



Traduction Simon Dixon

AND NOW? PRESTIGE, MOTIVATION, MONEY AND .. FACING THE ALL BLACKS

### **Being there is the greatest part**

Dreams have come true after the dramatic 80 minutes in Montevideo. Not even the fact that our ticket to France was guaranteed by defeating Uruguay by the slender margin of one point could take anything away from the enormous achievement of The Wolves (Os Lobos) on the pitch and the commitment shown by other people behind the scenes. The flip side of this historic and unparalleled qualification is the immediate and inevitable question: "What results will we be able to achieve in France?" The answer is as simple as this: We're going to be there, in France, which is in itself something splendid. People are going to be talking about Portugal and its rugby team, and with a special degree of attention not just because it is the only team in the competition with an amateur character, but also because of the positive impact of playing in France where there is a major population of Portuguese immigrants – France, a country in which rugby is one of the most popular of sports and where the impact of this World Cup, to be held between 7 September and 20 October, will be inescapable and will touch on all sectors of French society. And not forgetting the financial boost to be expected from the IRB simply because of our presence.

Fortune has placed us in Group C and our players know they will have to confront the might of New Zealand – without doubt the dream of every rugby player and a game that will be a milestone in every player's career, irrespective of the result (regrettably, we can expect the worst...). As one player already said, "Running out onto the pitch, seeing those black shirts, facing up to the Haka, I can't wait. I'll be able to show my kids that I played against the All Blacks." Although the games are not loaded with the same emotion, Scotland and Italy represent unbeatable opponents which will undoubtedly inflict defeats on us that our national public opinion is going to have to accept as being in the natural course of things. The series of games is rounded off by Romania, the one opponent against which Portugal could compete because we already know them as an adversary in the European Cup of Nations and we have beaten them in the past.

Of the 20 national teams qualified for the World Cup, Portugal is the only one with an amateur character, which is itself a historic fact.

Even if defeats are the most probable result against New Zealand, Scotland and Italy, victory is possible when it comes to Romania.