

Chapter 4 – SPORTS IN FRANCE

Part 1 – Olympic Spirit

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The Olympic Games – an introduction



The modern Olympic Games are an extension of the Olympic Games of Ancient Greece. They took place between 8th century BC and 4th century AD but disappeared a certain time ; they were renovated by the French baron Pierre de Coubertin in 1894. The CIO became the organizer of the Olympic Games.

The first new Olympic Games took place in Athens in 1896 and the Winter Games were created in 1924. There were cancelled during the two World Wars.

Initially, the Olympic Games were forbidden for elite athletes. Women were allowed to compete since 1900.

There are, since 1896, in the Summer Olympic Games, an amount of 49 different sports composed by between 1 and 48 tests. Paralympic Games began after 1988, in order to allow to the wounded from World War II to play to the Olympics Games.



The last Summer Olympic Games took place in Paris. It was the third time that Olympic Games took place in Paris. For them, the athletes used of a lot of pre-existing infrastructures.

The opening ceremony took place on the river Seine. Even if Russian and Belarusian weren't allowed to participate, their athletes could participate under the neutral banner. The Games themselves took place on the Seine, on the 'Stade de France', in Saint-Denis, in the Olympic Aquatic Centre, in the 'Velodrome Stadium', on the Bridge of Alexander III and a lot of other famous places and cities in whole France. The Olympic Cauldron was lit in the Tuileries Garden by Marie-José Pérec and by Teddy Riner.

An amount of 5 084 medals were distributed during the Games. The United States of America ended first, with 40 gold medals and an amount of 126 medals ; the second-place returns to China, with 91 medals altogether, the third place comes to Japan, with 45 medals ; France is in 5th position, with 64 medals among which we count 16 gold medals, 26 silver medals and 22 bronze medals.

Judo

The mixed team judo event at the Paris 2024 Olympic Games took place on August 3, 2024, where the French team won the gold medal by beating Japan in an exciting final.

France has been strong in judo for many decades. The country really stood out from the 1970s and became one of the strongest nations in the world thanks to great champions and a strong judo culture.

The team:

Teddy Riner (+100 kg)

Romane Dicko (+78 kg)

Maxime-Gaël Ngayap Hambou

Sarah Léonie Cysique (-57 kg)

Joan-Benjamin Gaba (-60 kg)

Clarisse Agbegnenou (-63 kg)



Teddy Riner's record is impressive and includes:

11 world judo titles.

3 individual Olympic gold medals (London 2012, Rio 2016, Paris 2024)

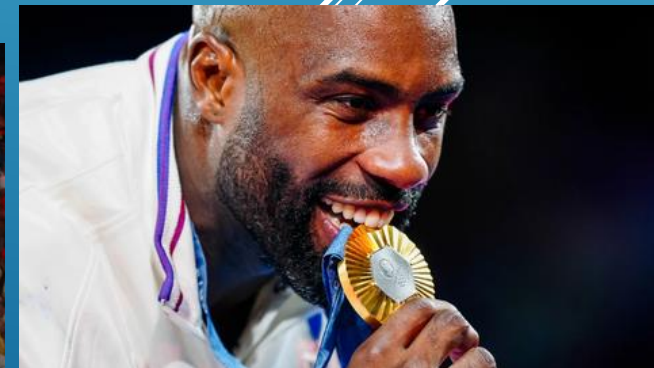
2 mixed team Olympic gold medals (Tokyo 2021, Paris 2024).

2 Olympic bronze medals (Beijing 2008, Tokyo 2021).

5 European championship titles.

These achievements make him one of the greatest judokas in history.

In total, France earned **16 golds**, **25 silvers**, and **22 bronzes**, so, France is the most decorated country in the world in this sport at the Summer Olympics.



Léon Marchand has emerged as a rising star of French **swimming**, boasting an impressive collection of World Championships, NCAA, and European crowns. Marchand's profile rose significantly before the Paris 2024 Olympic Games. He succeeded in uniting the French by winning several gold medals.

