

# 2000'S

1478. **2000** – The first match of the new millennium was played on 5th February 2000 when Italy hosted Scotland at the Stadio Flaminio in Rome. A pulsating match that ended with Italy defeating Scotland 34–20.
1479. **“He deserved it!”** – Brad Johnstone, All Black prop [1976–79], and coach of Italy [2000–02] provided a simple explanation why Peter Stringer, Ireland scrumhalf [2000–09], was head-butted by Salvatore Perugini, Italian prop [2000–12] during the 2000 Six Nations.
1480. **109,874** – The largest crowd to ever attend an international rugby match was 109,874 who packed into Stadium Australia on 15th July 2000 [now ANZ Stadium] the venue built for the Olympic Games in Sydney, to watch the Wallabies match against the All Blacks. It was a record attendance for a rugby match and is a figure that is unlikely to be bettered... the All Blacks were victorious by 39 – 35.
1481. **“Nobody... ‘cos nobody’s perfect!”** – a term often used to describe John Eales, Wallaby lock [1991–01] and captain and two times RWC winner.





John 'Nobody' Eales.

1482. “John Eales is a guy who can run, jump, catch, pass, tackle, kick goals, play a square cut on the cricket field and post around 11-seconds for the 100 metres.” – Bob Templeton, Wallaby coach [1971–81] on Wallaby captain, John ‘Nobody’ Eales.
1483. “New Zealand pop-group ‘*True Bliss*’ provided the pre-match entertainment, but it was Australian fans who went away in seventh heaven after the game’s stunning climax.” – Anonymous, after Australia defeated the All Blacks 24–23 at Wellington in 2000 after John Eales kicked a sensational match-winning penalty with the last play of the game.
1484. “It was just a bloody disaster. You’re back behind the goal-line thinking what the headlines in the paper the next day, will be. You’re seeing photos of everyone in the team and the headline ‘Woeful Wallabies’... it’s not good.” – John Eales,

when the All Blacks established a 24–0 lead over the Wallabies after just 8-minutes of the 2000 Sydney Bledisloe Cup game at the new Olympic Stadium in front of a record crowd for rugby of 109,874. The match ended with the Wallabies losing respectably 39–35... and the media was kind.

**1485.** **‘Granny-gate’** – Eligibility rules have been a constant talking point in rugby in the era of professionalism but perhaps the most notorious in recent years was the 2000 ‘granny-gate’ scandal involving New Zealand born full-back Shane Howarth and loose forward Brett Sinkinson. Both were suspended after it was discovered that neither kiwi-born and bred players had any Welsh ancestry, as had been claimed, and had therefore been representing Wales under false pretences. Howarth had already played four internationals for New Zealand and then played a further 19 test matches for Wales before the ‘error’ was identified. The scandal caused by Granny-gate, left the WRU utterly defenceless and embarrassed.

**1486.** **“I’ve nothing to hide, my mother’s father is from Cardiff. I couldn’t prove he was my grandfather; it wasn’t on the birth certificate.”** – Shane Howarth, All Black full-back [1994] and Wales [1998–00]. It quickly became clear this line of defence was untenable. Instead, his story changed to one in which his Māori grandmother had conceived via an unnamed, itinerant Welshman, although Māori birth records showed otherwise. **“In my heart, I truly believed, and I still believe now [2019], that I had Welsh blood running through my veins.”**

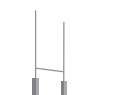
**1487.** **“I don’t know a thing about my Welsh grandfather. When I came over here, it was mainly to bum around and see the sights. I certainly didn’t think that I might become an international but when Graham Henry discovered my grandparents were from**



**Carmarthen, he roped me in.**” – Brett Sinkinson, Wales loose forward [1999–02] played 20 test matches for Wales. When confronted with the allegations that he was ineligible to play for Wales, he initially protested his innocence... **“My father’s got all the details; I hardly knew him. I’m not sure what the story is. Graham Henry did find out that my grandfather is from Carmarthen.”** When told that there was no evidence of a Welsh grandfather and that his British grandfather was a slaughterman from Oldham, Lancashire, which is 190 miles from Carmarthen, Sinkinson just nodded and replied: **“OK.”** Sinkinson’s agent Kevin Lane added, somewhat farcically: **“Although the birth certificate says his grandfather was born in Oldham, we believe that isn’t necessarily the case. Oldham is in Lancashire but it’s also not many miles from Wales.”**

1488. Phil Kingsley Jones, the former mentor of Jonah Lomu and the man who brought Sinkinson to Wales, said: **“It’s been made to look as if Brett told fibs, but he didn’t. Brett is a smashing lad, as honest as the day is long. There is no way he would have lied to Graham Henry or the WRU to get a cap. What was Brett supposed to do, turn down the chance to play international rugby? The WRU should be answering the questions because it’s their duty to check on players’ eligibility.”**

