

1981 Springbok tour

Page 7 – Tour diary

MCH, 2017u

‘A war played out twice a week’

The Springboks were officially welcomed to New Zealand on the Poho-o-Rawiri marae in Gisborne (just as they had been in 1965) on 19 July 1981. Despite all the pre-tour rhetoric and debate, few anticipated that the country was about to descend into near civil war, ‘a war played out twice a week’ as the Springboks moved from game to game.

22 July, Gisborne – the scene is set

The first game against Poverty Bay on 22 July saw tour supporters and anti-tour protestors confront each other, face to face, for the first time. On the field, the visitors won 24–6. As was to be the case for the entire tour, however, the real action was taking place on the streets surrounding the venue. See the related film clip and more about the Gisborne game.

25 July, Hamilton – game cancelled

The game against Waikato was called off in front of a full house at Rugby Park. A ground invasion by several hundred anti-tour protesters and rumours that a light aircraft had been stolen from Taupō and was headed for Rugby Park proved too much for the authorities. See the related film clip and more about the Hamilton cancellation.

29 July, Molesworth Street, Wellington – an ‘eruption of violence’

The Springboks defeated Taranaki in New Plymouth, but the real action that day occurred on Molesworth Street, outside Parliament in Wellington. Police used batons on anti-tour protesters for the first time. Former Prime Minister Norman Kirk’s prediction eight years earlier that a tour would result in the ‘greatest eruption of violence this country has ever known’ seemed close to being realised. See the related film clip and more about the Molesworth Street protest.

15 August, first test, Christchurch

The All Blacks won the first test 14–9. Protest action at the ground and around the country led one policeman to recall that it was ‘sheer luck’ that no one was killed that day. See the related film clip and more about the Christchurch test.

29 August, second test, Wellington

The tourists squared the series with a convincing 24–12 victory at Athletic Park. The streets surrounding the ground resembled a battlefield as major protests occurred.

Action began early that morning when 7000 protesters gathered in central Wellington. Groups blocked the motorway exits into the city as well as road and pedestrian access to Athletic Park. Police responded by forming human wedges to allow rugby spectators through. There were many scuffles as protesters were dragged away. Some rugby fans lashed out at them with fists and boots and once more police batons were used on suburban New Zealand streets.

Elsewhere there was disruption to television coverage.

12 September, third test, Auckland

The All Blacks won the deciding third test 25–22. It was a game when ‘all hell broke loose’ as protesters fought with police outside the grounds and flour and smoke bombs were dropped from a Cessna aircraft inside. See the related film clip and more about the Auckland test.

Itinerary of games

See also: interactive map of the Tour for more detail about each game.

Date	Game	Score
22 July	v Poverty Bay at Gisborne	24–6
25 July	v Waikato at Hamilton	Cancelled *

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1981 p.178

Related maps



Waikato Stadium, Hamilton

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page 155

3rd



29 July	v Taranaki at New Plymouth	34-9
1 August	v Manawatu at Palmerston North	31-19
5 August	v Wanganui at Whanganui	45-9
8 August	v Southland at Invercargill	22-6
11 August	v Otago at Dunedin	17-13
15 August	v All Blacks at Christchurch	9-14
19 August	v South Canterbury at Timaru	Cancelled *
22 August	v Nelson Bays at Nelson	83-0
25 August	v New Zealand Maoris at Napier	12-12
29 August	v All Blacks at Wellington	24-12
2 September	v Bay of Plenty at Rotorua	29-24
5 September	v Auckland at Auckland	39-12
8 September	v North Auckland at Whangarei	19-10
12 September	v All Blacks at Auckland	22-25

* The games scheduled for Hamilton and Timaru were called off for security reasons. You can find out more about each of the games on our interactive map.

HOW TO CITE THIS PAGE

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