Of the 20 teams competing, 12 qualified by finishing in the top three places in their pools during the 2011 World Cup. The other eight teams qualified through regional competition. Pool A has become known as the 'group of death'

Pool A

Australia Rank: 2
Record: **W33-L8**
Points (for/against): **1423-528**
Tournaments played: **7**
World Cup wins: **1991, 1999**

England Rank: 4
Record: **W29-L11**
Points (for/against): **1246-633**
Tournaments played: **7**
World Cup wins: **2003**

Wales Rank: 5
Record: **W18-L14**
Points (for/against): **916-633**
Tournaments played: **7**
Best finish: **Third place (1987)**

Fiji Rank: 9
Record: **W9-L15**
Points (for/against): **538-762**
Tournaments played: **6**
Best finish: **Quarter-final (1987, 2007)**

Uruguay Rank: 19
Record: **W2-L5**
Points (for/against): **98-352**
Tournaments played: **2**
Best finish: **Pool stage (Twice)**

Pool B

South Africa Rank: 3
Record: **W25-L4**
Points (for/against): **1009-378**
Tournaments played: **5**
World Cup wins: **1995, 2007**

Samoa Rank: 12
Record: **W11-L13**
Points (for/against): **585-608**
Tournaments played: **6**
Best finish: **Quarter-final (1991, 1995)**

Japan Rank: 13
Record: **W1-D2-L21**
Points (for/against): **428-1159**
Tournaments played: **7**
Best finish: **Pool stage (7 times)**

Scotland Rank: 10
Record: **W19-D1-L13**
Points (for/against): **972-620**
Tournaments played: **7**
Best finish: **Fourth place (1991)**

USA Rank: 15
Record: **W3-L18**
Points (for/against): **300-736**
Tournaments played: **6**
Best finish: **Pool stage (6 times)**

Pool C

New Zealand Rank: 1
Record: **W37-L6**
Points (for/against): **2012-584**
Tournaments played: **7**
World Cup wins: **1987, 2011**

Argentina Rank: 8
Record: **W15-L5**
Points (for/against): **742-605**
Tournaments played: **7**
Best finish: **Third place (2007)**

Tonga Rank: 11
Record: **W6-L15**
Points (for/against): **335-731**
Tournaments played: **6**
Best finish: **Pool stage (6 times)**

Georgia Rank: 16
Record: **W2-L10**
Points (for/against): **144-401**
Tournaments played: **3**
Best finish: **Pool stage (3 times)**

Namibia Rank: 20
Record: **W0-L15**
Points (for/against): **144-974**
Tournaments played: **4**
Best finish: **Pool stage (4 times)**

Pool D

France Rank: 7
Record: **W30-D1-L12**
Points (for/against): **1354-770**
Tournaments played: **7**
Best finish: **Finalist (1987, 1999, 2011)**

Ireland Rank: 6
Record: **W17-L13**
Points (for/against): **819-584**
Tournaments played: **7**
Best finish: **Quarter-final (5 times)**

