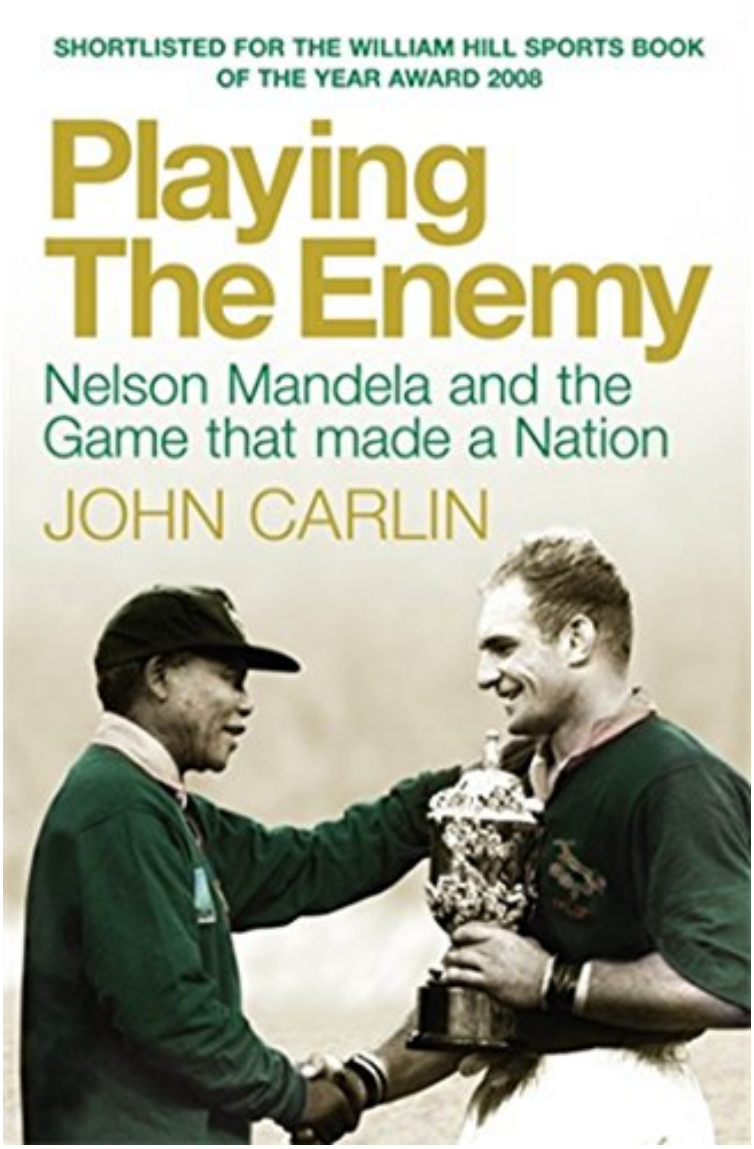
Playing the Enemy: Nelson Mandela and the Game That Made a Nation (English Edition)



Par John Carlin
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[Read and download] Playing the Enemy: Nelson Mandela and the Game That Made a Nation (English Edition)

Par John Carlin : Playing the Enemy: Nelson Mandela and the Game That Made a Nation (English Edition) before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Playing the Enemy: Nelson Mandela and the Game That Made a Nation (English Edition):

Description :

Prsentation de l'diteurAs the day of the final of the 1995 Rugby World Cup dawned, and the Springboks faced New Zealand's all-conquering All Blacks, more was at stake than a sporting trophy. When Nelson Mandela appeared wearing a Springboks jersey and led the all-white Afrikaner-dominated team in singing South Africa's new national anthem, he conquered the hearts of white South Africa. Playing the Enemy tells the extraordinary human story of how that moment became possible. It shows how a sport, once the preserve of South Africa's Afrikaans-speaking minority, came to unify the new rainbow nation, and tells of how - just