1489. Former Wales captain Jonathan Davies blasted: **“The WRU have made some crass decisions and cock-ups over the years, but to allow players with no right to play for Wales to pull on a red jersey beggars belief! It makes my blood boil to think we’ve left out fully-qualified, proud Welsh boys in order to allow a couple of foreigners to indulge their own fantasies. What an utter disgrace.”**



1490. An IRB inquiry into the affair lasted two days and concluded, without any formal sanction, that the **‘WRU must be saddled with the responsibility for not laying down a drill to be followed’**. The IRB later changed the eligibility rules so that a player could only play for one country. This led to problems with the Pacific Islanders and the All Blacks, who had previously treated one another’s players as interchangeable. New Zealander Stephen Bachop, for example, played for Samoa in the 1991 Rugby World Cup before becoming an All Black, but later switched back to Samoa. Similarly, his brother Graeme Bachop represented New Zealand and later Japan. The brothers played against each other in the 1999 Rugby World Cup. Since these events, Sitiveni Sivivatu and Sione Lauaki both played for the Pacific Islanders side but later went on to play for the All Blacks as playing for the Islanders did not require a player to commit his international future to one of the five sides which make up the Pacific Island teams.
1491. **“All I ask is that when people object to my ways, is that they stab me in the front, not in the back.”** – David Moffett, Australian born CEO of the Welsh Rugby Union, 2000. His tenure, although productive, often proved to be controversial and acrimonious at best.
1492. **“I’m prepared to back David... depending on what his views are.”** – Glanmore Griffiths, Chairman of the Welsh Rugby Union on the appointment of David Moffett as chief executive in 2000.
1493. **“One of my first games was at Twickenham and we got absolutely pummelled, I was playing against Austin Healey, who didn’t shut up for 80-minutes. I remember thinking ‘no wonder my family don’t like the English if this guy is anything to go by’.** He completely put me off my game. He absolutely



mentally broke me... he really did. He was telling me ‘Come on Williams, I thought you had gas. You’re much slower than I thought you’d be’. By the end, I was looking at the touchline thinking ‘I’ve had enough now, he’s absolutely broken me’. He’s like that – he’s still chopsy... but it’s banter and that’s how it goes.” – Shane Williams, Wales winger [2000–11] recalling his first test match against England at Twickenham in 2000, won 46–12 by England.

- 1494.** 2001 – The International Rugby Board [IRB] introduces awards recognising the best players and teams in world rugby at the World Rugby Awards. The inaugural men’s winner was Irish hooker Keith Wood, the international team winner was Australia, and the international coach of the year was Rod McQueen, coach of Australia.
- 1495.** 2001 – Neil Jenkins, Wales fly-half [1991–02], became the first rugby player to break the 1,000-international points mark, with a 28-point haul featuring a ‘Full House’ of a try, conversion, drop-goal, and penalty against France in Paris.
- 1496.** **All Black Player #1,000:** Carl Hayman, All Black prop [2001–07] ... 117-years since All Black #1, James Allan, from Otago. Hayman, also from Otago, went on as a replacement in the 2001 test against Manu Samoa at the North Harbour Stadium... Hayman went on to play 45-tests for the All Blacks.
- 1497.** 2002 – The first contest for the Antim Cup between the rugby union teams of Romania [The Oaks] and Georgia [The Lelos], was played in Tbilisi, with Romania winning by 31–23. The Antim Cup is contested each time Georgia and Romania meet in a senior international match other than World Cup matches. In 2000 there was a motion from the Georgia Rugby Union just



before the 2000 European Nations Cup decider in Tbilisi, to establish a challenge cup along the lines of the Calcutta and Bledisloe Cups to be annually played for between the Oaks and the Lelos. It was decided that the cup should be named after Antimoz Iverieli [Georgian version] – Antim Ivireanul [Romanian version] [c. 1650–1716]. The Rugby Supporters' League [RML] of Georgia approached the Catholicos-Patriarch of All Georgia, Ilia II through influential go-betweens and received his blessing for the use of the name 'Antim'. The trophy was made by Georgian sculptor and former rugby union player Gia Japaridze, who cast the cup in gilded bronze.