The LA28 Olympic Games use the 'Super bloom' as a symbol. It represents how athletes train for years, and when the conditions are right, they achieve something extraordinary, just like flowers blooming all at once. "The Super bloom mirrors the spirit of the Olympic and Paralympic Games. Athletes train their entire lives for a moment on the greatest stage in sports. When the conditions are right, everything comes together and something extraordinary happens." Marchand's rise illustrates how years of discipline, setbacks, and incremental progress culminate in moments of brilliance.

Another key aspect of Léon Marchand's impact lies in how his success reflects a broader transformation in modern sport: the fusion of individual excellence with collective identity. While swimming is often seen as an individual discipline, Marchand's victories transcended personal achievement. In the wake of the Paris 2024 Olympic Games, his performances became symbolic moments shared across the nation, turning races into collective emotional experiences. His composure, humility, and consistency helped shape a figure that people could relate to beyond sport, reinforcing the idea that elite athletes can embody national values without losing authenticity.



THE BADMINTON, AN OLYMPIC SPORT

Badminton has been an olympic sport since 1992 in Barcelone. The first event included men's singles, men's doubles, women's singles, women's doubles and in 1996, mixed doubles was added. Around 70 countries have participated in Olympic badminton competition.

For the results, China has dominated the medal table, winning a significant number of medals





Lou Jeanmonnot, French biathlon athlete

Aged 27 years old and 1,67 meters tall, Lou Jeanmonnot is a French Biathlon athlete and one of the 2026 Milan-Cortina Olympic games winners.

She studied in a sport section in Eastern France which allowed her to balance her studies and her sportive rise at the same time .

She started biathlon at the age of 12 and has been using the same carabine since her 14's. She participates in the entirety of the biathlon events such as the sprint, the pursuit, the individual, the mass-start as well as the different relay formats (female, mixed and single mixed).

She first entered the international sportive experience in 2015 at the age of 16 years with her participation at the European Youth Olympic Festival in Bürserberg.

She is worldly famous for her shooting accuracy skills, known for the precision of her shots, sometimes even reaching scores of 20/20 or 10/10 during competitions. She has established herself as one of the best shooters on the circuit with a success rate of 92%. Since she's an extraordinary shooter, one of the most interesting things about her is that she has been initiated to rifle shots thanks to a shooting range installed in the attic of her town hall. She is often described as an athlete having biathlon and shooting "in the skin".

She's also a very talented skier, for instance, she won a cross-country skiing race at the 2023 Martin Fourcade Nordic Festival.

Her 2023-2024 sportive season has been marked by her contraction of the covid-19 virus that constrained her to cancel her participation in some races.

Lou Jeanmonnot's Olympic medals and achievements:

- 2 gold medals in the world championship in 2024 and 2025
- the big crystal ball in 2026, and 6 other little crystal balls
- she received 61 podiums (with world championship and Olympic Games included)
- In 2025/2026, she won the World Cup, and in 2023/2024 and 2024/2025 she was 2nd.
- At the beginning she participated in the 2021 World Cup, where the audience discovered her.

After crossing a big part of Europe for its competitions (as in Finland, Austria,

Recently, during the Olympic Games in Milan Cortina, Lou Jeanmonnot won different medals in various categories, mainly in the relay (and mixed) race where she won the gold medal !

In the relay mixed race, she has shared her victory with 3 other people who are : Quentin Fillon Maillet, Julia Simon and Eric Perrot, by managing to get the time to 1:04:15.5.



