



# Game Plan

*The team talk of your life*



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# Kick Off

**THE GAME:** *The whistle blows and the ball is hoofed up the pitch. In the next 80 minutes, anything could happen . . .*

Crunching tackles, clever runs, unbelievable tries and insane drop goals. We love the raw unpredictability, aggressiveness and intensity of the rugby pitch.

But those things aren't always as much fun off the pitch. It's tough to have a steady game plan for life when things change or don't work out. We want to 'make it' and live exciting and enjoyable lives. But there are always opponents and problems getting in the way of that try line.

Getting to the try line is just as important in our lives as it is on the pitch. With that in mind, the next few pages are your team talk for getting the winning try, and dodging a terrible defeat.

*"I think you enjoy the game more if you don't know the rules. Anyway, you're on the same wavelength as the referees."*

—Jonathan Davies,  
a former Wales fly-half  
(37 caps, 81 points).

## QUICK QUIZ

1. In 1995 New Zealand scored the most points any team has managed in a single match. How many points did they score and who were their opponents?
2. Who is the youngest ever try scorer in a World Cup game?

Answer



# Approaching the opposition's 22m line

**THE GAME:** *A few sharp runs and a string of intelligent passes can get your team to the 22m line pretty quickly. So far things are looking good and the game plan's working.*

Brad Thorn (2011 World Cup winner with the All Blacks) described what life was like when his rugby career started to really take off: *"Suddenly, you've got money. You can buy a house. You have got a car. People are congratulating you. You feel really great about yourself. And the women notice you more!"*

Sounds great doesn't it?! Surely 'making it' looks like that!

*"I was a pretty wild character . . . I would drink and go out with lots of women".* If that sounds familiar, you might feel like you're at life's 22m line and playing well. The try line of satisfaction, happiness and 'making it' is in sight, everything's going to plan and "[feeling] really great about yourself" seems like it'll never end.

But what about if you never become a world class rugby star? What if you don't earn a fortune or have girls throwing themselves at you? What if you don't feel that good about yourself? And what if, worst of all, you have everything Brad had . . . and still find it isn't enough?

*"If you can't  
take a punch,  
you should  
play table  
tennis."*

*—Pierre Berbizier,  
a former France  
scrum-half  
(57 caps, 7 points).*

# Kicked into touch

**THE GAME:** *All it takes is one stray pass or a collapsed ruck to lose possession and the momentum. The ball is kicked into touch and your attack breaks down.*

*One failed attack doesn't mean that the game plan is in tatters. But if you keep being blocked again and again, and that try line starts getting further away, you can quickly find yourself on the back foot. Suddenly those 80 minutes can't be over soon enough.*

Pierre Spies, the South African no. 8 at the 2011 World Cup, described his own 'kicked into touch' moment: *"Two weeks after the [2007 World Cup] squad announcement, I started*

*to cough up blood . . . I had blood clots on my lungs. The doctors said I'd need a minimum of six months blood thinning medication, and that I would never play rugby again."*

We've all been there: at some point, things go wrong. Sometimes it's our fault; sometimes it isn't. No matter how good your game plan is, you'll feel like you've been kicked into touch. And no amount of money, fame, power or sex will make you feel like you've 'made it'.

What's the game plan when things keep going wrong? What's the answer when the things you want couldn't be further away?

## QUICK QUIZ

3. Who has scored the most drop goals in a single World Cup tournament?

*"We've lost seven of our last eight matches. Only team that we've beaten was Western Samoa. Good job we didn't play the whole of Samoa."*

—Gareth Davies, former Wales fly-half (21 caps, 38 points).



# Sitting in the sin bin

**THE GAME:** *We've all seen the frustrated player who stomps down on an opponent during a ruck. If the ref sees it, the player will get a yellow card and 10 minutes in the sin bin.*

It's pretty common to commit fouls as we try to live satisfying lives and avoid getting kicked into touch. Many are very small, and most we don't mean. But there is one big foul we're all guilty of: trying to make it on our own in the first place.

The Bible says God made us. And His game plan is for us to live with Him in total, lasting satisfaction. But we'd rather go it alone and try to get independent happiness. From the best to the worst, we are all guilty of living by our own game plans, rather than by God's.

