



## Les Kiss

The former Australian Kangaroos and Queensland Origin winger turned Rugby Union coach guru. Currently the head coach of Irish side, Ulster, as part of a long coaching stint in Europe.

Les Kiss joined Ireland as defence coach in 2009 and, by the end of his first season in the job, the men in Emerald Green jerseys were Six Nations and Grand Slam champions. The Grand Slam victory was Ireland's first in 61 years.

Five years later – in March 2014 – Kiss, the former Australian Kangaroos and Queensland Origin winger-turned-rugby union defence coach guru, played a significant role in Ireland claiming a second Six Nations championship when the men in Emerald Green scored a thrilling 22-20 victory over France in Paris.

And then one year later – in March 2015 – Ireland retained the Six Nations crown with a 40-10 win over Scotland in Edinburgh, fighting off final round challenges on points difference from England and France.

Kiss' reputation as rugby's best defence coach was therefore clearly intact at the end of the 2015 Six Nations championship.

In its five matches, Ireland allowed its opponents only 56 points, compared to England (100), Wales (93), France (99), Scotland (127) and Italy (182). The Irish were also the second highest points scorers in the championship with 119.

Kiss, who played 100 first-grade rugby league games on the wing for the North Sydney Bears and later coached the London Broncos, made a successful transition to rugby union coaching in 2001, having been recruited by the South African Springboks as defence coach.

Kiss' input was largely instrumental in the national team conceding only 11 tries in the same number of Test matches that year. In that year's Tri Nations championships, the Springboks had easily the best defensive record with least tries and least points conceded.

The following year Kiss was given the opportunity to further expand his influence with three South African Super 12 teams – the Stormers, Cats and Bulls. He also provided assistance to a number of Currie Cup teams.

Returning to Australia in 2003, Kiss teamed up with Australia's 1991 World Cup-winning coach Bob Dwyer at the NSW Waratahs, providing expertise in defence and video analysis.

His association with the NSW Waratahs developed further after that under head coach Ewen McKenzie, leading to assistant coach roles specialising in defence and backs strategy. Kiss was also appointed assistant coach of Australia A from 2003 to 2007, assistant coach of the Australian under 21 team in 2003 and head coach on the NSW Waratahs development tour to the United Kingdom and Ireland in 2006. He has also had coaching experience in Japan, assisting IBM in 2003 and 2008.

During his six seasons with the NSW Waratahs, the team consistently had the best defence record in Super Rugby – a key factor in the Sydney-based team reaching the finals in 2005 and 2008 and semi-final in 2006.

Former Wallaby coach Bob Dwyer says of Les Kiss: "Les works easily, in a relaxed, but authoritative manner. He has excellent man management skills and work ethic. His ability to present his thought process to players is equally excellent. At the same time, he is an excellent listener, a great team learner and thirsty for additional knowledge. He contributes in a frank, positive and constructive manner in the team environment of the coaching group".

In 2013 when Declan Kidney's reign as Ireland head coach finished, Kiss was appointed interim head coach for Ireland's summer tour of North America, winning both Test matches. Later, when Joe Schmidt was appointed head coach, Kiss was reappointed assistant coach for another three years.

So highly is Kiss regarded in Ireland Rugby that following the resignation of Ulster head coach Mark Ansbcombe and director of rugby David Humphreys in mid-2014, he accepted an invitation from Ulster to become interim director of rugby to allow for a full review of the province's coaching structure before new appointments were made. Kiss combined his Ireland duties with his new role at Ulster during this period.

Kiss is contracted to Ireland until the 2015 Rugby World Cup. Afterwards, he will take up the Director of Rugby role with Ulster.

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