occasionally - something as simple as a game really can help people to rise above themselves and see beyond their differences.ExtraitChapter XIVSILVERMINEOn May 25, 1995, the Springboks would meet the reigning world champions,Australia, in the first match of the World Cup in Cape Town.The day before, the team was gathered at Silvermine, an old militarybase inside a mountainous nature preserve on the Cape Peninsula,where they had established a temporary training camp. On the easternhalf of the peninsula's narrow waist, Silvermine was one of the mostbeautiful spots in South Africa. Looking north, you saw the totemicmonolith of Table Mountain. Looking south, you saw the rockyextremity where the Indian and Atlantic oceans met. All around werecliffs, forests, valleys, andsea.The team had just finished an afternoon training session when theylooked up and saw a big military helicopter throbbing down from thesky. Morn du Plessis, who had been tipped off about the visit, had puton a suit and tie. As they gawked up at the flying machine descendingtoward the field, he announced that this was Mandela on his way to seethem. They continued to stare as Mandela himself stepped out fromunder the rotor blades in a bright red and orange shirt, worn loose below the waist, in what had become his trademark presidentialstyle.As Mandela strode smiling toward them, the players crowded forward,jostling each other like photographers at a press conference, craningtheir necks to get the bestview.Mandela made some light remarks, raising some laughs, and thenDu Plessis called for quiet so that the president could address the team.Somewhat to their surprise, Mandela started by taking up the samelofty themes he generally did when addressing white people. (His audiencewas all white that day, as Chester Williams was away nursing aninjury.) He reminded them that the ANC had promised that the newgovernment would keep the commander of the army, the nationalcommissioner of police, the Reserve Bank governor, and the ministerof finance. He then pointed out that, a year after the elections, his governmenthad remained true to its word. As Afrikaners, they had nothingto fear from the ANC. Nor, Mandela added, breaking into a grin,from their opponents the nextday."You are playing the World Cup champions, Australia. The teamwho wins this match will go right through to the end," he predicted,before returning to a solemn tone. "You now have the opportunity ofserving South Africa and uniting our people. From the point of view ofmerit, you are equal to anything in the world. But we are playing athome and you have got an edge. Just remember, all of us, black andwhite, are behindyou."The players cheered and applauded, then Mandela took turns tochat with them one by one. "He asked me why I had dressed so formallyto see him," Du Plessis remembered. "But what was amazing wasthe chemistry. The players were drawn to him immediately." KobusWiese admitted, "I can't remember why we laughed, but I remember wewere laughing with Mandela the whole time he wasthere."Hennie le Roux, the chunky center three quarter, decided out of theblue to offer Mandela a token of his gratitude for taking the trouble to come and visit them. When the president got to him, he handed him hisgreen Springbok cap and said, "Please take it, Mr. President, it is foryou." Le Roux paused and added, "Thanks a lot for being here. Itmeans a lot to theteam."Morgan Freeman and Matt Damon in "Invictus"Mandela took it, smiled, and said, "Thank you very much. I shallwear it!" He put the cap on right then andthere.Franois Pienaar put the seal on the mountaintop ceremony with abrief message of farewell to Mandela. Referring to the next day's game,he declared, "There's one guy that now we understand we have to playfor, and that's thepresident."The Silvermine encounter redefined the Springboks' feelings fortheir president and their country. Describing the scene as Mandelaboarded his helicopter and flew off, Du Plessis was almost lost forwords. "I looked at the players as they looked up at the helicopter andthey were like young boys waving, so full of this excitement. Theseguys had all seen a million helicopters before but Mandela well, hehad won theirhearts."And he did them some good as a rugby team too. Pienaar had beenworried about the tension among his teammates on the day before playbegan. He would usually try to find a way to break it, with a song maybeor a film, but this time Mandela had done his job for him. A year earlier,Mandela had put Pienaar at his ease in the presidential office. Now hehad done the same for the team as a whole. "He relaxed the guys. Hisinteraction with the team was jovial, always smiling, always crackinglittle jokes. And he always has time for everyone. He'd stop and chat,and put the players at ease. That was very special before the openingmatch."Mandela may have lowered the Springboks' stress, but he couldn'tbanish it entirely. Few people actually died on a rugby field, but nosportin terms of pain endured and brutality of collisionwas closerto war. Rugby players took and gave hits as hard as American football players without any helmets, shoulder pads, or other protectivegear.And rugby demanded far more stamina than did American football.Each rugby match was played in two forty-minute halves with only aten-minute break between them and no timeouts except for injury. Butphysical fear weighed less heavily on the players than the burden ofnational expectation. In less than twenty-four hours they would faceAustralia's Wallabies, one of the five teams with a serious chance