Palmarès			
Compétition	Or	Arg.	Bro.
Jeux olympiques d'hiver	2	1	1
Championnats du monde	4	0	3
Coupe du monde (gros globes ind.)	1	2	0
Coupe du monde (petits globes ind.)	6	1	2
Coupe du monde (épreuves indiv.)	15	11	10
Championnats d'Europe	0	1	1

One personal story (challenge, comeback, controversy, or inspiring moment)

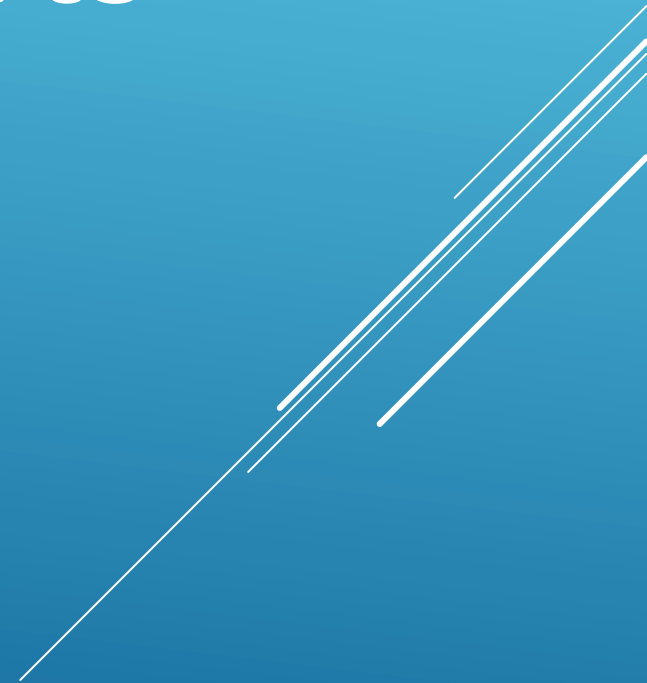
Now let's talk about a fun fact about Lou Jeanmonnot. During her childhood right before a competition at Plans of Hotonnes, a ski station in France, she was really stressed about the competition and her performance. At this moment her first coach named Ludovic Bourgeois, came near to her and said : "If you do what you're able to do, you will win". Without any doubt she won the competition and this moment reflects who she is.

In addition, thanks to some articles we learnt that she is right-handed, so at the beginning we can assume that she always uses her right hand when she practices. Otherwise, she elaborates on a new tech, she uses her left hand to bow. That's incredible!! Moreover, without focusing on the sport aspect, for herself, tattoos are part of her body. She considers them as accessories even if we can't discern them, when she has her sports equipment on. Each year, she does a new tattoo that's like a fun habit for her. You will probably never guess who Lou Jeanmonnot's biggest supporter is. Her dog, Inouk is currently a star on social media . Dress up before each sport event, it's Lou's sunlight.

Eventually, let's mention another fact about her, but it's not fun at all. She is on the bone marrow donor registry, a cause that is very dear to her, especially since the death of the French biathlon athlete Emmanuelle Claret who passed away of leukaemia



Part 2 – Popular sports in our country



FOOTBALL - SOCCER

Football is the most popular sport in France. It brings together millions of players and supporters of major clubs such as Paris Saint-Germain (PSG) and Olympique de Marseille (OM). The French team, winners of the 1998 and 2018 World Cups, occupies an important place in the country's culture. Thanks to its successes and popularity, football provides the French with a bonding experience and a source of great emotion.

Famous French football players

Zinedine Zidane (born in 1972) is one of the greatest players in the history of world soccer. An elegant and decisive playmaker, he made his name at Girondins de Bordeaux before joining Juventus, where he won several major titles and established himself among the world's best players. He became a legend at Real Madrid, with whom he won the 2002 Champions League, scoring a legendary goal in the final. Winner of the 1998 Ballon d'Or, he led the French national team to the 1998 World Cup title and then to the 2000 European Championship, and remains an absolute icon of French soccer.