1498. **“Everyone loves rugby and respects rugby players in Georgia. That is why it is important to use the authority of, and respect, for rugby players to help shape values of the younger generations for a fair and equal environment for all, free from violence.”** – Lekso Gugava, former winger [2004–12] for ‘The Lelos’ and recently as Director of Operations for Georgia Rugby Union explaining the 2016 innovative advocacy campaign following the establishment of a partnership between the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women [UN-Women] and the Georgian Rugby Union. When rugby players learned about the disturbing situation in the country concerning violence against women and girls, they immediately expressed their readiness to help solve the problem. Thus, the idea for the first joint project was born. In March 2012, tens of thousands of fans attending a match between the Georgian and Russian national rugby teams at one of Tbilisi’s largest stadiums were the first to hear the announcement: **“This game is dedicated to the United Nations Secretary-General’s Campaign UNiTE to End Violence Against Women.”**



1499. **“It is vital that men speak about gender equality, because it concerns us as much as women. This is why as many men as possible should get involved in this movement.”** – Sandro Nijharadze, a former Georgia player. Soon after, other athletes followed the example of the rugby players and joined the campaign. Giga Chikadze, a kick-boxing world champion, and many Georgian football players have openly supported the cause and held meetings with young men and boys throughout Georgia.
1500. **“Yes, this is a very interesting case. But are they now going to allow replacement doctors when one gets yellow-carded? After all, we have a specialist position on a game... like a prop does.”** – Mario Larrain, Argentina’s team doctor after being yellow-carded by referee Jamiel Panday in a mid-week game at Witbank during Argentina’s tour of South Africa in 2002. Apparently, the referee judged that the doctor was on the field at an inopportune time – while a goal-kick was being taken, and so the yellow-card was shown.
1501. **“Our bus had driven through the city after the match on our way to the reception. One Welsh fan actually ran up and head-butted the vehicle. He turned away, head streaming with blood and a big, silly grin of triumph on his face.”** – Martin Johnson, England lock [1993–2003] explains the animosity between the English and Welsh in 2001... England won 44–15. **“The same day, our wing-mirror clipped another Welshman and knocked him unconscious. The bus had to wait for the police and ambulance to arrive, with an ever-growing crowd of home fans, pint-pots in hand, gathering around the bus, shouting, and making traditional gestures at us. I remember thinking, ‘Yeah, this is pretty good-natured at the moment, but if one**





of those guys lobs his pint at us, they're all going to do it, and then we won't be laughing."

1502. "Turn them over. Smash 'em. Simple as that. Relish this game. Relish it. Shut their crowd up, shut their players up. Win the match." – Martin Johnson, captain of England prior to the grand-slam decider against Ireland in Dublin 2003.
1503. "It really was shitting on somebody else's doorstep and saying, *'Yes, we did it, we're here to take over.'*" – Tony McGurk, journalist, and broadcaster's summary of managing to upset Ireland when he refused to budge after lining up on the Irish side of the red carpet ahead of the 2003 Six Nations decider at Lansdowne Road. The Irish ran out to take their usual side, which meant going beyond Johnson's men and lining up on the turf, leaving the other half of the red-carpet empty, resulting in Irish President Mary McAleese getting her shoes muddy as she greeted the Irish players.
1504. "He told us that none of us were going to move... and if we did, he'd kill us." – Steve Thompson, England hooker [2002–11] recalls England captain, Martin Johnson's instructions during the diplomatic stand-off at Lansdowne Road in 2003.
1505. "Get off, you look ugly." – Peter Marshall, Australian referee to blood-spattered England flanker Neil Back [1994–03] after he complained about being ordered to the blood-bin in the game against South Africa 2003.
1506. 2003 – The International Rugby Board [IRB] introduces the World Rugby Rankings, a ranking system for men's national teams in rugby union, managed by World Rugby, the sport's governing body. The teams of World Rugby's member nations



are ranked based on their game results, with the most successful teams being ranked highest. A point system is used, with points being awarded based on the results of World Rugby recognised international matches. England were ranked No.1 when the rankings were introduced. New Zealand held the record for the longest tenure as the No.1 world ranked team, spending just three months short of 10-years uninterrupted atop the rankings from 2009–2019.

- 1507. 81 Tries** – During the 2003 calendar year, the New Zealand All Blacks scored a record 81-tries in just 14-matches. This total was also matched by South Africa in 2007 but they played 17-matches to accomplish the feat.
- 1508.** “Next weekend is going to be a tough one, whatever happened against New Zealand, Australia is a different bag of hammers.”  
– Eddie O’Sullivan, Ireland coach [2001–06].
- 1509.** “It’s a dismissive term to say the Irish team are plucky because it rings back to the old days when we went out and gave it a lash, set our hair on fire and ran after the opposition for 20 minutes and, if they survived that, they beat us by 50 points.”  
– Eddie O’Sullivan, Ireland coach [2001–06] rejects suggestions that the 17–16 loss to Australia in 2003 was just another ‘heroic’ Irish defeat.
- 1510.** “Stringer may as well be looking for a Mars bar in a bucket of shit.” – Eddie O’Sullivan, Ireland coach [2001–06] berating his forwards during a training session. He didn’t like how they were protecting rucks and Irish scrumhalf at the time, the diminutive Peter Stringer, was having difficulty in getting his hands on the ball.

