

When football and rugby collide

Looking to challenge the globally acclaimed coach, Adidas paired Liverpool manager Jürgen Klopp with an entirely different trial - South African national rugby captain, Siya Kolisi.



Image supplied: Jürgen Klopp and Siya Kolisi

The collaboration saw Kolisi exchanging his hands for his feet as he received pointers from Klopp on how to bend it like a pro footballer.

The meet-up took place in Liverpool in September, and the excitement for those involved was palpable. All were curious to see what would happen when the skill and finesse of football met with the strength and power of rugby.

What type of magic would result when German precision was combined with South African flair? Would one of the finest football coaches of all time be able to unlock the South African national rugby captain's football skills? Would Kolisi be able to master a penalty kick, a corner and a free kick? What resulted was powerful sporting entertainment.

The Klopp x Kolisi friendship

After a chance meeting with Klopp one evening in Cape Town, Kolisi now considers him a close friend, saying, "It's always fun to be in Jurgen's presence. He has a way of making you feel so good about yourself. What people might not know is that he has a great sense of humour and he's very family orientated."

As a Liverpool fan, Kolisi admires Klopp's ability to bring out the best in his players. "He focuses on building people up and has the ability to bring a diverse group of players together, which is something I really admire. In many ways, he reminds me of Rassie [Erasmus]."

"Jurgen is big on positive reinforcement. He loves a hug. And I love a hug too, so it's high fives and positive vibes whenever I'm around him," Kolisi said.

When it came to the shoot, Kolisi said he was "very aware of training with Klopp". "I kept thinking: 'I can't mess this up.' But then again, I taught him how to pass the rugby ball."

As much as there are differences between footballers and rugby players, Kolisi shares an important similarity: "We may be different on the field in terms of skills and physicality, but off the field, we all feel the same sense of responsibility to give people hope, to let them know that they can achieve anything they dream of."

It was a great afternoon with sporting icons, but the question remains: Was Klopp able to improve Kolisi's football skills? "I'd say yes, but he'd probably disagree," Kolisi said.

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