Michel Platini (born in 1955) is one of the greatest players in the history of French and world soccer. An exceptional playmaker, he began his career at AS Nancy-Lorraine, with whom he won the Coupe de France in 1978, before shining at AS Saint-Étienne. He reached the pinnacle of his career at Juventus in Turin, one of Europe's greatest clubs, where he won numerous titles, including the European Cup in 1985. A three-time Ballon d'Or winner (1983, 1984, 1985), he led the French national team to victory at Euro 1984, finishing as the tournament's top scorer. There are also other great names in French soccer, such as the current coach of the French national team, Didier Deschamps, defensive midfielder Emmanuel Petit, Lilian Thuram, and Marcel Desailly. Among the modern generation are players such as Karim Benzema, a Ballon d'Or winner; Kylian Mbappé, now a forward for Real Madrid who is building an exceptional reputation; and Antoine Griezmann, the all-time leading scorer in Atlético Madrid's history.



Kylian M Bappe -
Finale de la Coupe du
monde de football
2018 - Wikipedia





Antoine Dupont 2023

Rugby is very popular in France, especially in the south where it is part of the local culture.

Teams like Stade Toulousain attract many supporters and create real passion in stadiums.

Matches in the Six Nations Championship are widely watched on television and bring together millions of fans.

Famous players like Antoine Dupont also contribute to the popularity of this sport and inspire younger generations to play rugby.



Tennis is a very popular sport in France, even if it is a bit less played than football or rugby.

Prestigious tournaments like Roland-Garros in Paris attract thousands of spectators every year and millions of TV viewers around the world.

This event is one of the most important in world tennis and makes the French very proud.

Tennis is appreciated for its elegance, intensity, and respect between players.





Judo is very popular in France, especially among young people. It is one of the most practiced sports because it teaches discipline, respect, and self-control. Many children start judo at a young age in local clubs, which makes it very accessible. Judo is also appreciated because it is not only about strength, but also about technique and mental control.

A big reason for its popularity is Teddy Riner, one of the greatest judokas in the world. He has won many Olympic and world titles, and he inspires a lot of people in France to try judo. His success has made the sport more visible and respected.

For all these reasons, judo plays an important role in French sports culture.

SWIMMING

There are three types of competitive swimming: racing, artistic swimming and team sports.

Racing involves covering a certain distance as quickly as possible. In artistic swimming, competitors must perform specific artistic routines. Team sports require mastery of both swimming and other physical skills, such as those needed for water polo.

At the Olympic Games, there are many different disciplines: butterfly, backstroke, breaststroke and front crawl, as well as events combining these four swimming styles.

During the last Olympic Games, there were four tests for the swimming sports :

Sportive

Artistic

Dive

Water-polo

In 2024, 400,000 people were members of a swimming club, according to the French Swimming Federation.

Swimming remains in the top 10 most popular sports in France, ranking seventh.

But what exactly is swimming? And why do the French love it so much?

Swimming is a sport that involves moving through the water using various movements. In France, it is very popular because it is accessible to everyone, good for your health and has no impact on the joints. It also helps you relax and strengthens the heart and muscles.

At the 2024 Paris Olympic Games, we won 51 medals, comprising 37 men's medals and 14 women's medals.

This sport is divided into four main strokes: butterfly, backstroke, breaststroke and front freestyle. Here are a few French records in these strokes:

- Maxime Grousset (1) became world champion in the 50m butterfly at the 2025 World Swimming Championships in Singapore, with a time of 22.48 seconds, breaking the French record.

- Pauline Mahieu (2) is a backstroke specialist, having won 11 French championship titles in the 200m backstroke.

- Antoine Viquerat (3) has been crowned French champion in the 50m, 100m and 200m breaststroke on several occasions, notably in 2019, 2020 and 2021. He has held the French record for the 50m breaststroke in a standard-size pool with a time of 26.93 seconds since 2025.

- Florent Manaudou (4) has also been crowned world champion in short-distance events such as the 50m and 100m freestyle.

- During the same Olympic Games, the french participant Léon Marchand (5) wins the gold medal for the butterfly stroke and the breaststroke competition and for the four swimming test ; France win four gold medal and was third on the rank, behind the United States of America and the Australia.



Cycling is very popular in France for several reasons.

Firstly, it is both a sport and an everyday activity, which means many people can practice it easily. Some people cycle to stay fit, while others use their bikes to go to school or work, especially in big cities where bike lanes are increasing.

