

SPORTING LEGENDS: DAVID CAMPESE

SPORT: RUGBY

COMPETITIVE ERA: 1981 - 1996

David Ian Campese (born October 21, 1962 in Queanbeyan), also known as Campo, is an Australian rugby union footballer.



Campese is considered one of the greatest wings in the game but also occasionally plays full back. He was capped by the Wallabies 101 times, and holds the world record for the most tries (64).

He was voted player of the tournament at the 1991 Rugby World Cup after scoring nine tries in test. He is famous for his "goose-step" - a hitch kick motion which left opponents stumbling to try and tackle him.

Originally a rugby league footballer, Campese switched codes in his late teens. His big break was the 1982 tour of New Zealand when he was called up by the Wallabies after a mass walkout by Queensland players on the eve of the tour, but also due to an outstanding performance in a under-19 test against New Zealand just prior to a key selection meeting.

He made his mark in the first Test outfoxing the legendary Stu Wilson and scoring an opportunist try late on in a defeat to the All Blacks. In 1983 he had the honor of helping Australia to their second Hong Kong Sevens title in a row defeating Fiji in the final. With Alan Jones as coach, the Wallabies toured the British Isles in 1984.

They managed to win the "Grand Slam" with the side which included Campese as well as Mark Ella, Nick Farr-Jones and Michael Lynagh. Campese scored his only try of the tour in a crushing win over Scotland in the final Test at Murrayfield.

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Campese was one of Rugby's toughest competitors.

He also scored a brilliant try from his own half in the Barbarians match, humiliating Welsh centre Robert Ackerman with his speed and trickery.

Campese was immense during the 2-1 series 1986 tour triumph over the All Blacks securing the Bledisloe Cup on New Zealand soil for the first time since 1949.

On back of this fine achievement the Wallabies were the favourites for the inaugural Rugby World Cup in 1987. An injury dented Campese's campaign and Australia's hopes were dashed with a semi final loss to a Serge Blanco-inspired France.

Australia entered a slump after the World Cup and suffered heavy defeats in the Bledisloe Cup and in 1988 Campo's opposite number John Kirwan gave him a runaround on many occasions, a mauling that severely affected his confidence.

Campo later made a habit to read "Winners Take Chances", a poem given to him by his mother, before every match to motivate him after seeing his son's performance. He capped off the year scoring five tries leading a weak Wallabies side touring British Isles and Europe.

Campo's misfortunes continued as one of the lowpoints of his career came in the deciding third Test of the 1989 British Lions tour of Australia in Sydney. Campese threw a suicidal goal line pass to Greg Martin which the full back had no chance of catching. Lions winger Ieuan Evans gleefully capitalised on the error and downed the ball in what became known as "Campo's Corner." That moment went down in rugby history and Campese was heavily criticised for that incident.

His nickname was "Too Easy (Campese)". The phrase 'Easy Campese' has passed into the vernacular in Australia, meaning something like no worries.

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Scott Burton's Final Thought

David Campese was the embodiment of Australian Rugby Union for more than a decade, and always represented his country with pride.

Sure, he made the occasional mistake, but his consistency of excellence always far outweighed any rare errors.

I'm not a massive Rugby fan, yet I have always followed the progress of the England Rugby Union Team. David Campese was always a big thorn in England's side during the 80s and early 90s, and I have a lot of respect for the way he could turn games around almost by himself.



Campese embodied skill, power and speed all in the same package.