

Jonathan Agnew



The autumn rugby internationals kick off next week with some outstanding fixtures ushering in the much anticipated World Cup. In fact this weekend marks exactly a year until the final is staged at Twickenham. England's first opponents on Satur-

day week are New Zealand, and this will be considered the stand-out fixture but frankly Wales against Australia and Ireland v South Africa are equally appealing.

With four big matches in as many weeks – Samoa being the fourth opponent – this will be an early indicator to assess where England stand with 12 Tests to go, and they will be particularly keen to beat Australia, who they will face in the World Cup.

This run-in does allow some scope for experimentation and although critics have suggested that England have chosen a cautious squad, the inclusion of the 27-year-old Fijian-born Semesa Rokoduguni not only adds flair to the wing, but also one of those background stories that helps to keep sport in its proper perspective.

Aged 19, Rokoduguni left his village close to the Fijian capital, Suva, to serve in the British Army. In his first week in Afghanistan, a marine on his patrol stepped on a mine and lost both legs. It was a defining moment for the youngster who vowed that he would make the best of any opportunity that came his way. Now a Lance Corporal with the Royal Scots

Dragoon Guards, Rokoduguni regularly visits the rehabilitation unit at Headley Court where injured servicemen are treated – a humbling experience that would surely benefit any professional sportsman who believes that life is tough.

'You miss a tackle, you can get it right next time', he says. 'Make a mistake in Afghanistan might mean someone loses their life. Rokoduguni's rise has been meteoric, since he

signed professionally for Bath only two seasons ago. Six feet tall, he has added three stone to weigh in at more than 16 stone to become another of the modern-day units that can sprint as fast as ever, but shrug off tackles and bounce

off opponents. Just how do you stop someone like that, for goodness sake?

One thing is for sure, the All Blacks can perform the most chilling and passionate haka of their lives at Twickenham on Saturday week but even on his international debut, it will not faze Rokoduguni who knows better than most that sport is hardly a matter of life and death.

How do you stop a 16-stone, six foot unit like Rokoduguni?

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