Another important reason is the Tour de France, a very famous race that attracts millions of viewers every year and inspires many young people to start cycling. France also has beautiful landscapes, such as mountains and countryside roads in the Pyrenees for instance, which are perfect for riding a bike.

Finally, cycling is becoming more popular because it is cheap, healthy, and environmentally friendly. For all these reasons, cycling is an important part of French culture and daily life !



Hiking

Hiking is a very popular activity in France. It consists of walking in nature, on marked trails, alone, with family, or with friends. This sport is accessible to everyone because it does not require special skills or expensive equipment, apart from good shoes and a backpack. It is also highly appreciated for its health benefits: it allows people to exercise, breathe fresh air, and relax.

Hiking is so widespread in France partly because of the diversity of its landscapes. It can be practiced in many places such as the French Alps or the Pyrenees for mountain lovers, but also along the coast with the famous Sentier des Douaniers in Brittany. It is also possible to hike in quieter regions such as the Massif Central or in forests like the Forest of Fontainebleau.

In France, hiking is very well organized thanks to the French Hiking Federation, which is responsible for marking and maintaining many trails. This allows hikers to find their way easily and enjoy their activity safely.



Since the emergence of the first video games between 1947 and 1952, this field never stopped growing. The games evolved they were initially just some pixels that the player can move, but with the widespread adoption of these kind of game, they became more and more sophisticated.

The videogames were first not created to organize competition, but in 1972, one of the most prestigious university of the USA, Stanford university, set up a competition around the game ‘Spacewar!’ . And we can name this event as the creation of the :

Esport

France has a really big esport industry and a huge esport community. Indeed, in 2016, the association “France esport” sprung up. Its aim is to help the esport world progress, and to develop the influence of this booming field.

But, esport became influent thanks to the social medias including YouTube and Twitch. The first biggest teams and players used those platforms to show the competition because, in the beginning, there weren’t any match on the TV.

“The French Monster”, everybody that like playing video games knows this name. It is the nickname of Corentin Houssain or Gotaga (his pseudonym). He is one of the pioneer of the esport. First, because he played for one of the first French team : Vitality (currently one of the biggest European teams). He has perfected his skills on video games like Call of Duty. He played some competitions with Team Vitality and everyone knew his name because he was impressive. When Gotaga was in a team everybody knew how the match will finish : Gotaga will win. But that’s not only his unrivaled regularity that made his reputation, his style of play did make it. Gotaga always push, he has an aggressive game play and he just destroy his enemies in every fight. We can notice a famous clip of his career that every video game player knows : [Vidéos Bing](#)



In conclusion, the esport is developing in France and across the globe but many person still don’t consider the competition on video games like sport.

Part 3 – National sports awards



In France, the best athletes can receive several awards. For instance, they can be rewarded during events like the “*Cérémonie des Champions*”, where their performances are celebrated.

They can also receive official distinctions from the government, such as the “*Légion d’honneur*” or “*Ordre National du mérite*”, like Teddy Riner.

In football, one of the most famous awards is the “*Ballon d’Or*”. This award was created in 1956 by the French magazine “*France Football*”. Every year, it is given to the player considered the best in the world based on their performances and achievements during the season. Originally, only European players could win the “*Ballon d’Or*”, but today it is open to all players in the world. The winner is chosen by a group of international journalists who vote for the best players. Winning the *Ballon d’Or* is a huge honor for the one who win it. Some of the most famous winners are Lionel Messi, Cristiano Ronaldo and the French player Karim Benzema, who won it in 2022.

This award is important because it inspires many young players to dream big and work hard. But more generally, awards are important because they recognize the athletes’ hard work and dedication. They show that success in sport is valued in society and strengthen national pride, as athletes represent France on the international stage.



Part 4 – Sport and National identity



How does sport unite people in France ?

Sport plays a major role in uniting people in **France**. Football especially brings together people from different backgrounds, cultures, and regions.