ofwinning the World Cup, along with France, England, New Zealand, andSouth Africa. Mandela might have made them feel special, but what stillremained to be seen was whether the Springboks could channel thatpressure in their favor during the game itself, or be crushed under itsweight.It also remained to be seen how much support black South Africanswould really give the Springboks, how effective Mandela had been inhis efforts to persuade his people that the old green-and-gold jerseywas now theirstoo.The Presidential Protection Unit provided as good a barometer ofthe national mood as any. They were one group of South Africans whowent to bed on the night before the game against Australia feeling astense as the Springboks themselves. But for different reasons. "For thatfirst game against Australia the security challenge was huge and thesecurity arrangements enormous," said Linga Moonsamy, the formerANC guerrilla and a member of the PPU since Mandela'sinauguration."We spent weeks planning for that day. We went up and down examiningevery high-rise around the stadium. We placed snipers on rooftopsat strategic points, we placed people at the points of weakness insidethestadium."The PPU was united in its sense of mission but split down themiddle between blacks and whites, between former members ofUmkhonto we Sizwe, like Moonsamy, and former members of thesecurity police. "The Umkhonto guys and the police guys: people who'd been each other's mortal enemies, literallywe had wanted tokill each other for years," Moonsamy said, "though they succeeded, itshould be said, more than wedid."The split extended to rugby. Being in Mandela's presence day in, dayout for a year had smoothed Moonsamy's sharper edges. But he was stillsome way from actively supporting the Springboks or, for that matter,understanding what the game wasabout."There had been plenty of rumors that the white far right would usethe competition to stage a terrorist act against the new democracy,against Mandela himself," Moonsamy recalled. "Our white colleagueswere as aware of that possibility as us, and they were prepared, like us,but the big difference was that they were, if anything, even more nervousabout the outcome of the game itself. We looked at them, smiled,and shook our heads. We just didn'tget it."At the event, the PPU's preparedness paid off. The South Africa Australia game went without a hitch. Mandela was helicoptered fromthe presidential residence in Cape Town to a tall building near the stadium.From the building he traveled in a silver armored BMW to thestadium, with Moonsamy, who was number one bodyguard on the day,sitting in the passenger seat before him. Amid all the excitement, Mandelahad not forgotten Hennie le Roux's cap. He wore it at the tournament'sopening ceremony, where the sixteen teams taking part in thetournament went on parade there at Newlands Stadium alongside 1,500dancers (or 1,501, Mandela himself joining and performing a lively jig),before the inaugural game itself. And he wore it when he went out ontothe pitch to shake the hands of the two teams, to a warm cheer fromthe overwhelmingly white 50,000-strong crowd, among whom newSouth African flags abounded. He kept wearing it when the Springbokssang the twin national anthems, into which they now invested equalemotion, if in the case of "Die Stem" they still showed more familiaritywith thewords.The game itself was a triumph for the Springboks. All the pressurehad worked in their favor, in the end, and they beat Australia, whomnone had beaten for fourteen months, more comfortably than thescore27 points to 18suggested. Joel Stransky was the man of thematch, scoring 22 of the Springbok points, 17 of them from kicks, onea try over the line. As the game neared the end a hastily painted banneremerged from the crowd that read, "Forget the Rhino. Save the Wallaby!"The Australians, themselves ferocious competitors in every sportthey played, were gracious in defeat. "There's no doubt that the betterteam won," Bob Dwyer, Australia's coach, said. "Any other result, if we had sneaked it, would have beenunfair."That night the Springbok players celebrated as rugby players do,drinking until four in the morning, being fetedcarried high alofteverywhere they went. Kitch Christie, the coach, did not spare themtheir daily run at nine the next morning, from the heart of the city outto the seashore, but the throbbing pain of it was eased by the passersbywho cheered them every step of theway.A day later, their heads still rather the worse for wear, they foundthemselves on a ferry bound for Robben Island. It had been Morn duPlessis's idea. Du Plessis had begun to see just how enormous theimpact of this "One Team, One Country" business was, not only interms of the good it would do the country, but the good it would dotheteam. "Invictus" Movie Poster"There was a cause-and-effect connection between the Mandelafactor and our performance in the field," Du Plessis said. "It was causeand effect on a thousand fronts. In players overcoming the pain barrier,in a superior desire to win, in luck going your way because you makeyour own luck, in all kinds of tiny details that together or separatelymark the difference between winning and losing. It all came perfectlytogether. Our willingness to be the nation's team and Mandela's desireto make the team the nationalteam."Robben Island was still being used as a prison and all the prisonersthere were either Black or Coloured. Part of the day's event involvedmeeting them, but first the players took turns viewing the cell whereMandela had spent eighteen of

