



COMPETITIVE EDGE

How does a World Cup Final place impact the sales of rugby shirts? NPD investigates



Who would have thought four months ago that England would knock Australia out of the 2007 rugby union World Cup and France would send New Zealand home before the semi-finals? It was a stunning result for the French, the host country for the competition for the first time in its relatively short history.

But it was a rejuvenated England side that took the smiles off the French supporters' faces, putting the hosts out of the competition as Brian Ashton's team booked themselves a place in their third World Cup Final. It was

England's second in succession and waiting for them were the formidable South Africans, a team that demolished England two games into the tournament.

Performance

So how have the home nations' performances of late impacted the sales of rugby apparel in Great Britain? In the last 12 months to June 2007 2.3 million units of rugby apparel was sold (see chart), a figure that is down versus sales in the 12 months to June 2003, the year of the last Rugby World Cup.

However, both of these periods are pre-World Cup and therefore only likely to predict the base level of interest in rugby apparel before tournament fever takes hold.

In 2003 sales of rugby apparel started to pick up at the back end of the third quarter, but it was the fourth quarter when sales rocketed. This was in part due to the competition starting in October of that year, but also a direct result of England's performances throughout the competition, all the way to winning the final against Australia.

Sales in October to December 2003 reached a massive £40 million in a single three-month period, a level not reached since.

As the NPD Group awaited sales reports for the third quarter of 2007, there was some hope that sales would have picked up, particularly towards the end of the quarter as the 2007 competition started a full month earlier than 2003.

Support

Diehard fans would have been purchasing their replica shirts to show support for their team whether they were travelling to France for the tournament or watching their team in their local bar or at home in their sitting room.

At the very end of the third quarter, it was expected that sales of England and Scotland shirts would have risen further as fans of both teams learnt of their advancement into the quarter-finals.

Such progression these days is well covered in the daily press, particularly when results far exceed expectations, helping to increase awareness among borderline rugby followers and other



consumers. This hopefully led to a positive impact on additional shirt sales for the two teams.

And further still into October, as England's performances in the quarter-final and semi-final games should have added revenue to the rugby shirt market for Nike and the England shirt.

Surely England booking their place in the final would have delayed any discounting from specialist retailers, who would have certainly rubbed their hands in unexpected increased sales as a result. Another bonus for the sports industry.

Want to know about how major tournaments affect your category? Contact the NPD Group on 01932 355580. 