The national team, **France national football team**, represents diversity and unity. When big matches happen, millions of people watch together in homes, bars, or fan zones. Sport creates a sense of pride and belonging. Around **20+ million viewers** watched major World Cup matches in France. Over **2 million people** gathered on the **Champs-Élysées** after victories.

One of the strongest examples is the **2018 FIFA World Cup** victory : France won against Croatia; huge celebrations took place across the country and people of all ages and origins celebrated together in the streets. There is a unity in a diverse country, a creation of a national memory and a national pride after difficult times. To explain with numbers, the 2nd World Cup victory (after 1998), and meet 19.3 million TV viewers for the final. Finally, millions celebrating nationwide

Can sport or entertainment influence politics or social change?

Yes, sport and entertainment can have a strong impact on society in France. Victories can improve national morale.

The team is often seen as a symbol of a multicultural nation. France Players like **Kylian Mbappé** inspire younger generations.

Politicians often associate themselves with successful teams. Athletes sometimes speak about racism, inequality, or poverty.

Sport can open discussions about identity and inclusion. Athletes increasingly use their platform for social causes. Sport helps promote values like equality and respect.

In France, sport is more than entertainment, it is a powerful force that unites people, creates shared national moments and influences society and sometimes politics. Events like the 2018 World Cup show how sport can bring an entire country together, even if only for a moment.

Some links to learn about sports and national identity :



Sport and national identity: rugby in France

In France, rugby holds a quite special place. It is not the number one sport in terms of practice or pure popularity, football remains largely ahead, but it has a very strong image in the collective imagination. Historically, rugby has mainly developed in the Southwest, in cities like Toulouse, Bayonne or Pau, where it is almost part of the local identity. But today, this regional image has changed: when the XV of France plays, it's the whole country that follows. We see it in the ratings, in the atmosphere around the matches, and in the importance that some players like Antoine Dupont have taken.

This sport is associated with values such as the collective, commitment or solidarity. Through two major international events, 2023 Rugby World Cup and Six Nations Championship, it is clear that rugby can today create a true sense of national unity in France.

I. The 2023 World Cup: an event that brought the country together

The 2023 World Cup had a particular impact because it was taking place in France. For several weeks, rugby was everywhere: in the media, in discussions, in the host cities, and even among people who do not usually follow this sport.

The opening match against New Zealand immediately started this dynamic. The French victory created a very strong enthusiasm, because it gave the impression that something great could happen.

The Stade de France in Saint-Denis is shown in a panoramic view, captured just a few minutes before France and New Zealand entered the field for the opening match of the 2023 Rugby World Cup. This image, taken on September 8, 2023, is the original work of Erwan Harzic.



The figures show how much this event has gone beyond the simple sports framework:

- More than 2.4 million spectators in the stadiums
- 1.33 billion viewing hours worldwide
- In France, 164.5 million cumulative viewers on the matches of the Blues

Even after the elimination against South Africa in the quarter-finals, there was a form of national communion. The disappointment was immense, precisely because many French people had projected themselves with this team. What is interesting is that a lost match can sometimes strengthen the collective attachment even more: for several days, everyone was talking about the same match, the same referee decisions, the same feeling of injustice.

II. The Six Nations Tournament: a sporting tradition that brings together each year

If the World Cup remains an exceptional event, the Six Nations Championship has another strength: it returns every year, and it is precisely this regularity that makes it a very important event in France. Every winter, for several weeks, the tournament creates a form of collective habit. Even people who do not follow rugby all year round watch the big matches, especially when the XV of France plays important posters.

The 2026 edition showed it again. France won the tournament with 4 wins in 5 matches, finishing first ahead of Ireland, with 21 points to 19.

This success was marked by several impressive performances:

- victory 36–14 against Ireland, who immediately launched the tournament
- victory 54–12 against Wales
- victory 33–8 against Italy
- a spectacular match against England won 48–46, in an extremely offensive meeting

The only French defeat took place against Scotland, with a very intense match lost 50–40.