his twenty-seven years in captivity. Theplayers entered the cell one or two at a time; it couldn't hold any morethan that. Having just met Mandela, they knew that he was a tall manlike most of them, if not as broad. It required no great mental leap topicture the challenges, physical and psychological, of being confined ina box so small for so long. Pienaar, who had done a bit of reading onMandela's past, also knew that it was in this cell, or at any rate in thisprison, that much of the energy and planning behind the boycott ofthe Springbok international tours had come. Morn du Plessis had asimilar reflection, all the more powerful since he had been one of theSpringbok players affected by it. Steve Tshwete, now the minister ofsport, had told Du Plessis that, in these cells, they listened on the radioto the Springboks' games against the British Lions in 1980. The guardsyelled at the prisoners to stop their cheering, but they cheered on. "Andyou know," Du Plessis told me, "looking around those cells, seeingwhat we put them through, you know what? I would have cheered forthe Lionstoo."After Mandela's cell the Springbok players went outside to the yardwhere Mandela had once been obliged to break stones. Waiting forthem was a group ofprisoners."They were so happy to see us," Pienaar said. "Despite being confinedhere they were so obviously proud of our team. I spoke to themabout our sense that we were representing the whole country now,them included, and then they sang us a song. James SmallI'll neverforget thisstood in a corner, tears streaming out. James lived veryclose to the sword and I think he must have felt, 'I could have beenhere.' Yes, he felt his life could so easily have gone down another path.But," Pienaar added, recalling the bruising fights he would get into when he was younger, the time he thought he had killed a man," but mine too, eh? I could have ended up theretoo."Small remembered the episode. "The prisoners not only sang for us,they gave us a huge cheer and I I just burst into tears," he said, hiseyes reddening again at the recollection. "That was where the sensereally took hold in me that I belonged to the new South Africa, andwhere I really got a sense of the responsibility of my position as aSpringbok. There I was, hearing the applause for me, and at the sametime thinking about Mandela's cell and how he spent twenty-sevenyears in prison and came out with love and friendship. All that washedover me, that huge realization, and the tears just rolled down myface."From Publishers WeeklyCarlin offers the final dramatic chapters of how then president Nelson Mandela and his wily strategy of using a sporting eventthe Sprinkboks rugby team in the 1995 World Cupto mend South Africa. Carlin, a senior international writer for El Pas, quotes Mandela: Sports has the power to change the world.... It is more powerful than government in breaking down racial barriers. After giving an informed capsule history of apartheid's bitter legacy and Mandela's noble stature as a leader, the scene is set for the influential rugby match between the solid New Zealand team and the scrappy South African squad in the finals of the World Cup, with 43 million blacks and whites awaiting the outcome. All of the cast in Afrikaner lore are hereBotha, DeKlerk, Bernard, Viljeonas they match wits with Mandela. Carlin concludes this excellent book of redemption and forgiveness with chapters that depict how a divided country can be elevated beyond hate and malice to pride and healing. (Aug.)