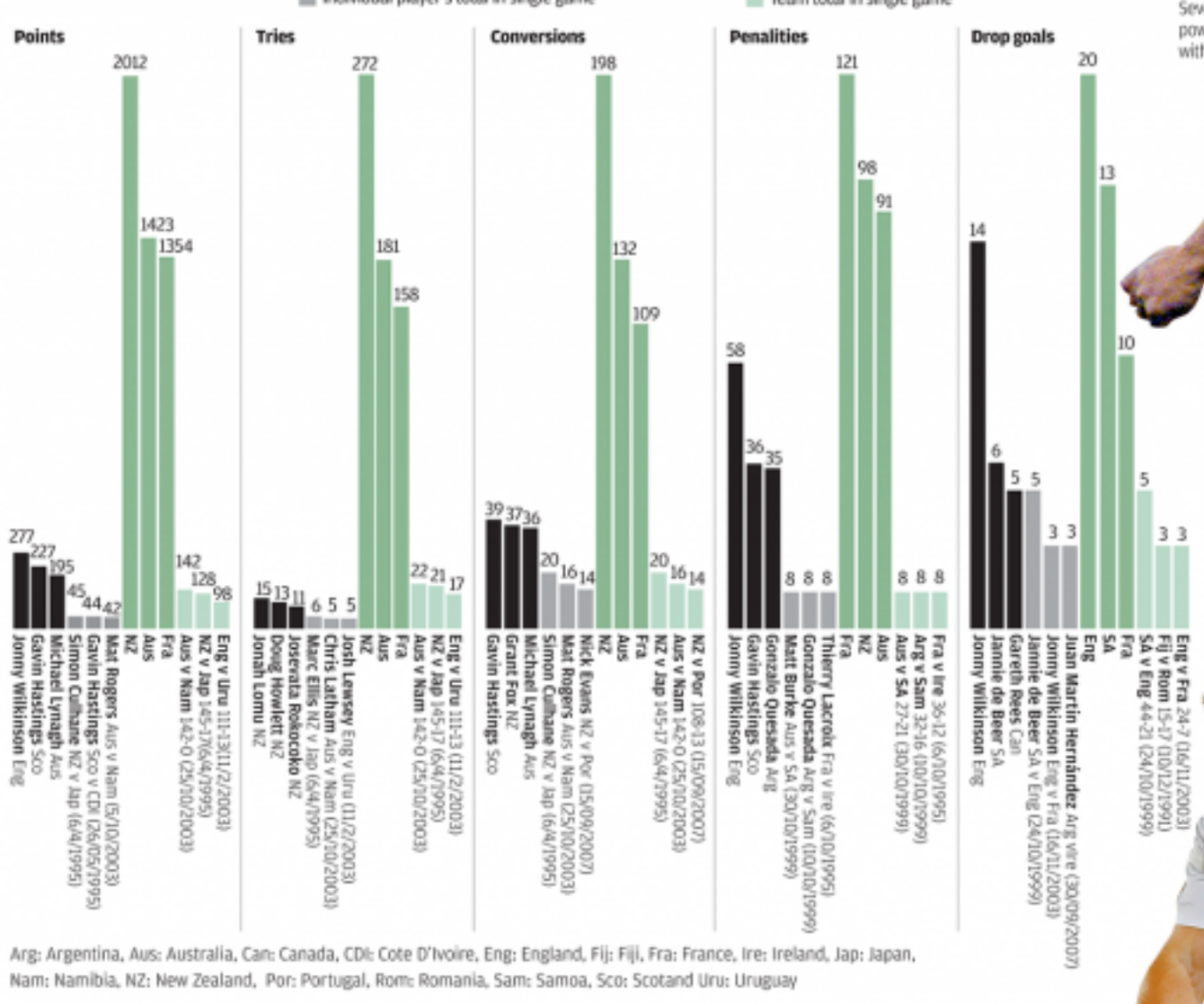
Italy Rank: 14
Record: **W9-L15**
Points (for/against): **455-811**
Tournaments played: **7**
Best finish: **Pool stage (7 times)**

Canada Rank: 18
Record: **W7-D2-L16**
Points (for/against): **469-707**
Tournaments played: **7**
Best finish: **Quarter-final (1991)**

Romania Rank: 17
Record: **W5-L19**
Points (for/against): **305-939**
Tournaments played: **7**
Best finish: **Pool stage (7 times)**

Sources: rugbyworldcup.com, intheloose.com, FT

World Cup records



Arg: Argentina, Aus: Australia, Can: Canada, CDI: Cote D'Ivoire, Eng: England, Fij: Fiji, Fra: France, Ire: Ireland, Jap: Japan, Nam: Namibia, NZ: New Zealand, Por: Portugal, Rom: Romania, Sam: Samoa, Sco: Scotand Uru: Uruguay

Jonah Lomu burst onto the international rugby scene in the 1994 Hong Kong Sevens tournament. As an All Black, he powered into the World Cup record books with a total of 15 tries

Talismanic Englishman **Jonny Wilkinson** scored more points, played more games and slotted over more penalties and drop goals than any other World Cup player

Kicking off

The eighth quadrennial rugby union world championship kicks off on September 18 at Twickenham Stadium in London, England

