

NEWS FROM:



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Isdell's \$1m donation kicks off UCT rugby stadium project

A donation of US\$1 million (about R7 million) by alumnus Neville Isdell to the Rugby Club on 7 March 2010 has allowed the University of Cape Town to dust off its long-nursed plans to build a rugby stadium.

Isdell – the former chairperson and chief executive of the Coca-Cola Company, and a longstanding, dedicated donor to UCT coffers – made the official announcement of the donation at a function after the UCT-Stellenbosch Varsity Cup clash on 7 March.

The award, he said, was inspired by his rugby-playing days as a UCT student in the 1960s. (According to records, his game was marked by “speed, aggressiveness and team spirit”.)

Isdell said: “I look back on my life and my career, and certainly the time that I spent here at varsity was absolutely pivotal in terms of the person that I became, good or bad. The most meaningful part of that was actually playing rugby.” Those experiences urged him to keep in touch with the Rugby Club at UCT. The Varsity Cup, he added, had upped the stakes for university sport.

That sentiment was echoed by UCT Vice-Chancellor Dr Max Price – especially, Dr Price pointed out, in light of the Ikeys’ surprise performance in the competition. “We do want to be a university that educates all-rounders, and we see the value of sport in the development of students and future leaders,” said Price.

UCT had not yet decided on a site for the stadium, reported Price. He noted that it would unfortunately not be on campus. (Because of heritage concerns, the rugby fields on Upper Campus cannot be upgraded to house the new stadium.) But, particularly considering the Varsity Cup, the stadium would be located within range of the university.

UCT had already appointed a project implementation committee, which was scouting the surrounding area for options, confirmed John Critien, the executive director for properties and services at UCT. The university has also appointed an architect and a quantity surveyor.

However, more fundraising will be required before any work can begin on the stadium, which will be developed in stages. The first will cost about R12 million.

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Caption for attached photo: UCT alumnus Neville Isdell (left) hands a cheque for \$1 million to Vice-Chancellor Dr Max Price on 7 March 2010. The donation will go towards the construction of a UCT rugby stadium.

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