

What is that thing on the back of the Springbok jerseys at #RWC2023?

By [Lindsey Schutters](#)

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Rugby players are now sporting more than just their team colours on the field. The padded modules strapped to their backs are part of a sophisticated biometric tracking system that provides valuable insights for coaches and trainers.



Source: x.com

Here's what you need to know

What Is It? The module, called the Apex Pod, is often referred to as a GPS tracker and combines several sensors in a compact unit. It includes multi-satellite GNSS antennas, an accelerometer, a gyroscope, and a magnetometer. Additionally, it may be connected to a separate heart rate monitor. Newer versions also have ultra-wideband (UWB) chips inside.

What does it do? Coaches and trainers receive real-time data transmitted wirelessly from the modules and this information helps track player performance, fatigue levels, and impact during tackles. These insights inform coaching strategies, player substitutions, and training adjustments.

Who makes it? The systems used by rugby players is manufactured by [STATSports](#) and Sports Performance Tracking (SPT). These companies provide advanced athlete monitoring devices designed with input from leading practitioners at the world's biggest sporting institutions.

Who developed the technology? STATSports was first to market with the Viper Pod and the company was founded by [Alan Clarke](#), a data scientist and former touring drummer who played with The Rolling Stones, and Sean O'Connor in 2008.



Nike reveals new innovative team kit for the Springboks

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The Irish company updated the rudimentary Viper Pod with the Apex Pod that integrates the latest technologies on the market, including an 18Hz GPS (10Hz Augmented GNSS) receiver that works with Google Maps, a 952Hz accelerometer with enhanced rotational force tracking, and Bluetooth LE.



Bottom line

So, when Jacques Nienaber tells the media that he has years of data on each player that includes acceleration, tackles made, time between tackles and how many minutes they've played, he literally does. Each player is assigned their own Apex Pod and they use that to track training sessions as well as games.

ABOUT LINDSEY SCHUTTERS

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