Players to watch out for

FORWARDS

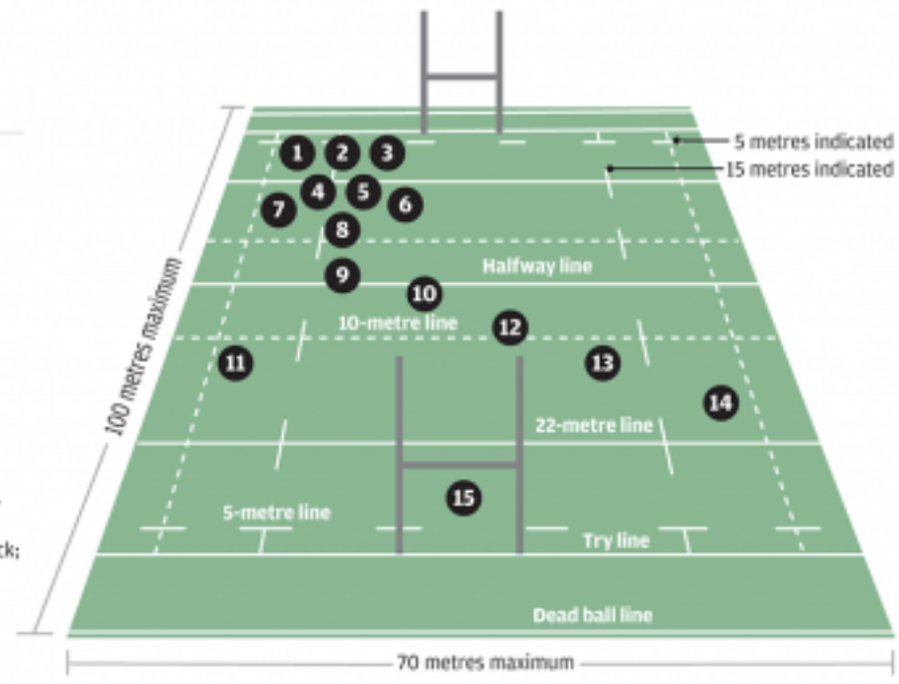
Position	
1 Loosehead prop	**Marcos Ayerza** *Argentina*
2 Hooker	**Agustin Creevy** *Argentina*
3 Tighthead prop	**Dan Cole** *England*
4 Lock	**Eben Etzebeth** *South Africa*
5 Lock	**Brodie Rettalick** *New Zealand*
6 Blindside flanker	**Mamuka Gorgodze** *Georgia*
7 Openside flanker	**Richie McCaw** *New Zealand*
8 Number 8	**Louis Picamoles** *France*

BACKS

Position	
9 Scrumhalf	**Aaron Smith** *New Zealand*
10 Flyhalf	**Johnny Sexton** *Ireland*
11 Left wing	**Jonny May** *England*
12 Inside centre	**Ma'a Nonu** *New Zealand*
13 Outside centre	**Tevita Kuridrani** *Australia*
14 Right wing	**George North** *Wales*
15 Full back	**Israel Folau** *Australia*

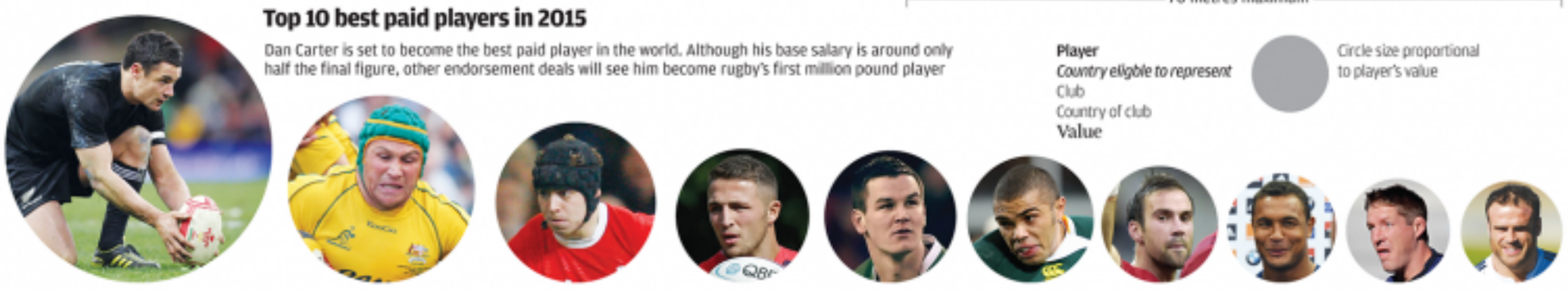
To the uninitiated rugby can look like organised chaos, but there are many complex rules and laws. Some are contentious. Some are open to the referee's interpretation. Even a player's position can be confusing.

Here are a few variations of postion titles: **Lock** second row; **Flanker** wing forward; **Number 8** 8-man; **Scrum-half** half-back; **Fly half** outside-half, stand-off, outhalf, first five-eighth; **Inside centre** second five-eighth; **Wing** wing three-quarter



Top 10 best paid players in 2015

Dan Carter is set to become the best paid player in the world. Although his base salary is around only half the final figure, other endorsement deals will see him become rugby's first million pound player



