

# Visa Rugby Legend

## Philippe Sella



Philippe Sella holds a unique place in the history of rugby union as one of the world's most capped international players. During Philippe's 13-year international career, he won 111 caps for France, and when he retired from international rugby in 1995 he was the world's most capped player.

Philippe made his international debut on the wing for France in 1982 against Romania, but after his first few games he moved to centre, a position in which he would earn international acclaim. He quickly became a regular in the French team. A natural athlete, he was blessed with a strong physique and a classic pass. When these were allied with his majestic lines of running, Philippe had the ability to devastate any defence, while also being a notable tackler himself. He was once described by former French coach Jacques Fouroux as having "the strength of a bull but the touch of a piano player". Philippe soon established himself as one of rugby's greats.

Philippe competed in three Rugby World Cups, including the inaugural Rugby World Cup 1987 where France was defeated in the final by the All-Blacks, and the Rugby World Cup 1991, when France was beaten by traditional rival England. It was at the Rugby World Cup 1995 in South Africa that Philippe won his 111<sup>th</sup> and final cap for France in the third-place play-off final against England, when France ran out 19-9 winners. He retired from international rugby following the Rugby World Cup 1995 tournament.

Philippe remains an icon of French rugby as France's most capped player and the third-highest try scorer in France's history with 30 tries. The most notable of these were the successive tries he scored in the 1986 Five Nations Championship, becoming only the fourth player in the tournament's history to score a try in each match. Only Scotland's Gregor Townsend has achieved this feat since. Philippe still holds the French record for the number of appearances in a Five or Six Nations Championship (50), and, along with Serge Blanco, France's record for tries in the tournament (14). France won or shared six Five Nations Championships during Philippe's career including a Grand Slam victory in 1987.

The majority of Philippe's domestic career was spent with leading French side Agen, helping them to win the French national championship in 1982 and 1988. At the start of rugby's professional era in 1996, Philippe joined English Premiership side Saracens, and in 1998 helped the Saracens win England's Tetley Bitter Cup. He would retire from rugby later that year.

Philippe's place in rugby history was assured when he was inducted into the Rugby International Hall of Fame in 1999. Following his retirement Philippe set up his own marketing and communications company, and is also a television pundit for French channel *Canal+*. He is also president of "les Enfants de l'Ovale", an educational and sporting association in favour of underprivileged childhood ([www.enfantsdelovale.org](http://www.enfantsdelovale.org)).

