

The personality: Les Cusworth assists Loffreda as a specialist in video technical analysis

## THE ENGLISH MAN GIVING A HAND

He is 53 years old, he was fly-half in Leicester and in his country's team which he managed as well. Based on technology, he analyzes his team's good moves and mistakes as well as the opponents'.

Walter Daniel Raiño. BRUSSELS, BELGIUM CORRESPONDENT

Over the past ten years, rugby has depended a lot on the contribution made by the game analyst. Videos from games and training are valuable resources when deciding the strategy to implement against such and such opponent. This technological support is the result of meticulous work, which you can see on the field with a surprising and effective move that can change the course of the game.



*Meticulous. "Ignoring one of your opponent's strength or being mistaken in a movement is worth a defeat", says Cusworth.*

The English man, Les Cusworth, born 53 years ago in Normanton is a key aspect of Los Pumas's preparation. Former fly-half in Leicester and England (12 caps between 1979 and 1988) and former England's coach (between 1994 and 1997, he won the first World Cup and made the Grand Slam in the 6 Nations Tournament with England), he was nominated coach of the year in 1994 by the Rugby Football Union. He is the outstanding UAR's (Argentinian Rugby Union) rugby director over the past 6 years, he is technical advisor, the expert in technical video analysis, and assists Marcelo Loffreda and his assistants (Daniel Baetti, Diego Cash and Mario Barandarian) in planning the team's general organization, the defensive and offensive strategy, with or without the ball, in front of an opponent.

Assisted by Nicolas Basdedios Molina's (staff assistant, 31 years old, former centre and scrum half for Los Pinos between 1993 and 1998) quiet but efficient collaboration, Les Cusworth provides players and coaches with precious details about their movements and performances and their opponents'. He leaves nothing to chance.

"Our job is to analyze our rival, who are the players, what are their moves, how they use the formations and all aspects related to the game. Rugby has changed a lot over the past 6 years. It is improving and developing. Players are stronger, more skillful, and more agile. Skills, physiques, power and speed are different now" says Les Cusworth.

He dedicates himself totally to giving the technical staff and the players the best information. Summarizing an explanation about a movement or an action that will be provided during a technical talk in 5 or 10 minutes (which could happen twice a day) requires more than 6 hours editing on computers. Sometimes, he even repeats himself or makes copies so that the players (they need that to get rid of their mistakes) or the technical staff can watch the videos separately.

"Using images and videos is powerful Two years ago, when I was coaching England, I was talking a lot with fly-halves and the 2 centres about their angle of run, how they move and how they complement one another. From there, we prepare shots and all I told them about during three weeks can be shown in a 3-minute video. Of course, there is no need to talk anymore" confides Les.

In order to have the most complete view, Cusworth and Basdedios Molina are using 3 high definition fixed cameras ("we started during the 2001 tour in Scotland and Wales, with VHS video and a home camera" Les remembers) for each game. One is set on the field width, one behind the posts and the last one returns an aerial view to see precisely each action and each movements of the game. The video editing is made through the Australian software SportsCode, with the Gamebreaker and Elite versions, on 3 Apple MacBook Pro computers and 7 300 Gb-hard drives (which are updated every 8 games), in addition to DVDs (150 are used each week) and various projectors.

“We have information about France’s last 10 games, Ireland’s last 8 games, Namibia’s last 5 games and Georgia’s last 3 games. We know what to look for. In rugby, ignoring one of your opponent’s strength or being mistaken in a movement is worth a defeat. We know what to look for. We only provide the players with the information allowing them to take good decisions” concludes Les Cusworth.

**Confidential**

Les Cusworth is a specialist of the game. “Teams modify systems and strategies. They are evolving. The best example is the All Blacks. They surprise me every single day. It’s unbelievable how fast they run, their reactions and individual skills under an extreme pressure. They borrowed tools from other sports – American Football and Rugby league – and they’ve got a clever coach. They take the ball with their fingers while others take the ball with their hands, which give them more and better movements’ options. A lot are copying them, but none will ever equal them” says Les.