

South Africa to Host Junior World Championships

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Rugby's premier age grade competition will be played in South Africa next year after the International Rugby Board awarded the hosting rights to the IRB Junior World Championship 2012 to the South African Rugby Union (SARU).

Cape Town and Stellenbosch, both steeped in rich Rugby heritage, will play host to 312 of the world's finest Under 20 players over the three-week tournament as 12 international teams seek to claim the greatest prize in age grade Rugby at an event that will provide a significant legacy for the sport in South Africa.

The announcement continues SARU's strong commitment to hosting IRB events and showcasing the world's best young talent having previously hosted record IRB Under 19 Championships in 2004 and 2005 and the U21 World Championship in 2002.

"The International Rugby Board is delighted that the IRB Junior World Championship 2012 has been awarded to South Africa. Rugby is such an integral part of the fabric of the nation, and I have no doubt that teams and travelling fans will be treated to a high-quality tournament set against a backdrop of outstanding passion and atmosphere," said IRB Chairman Bernard Lapasset.

"This is a huge boost for the Championship which has grown to be a highlight of the Rugby calendar and is essential in the development of the next generation of stars to showcase their skills on the international stage. South Africa certainly has all the facilities, infrastructure and outstanding Rugby supporters to ensure that the tournament will be organised to a very high standard and shown around the world, which is vital for its ongoing success."

More than 80 players have graduated from the tournament since its inauguration in 2008 to win full international caps, including Patrick Lambie who mixed with stars at the official launch at the Cape Town Planetarium today.

SARU President Oregan Hoskins said his organisation is thrilled at the prospect of hosting another international Rugby tournament in South Africa.

"SARU will work closely with the Western Province Rugby Union and the IRB to make this a

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truly unforgettable tournament for the players and the spectators. We are looking forward to hosting the IRB Junior World Championship next year and to welcome the best young rugby players in the world to South Africa," said Hoskins.

"It is my firm belief that the Junior World Championship tournament will help SARU in its vision to promote, help to educate and grow the Game at grassroots level. Part of the overall tournament strategy is the implementation of a comprehensive Legacy Programme and our intention is to use the Junior World Championship as a platform to further raise the levels of awareness amongst our various township communities and to introduce the Game to non-rugby environments in the greater Cape Town area."

The IRB Junior World Championship 2011 kicks off in Italy on June 10 with the final being played in Padova on June 26. The current world champions are New Zealand, having defeated Australia to lift the prestigious title in Argentina last summer for the third year in succession. South Africa again finished third, as they have in all previous IRB Junior World Championships to date.

(Don't confuse this with the 2nd tier Junior World Trophy, which is the competition that the USA is participating in this spring.)