Player
Country eligble to represent
Club
Country of club
Value

Circle size proportional to player's value

Dan Carter
New Zealand
Racing Metro 92
France
£1,000,000

Matt Giteau
Australia
Toulon
France
£700,000

Leigh Halfpenny[1]
Wales
Toulon
France
£600,000

Sam Burgess
England
Bath Rugby
England
£500,000

Johnny Sexton
Ireland
Racing Metro 92
France
£494,000

Bryan Habana
South Africa
Toulon
France
£474,000

Morgan Parra
France
Clermont
France
£436,000

Thierry Dusautoir
France
Toulouse
France
£408,120

Bakkies Botha[2]
South Africa
Toulon
France
£389,000

Jamie Roberts
Wales
Racing Metro 92
France
£380,000

[1]Missing World Cup due to injury [2]Not selected by his country

Winners of the William Webb Ellis Cup

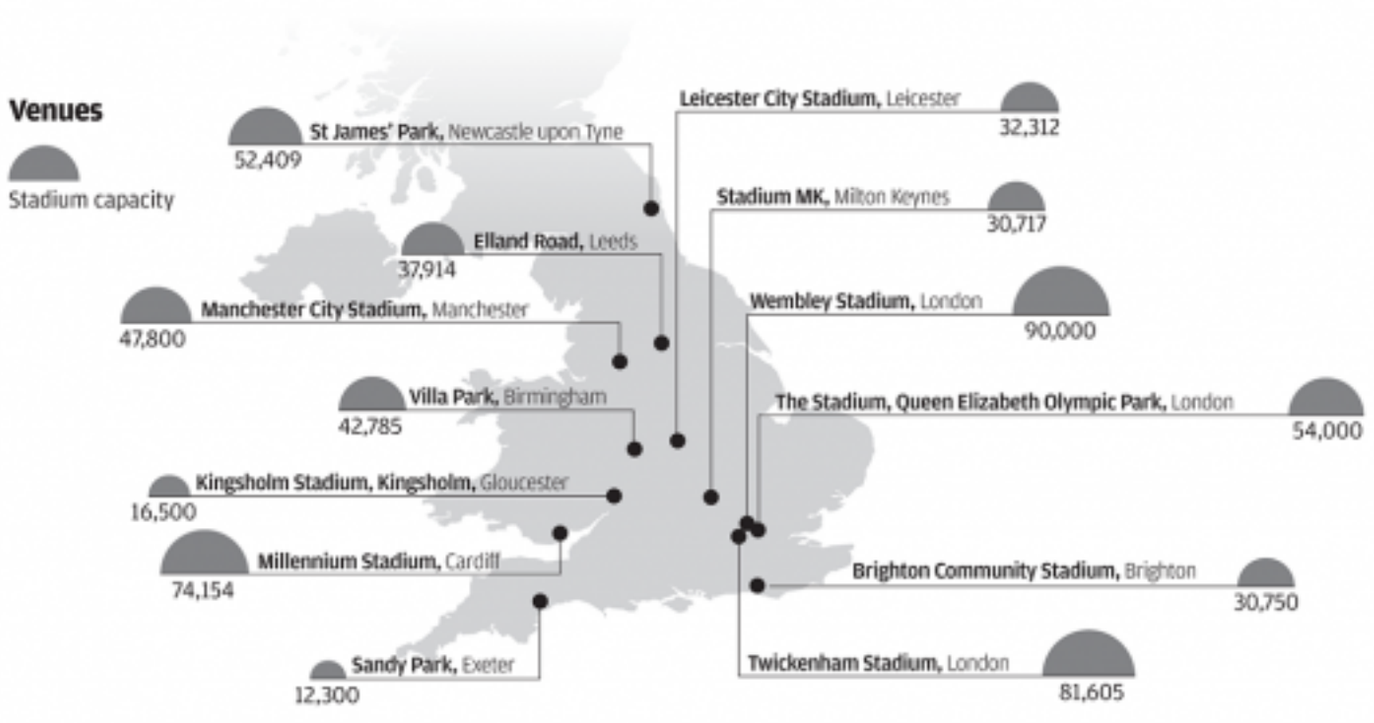
Reverend William Webb Ellis (24/11/1806-24/2/1872) is believed to have invented the sport whilst a pupil at Rugby School. The cup and the sport are named after Ellis and his alma mater

1987 New Zealand
1991 Australia
1995 South Africa
1999 Australia
2003 England
2007 South Africa
2011 New Zealand

How the World Cup winners compare

Standard deviations above/below mean Elo rating of top teams

*South Africa was either boycotted or actively banned between 1967 and 1992 due to the apartheid regime



Opening game
Sep 18, 2015 20:00 (HK time: 03:00)
Twickenham, London
England v Fiji

Bronze final
Oct 30, 2015 20:00 (HK time: 03:00)
The Stadium, Queen Elizabeth Olympic Park, London
Loser SF1 v Loser SF2

Final
Oct 31, 2015 16:00 (HK time: 23:00)
Twickenham, London
Winner SF1 v Winner SF2

SMP Graphic: Dennis Wong