

ITV commissions Grand Slammers

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Brand new series sees England Rugby World Cup Winners tackle rugby behind bars

Captain Martin Johnson, Jonny Wilkinson, Lawrence Dallaglio, Phil Vickery, Jason Robinson, Will Greenwood, Ben Cohen, Mike Tindall and Matt Dawson - each an England Rugby World Cup-winning legend who together as part of their best ever team, tasted glory in their country's finest moment on a rugby pitch, lifting the William Webb Ellis trophy.

Now, this group of legends who made such an unforgettable contribution to England's sporting history are back together for the first time two decades on from their triumph... only this time it's different.

Twenty years after they led England to victory in that unforgettable final in Sydney against Australia, members of the team are going behind bars to face a unique challenge, in a new two-part series, which will land during this year's Rugby World Cup, with the tournament also to be shown exclusively on ITV.

Grand Slammers, a 2x90 series, produced by Remarkable Factual (a Banijay UK company), will see the sporting heroes enter HMP The Mount prison – home to one of the only remaining rugby pitches inside an adult male English prison – to attempt to build and train a team of inmates strong enough to compete against a formidable rival, the Australians.

The series will offer a vivid insight into the power of sport to change lives as the England legends open up to inmates about how rugby had a profound impact on them during formative periods and gave them a purpose in life.

The legends experience clashes, confrontations as well as offering encouragement about how the sport could make a difference for each inmate, as they show their charges the spirit of rugby and its broad appeal with all the camaraderie, intensity, emotion, buzz and laughter that comes with being part of a team focused on a common goal, beating the Aussies...

The finale of the two episodes will see our legends play alongside the inmates they've trained to recreate the historic Rugby world cup final from 20 years ago...this time against a team of ex-pat Australian rugby players.

In response to statistics which show that a staggering 50 per cent of all prisoners reoffend within 12 months of release, Grand Slammers will explore how channelling their energy into team sport can have a positive effect on the lives of prisoners whilst also lowering their chances of reoffending post release. This entire project would not be possible without the support from HMP The Mount's governor, John Gormley as well as the Ministry of Justice.

Grand Slammers is commissioned for ITV by Kate Teckman, Head of Development, Factual Entertainment.

Kate said:

“In this new series we'll see some of the greatest sporting heroes England has ever produced reunite on the pitch for the first time in 20 years to go into a prison and build a rugby team with men who live their lives behind bars. For some of these England legends, rugby presented a positive pathway and an opportunity to fulfil their potential. So, with re-offending rates from ex-prisoners at an alarming

level, these World Cup winners are engaging with young men who've made big mistakes to show them how the game they love can offer the possibility of taking positive steps to move forward. At a moment when rugby will be in the spotlight, during this autumn's Rugby World Cup, Grand Slammers will provide a revealing insight into both England's legends and the power of the sport that has defined so much of their lives."

Grand Slammers was developed by Matt Winter and Executive Producers for Remarkable Factual are Helen Simpson, Tim Allsop, Jo Smith and Kitty Walshe.

Kitty Walshe, CEO Remarkable Factual and RDF, said:

"Grand Slammers would not be possible without the collective efforts of John Gormley and his staff, as well as our incredible sporting heroes who won the hearts of the nation 20 years ago. Everyone involved passionately believes that rugby is a sport that has the power to change people's lives and what we see unfolding across the series is often raw with a range of emotions surfacing as our England legends bring their full commitment to their work with the inmates."

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