What makes this tournament particularly popular is that each match immediately counts in the public debate: a victory relaunches an entire country, a defeat immediately provokes discussions about the team's level, tactical choices or ambitions for the future. In 2026, the tournament attracted more than 35 million viewers throughout the competition, which confirms that rugby now holds a very strong place in the French sports landscape.

But the most memorable moment remains obviously the last match against England, what is traditionally called the Crunch. Crunch is probably the most symbolic rivalry of European rugby. Between France and England, there is obviously a sporting rivalry, but also a much older history: political, military, cultural rivalries... All this gives the match a particular intensity. In France, beating England often has an additional symbolic value. It is never a match completely like the others. In 2026, this dimension was further reinforced by the scenario: in an extremely tense end of the match, Thomas Ramos scored the penalty for victory at the last second, offering not only the match, but also the tournament to the XV de France. The final score, 48–46, perfectly sums up what this match represents: from intensity, uncertainty, tension to the end.

III. The place of rugby today in France: a strong generation and great ambitions

Today, French rugby is going through a very ambitious period.

First because the French championship, the Top 14, is considered one of the most competitive in the world. Clubs like Stade Toulousain regularly dominate in Europe.

Then because the XV of France has a particularly strong generation. Players like Antoine Dupont, Grégory Alldritt and Thomas Ramos have become true national figures. Antoine Dupont, for example, today goes beyond the framework of rugby: he embodies a form of French sports excellence, with a very positive image.

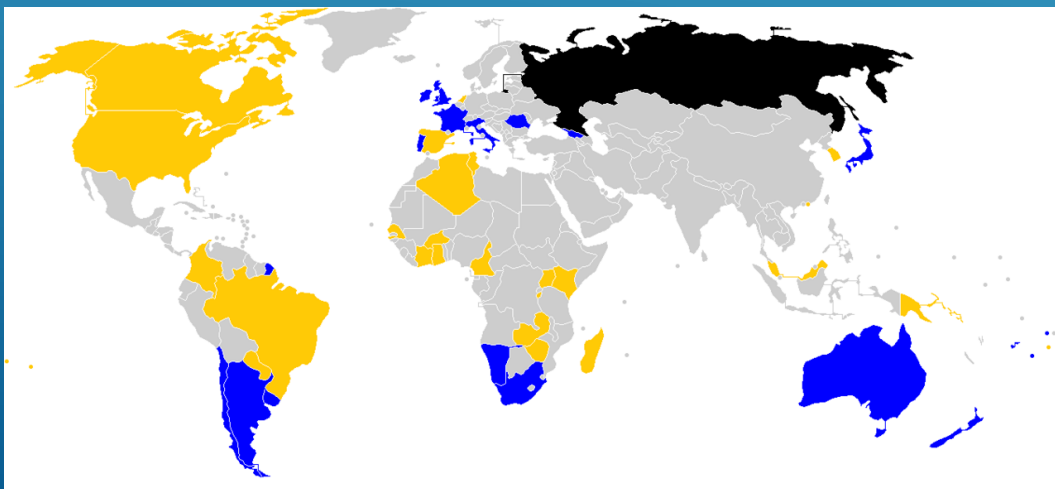
Rugby also attracts because it gives the image of a collective, disciplined, demanding sport where the individual always seems to be at the service of the group.

And above all, there is a very strong expectation: France has never won the World Cup, despite several finals. This absence of a world title creates a particular ambition: each major competition is lived with the idea that a historical page can finally be written.

Conclusion

Rugby shows very well how a sport can participate in national identity. During some matches, it creates a very visible unity: millions of people watch together, react together, hope together.

But it also creates strong national rivalries. Faced with England, Ireland or South Africa, there is always an additional emotional dimension. These rivalries remain positive: they fuel the intensity of the sport and give even more value to victories.



« Countries qualified for the 2023 rugby world cup ». This image shows the situation as of March 30, 2022. The image, dated March 30, 2022, is an original work by Maxdemadrid