And the 'sin bin'? Dying is our punishment for ignoring God's game plan. This isn't just a time out. This is total separation from Him and lasting satisfaction. It's a big deal—it means whatever happiness we have will come to an end. Only God, who lives forever, can offer lasting happiness.



*"I like to think I play rugby as it should be played—there are no yellow or red cards in my collection—but I cannot say I'm an angel."*

*—Jonny Wilkinson, a former England fly-half and 2003 World Cup winner (91 caps, 1,179 points).*



### QUICK QUIZ

4. Who is the oldest player to appear in a World Cup final?



▲ **THE GAME:** In life's 'rugby match' the team called "People" is full of individuals ignoring their coach, God. We do anything we think will make us happy. But we're being battered by the opposite team, with players like "Sickness", "Break-ups", "Job Loss" and finally "Death" making sure that we lose. No matter what we do, we can never beat all our opponents and 'make it' with a winning try of total satisfaction.

And the really bad news is we've all ended up in the sin bin. By playing by our own rules, we've rejected God and fouled others. Now, we're all sat on the side lines, helplessly watching the time run down, knowing our opponents are going to win. We've failed our coach and deserve to lose.

A close-up photograph of a rugby scrum in progress on a green field. Several players from two teams, one in red and white and the other in black and white, are huddled together, pushing against each other. The focus is on the players' legs, arms, and hands as they struggle for possession of the ball.

## QUICK QUIZ

5. Can you name the three international matches in Rugby Union history that have ended as draws?
6. Between which two teams was the 'Battle of Boet Erasmus' played in the 1995 World Cup?

Answer





*For the wages  
of sin is death,  
but the gift of  
God is eternal  
life in Christ  
Jesus our Lord.*

*—Romans 6:23  
(NIV Bible)*

## The try!

**THE GAME:** *As a team, “People” need help. Sat in the sin bin, we’re cut off from our coach and we’re unable to change the direction of the game. We can’t do a thing.*

The good news is that God has a game plan to save us. That plan is Jesus. Jesus, who is God, gave up His place in heaven so that He could enter onto the pitch as our sub and beat the opposition—even death, our final opponent!

The Bible tells us that He chose to come to earth and die a horrible death on a cross of wood. But He didn’t just die; on the cross He was receiving God’s right anger towards us because of our rejection of Him. Jesus paid the price for anything we have ever done wrong so that we could be forgiven by God. Then He came back to life—eternal life. In other words He ‘made it’ and invites us to join Him.

Jesus has scored the match winning try! He won an unending, satisfying life for us with God; something we can never get on our own.



Brad Thorn tells his story like this:

*"Jason (a member of the Australian rugby league team) was different from the rest of the team. When we travelled away from home as a team, we behaved wildly. But Jason did not do that. I talked to him a lot. Everyone says that you are weak to not drink loads of alcohol. You are weak if you do not have sex with any women. But it is the opposite. Saying 'No' involves character.*

*"Jason said that I should ask Jesus to forgive me for the things that I had done. And that I should ask Jesus Christ to teach me how to live well and follow him."*

Brad soon realised he needed to ask Jesus to pay for his sin and to give him a new life with God: *"I said a prayer. I told Jesus I regretted the things I had done. I asked him to forgive me and help me turn my life around."*



QUICK QUIZ

7. Which was the first country to win the World Cup twice?

# Converting

**THE GAME:** *After the try comes the conversion: the opportunity to kick another two points onto the scoreboard. The other meaning of “converting” is to give something a ‘new form’. That’s the conversion Jesus offers.*

Pierre Spies recalls his own ‘conversion’: *“I was tired of hangovers and the fake [brilliance] of man. I chose to give my life back to God . . . [Jesus] made me new.”*

We can either try to make it on our own, or we can make it with Jesus. Alone, we are destined to die for rejecting God. With Jesus we are made into new people who belong to God again, forever! We are welcomed back onto the field to celebrate the victory with Him. But if we continue to have no interest in Jesus, then we are stuck in the sin bin with no other way out.

He gives this promise to those who trust Him: *“I will come again and receive you; that where I am, there you may be also”* (John 14:3). With our sin and penalty being paid by Jesus, He promises to bring us safely into heaven forever, the place where we will find lasting satisfaction, happiness and “[feeling] really great”.

It’s possible to really ‘make it’, but you need to give up your own game plan, and trust your whole life to Jesus. So the question is: which game plan do you want to live by?



*For God so loved the world that He gave His one and only Son (Jesus), that whoever believes in Him shall not [die] but have eternal life.*

—John 3:16

# The big game plan!

**THE GAME:** *It's worth listening to others before walking onto the pitch. Their experience and advice can help us make good decisions at key moments.*

When Pierre Spies couldn't play at the 2007 World Cup because of illness, this was his reaction: *"Immediately I knew God was in control. My faith was tested, but I made a decision to praise God whether I stayed sick or got healed, because I knew God's plan is bigger than mine and I had to submit to His will."*

What a response! Despite serious illness, Spies still trusted God's game plan. Being a Christian doesn't mean we won't have problems, and it doesn't mean we'll live perfect lives. Thorn says *"I am very clear that I am not perfect and I never will be."*

But it does mean we can live by God's game plan: relying on and knowing Him. He promises us a welcome into heaven when we die, and in the meantime, we can have satisfaction. This satisfaction isn't based on us keeping our jobs or having successful relationships. Tough things may still happen to us. Instead it's based on God—knowing that He calls us His own children, makes us more like Himself every day and will never leave us.

With Him, we get the security, contentment and the future we've been failing to find on our own.



*"I do feel now I have a purpose. I believe that there is a God who loves me. I want to be a good husband and father. And I want to give my best on the rugby field . . . showing respect to my opponent afterwards, whether I win or lose."*

—Brad Thorn



QUICK QUIZ

8. No player scored a conversion in a Rugby World Cup Final between 1999 and 2011. Who scored the last conversion of the 1999 final and the only conversion of the 2011 final?

If you want to think more about Jesus, Our Daily Bread Ministries is here to help. We believe that the best way to know God and understand His game plan is to read the Bible. We publish daily Bible reading notes called *Our Daily Bread* to help with this. You can check it out online at [odb.org](http://odb.org) or contact one of our offices at [ourdailybread.org/locations](http://ourdailybread.org/locations) if you want a printed copy.

Visit us at [ourdailybread.org/locations/united-kingdom](http://ourdailybread.org/locations/united-kingdom) to see the other resources we have available to help you think further about God's game plan.



**FULL NAME:**  
**PIERRE JOHAN SPIES**

**Born:** 08/06/1985

**Nationality:** South African

**Position:** No. 8

**Height:** 6ft 4in

**Weight:** 235lb

**Test Debut:** Australia v South Africa (15/06/2006)

**Caps and points:**  
53 caps, 35 points

**Did you Know ...**

Pierre Spies is the most capped Springbok no. 8, also scoring the most Test tries in that position (7).



**FULL NAME:**  
**BRAD CARNEGIE THORN**

**Born:** 03/02/1975

**Nationality:** New Zealand

**Position:** Lock

**Height:** 6ft 5in

**Weight:** 246lb

**Test Debut:** New Zealand v Wales (21/06/2003)

**Caps and points:**  
59 caps, 20 points

**Did you Know ...**

Brad Thorn achieved a winning ratio of 86.44% with the All Blacks, securing the 2011 World Cup with them. He was also the first player to win the World Cup, a Super Rugby title and the Heineken Cup.



### **Quiz answers**

1. 145, Japan (1995).
  2. George North, aged 19 years and 166 days (he scored on his World Cup debut for Wales against Namibia in 2011).
  3. Jonny Wilkinson (he scored 8 drop goals for England in 2003).
  4. Brad Thorn (aged 36 years and 262 days in the 2011 final).
  5. France v Scotland, 1987. Canada v Japan, 2007. Canada v Japan, 2011.
  6. South Africa v Canada.
  7. Australia (1991 and 1999).
  8. Matt Burke (Australia) and François Trinh-Duc (France).
- Answers correct before the 2015 World Cup.**

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Email: [ireland@odb.org](mailto:ireland@odb.org) ~ Tel: +353 (01) 667 8428

**UK & Europe:** Our Daily Bread Ministries, PO Box 1, Carnforth, Lancashire, LA5 9ES  
Email: [uk@odb.org](mailto:uk@odb.org) ~ Tel: +44 (0) 15395 64149

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