

ALAN IRVING MCLEAN:-NONDESCRIPTS: KENYA REGIMENT: EAST AFRICA 15's: SCORPIONS RFC: KENYA 15's; RFUEA PRESIDENTS 15's: LIBERIA 15's: & KENYA CENTRAL PROVINCE RUGBY FOOTBALL UNION 15's



[Irvin Allan Mclean, Kenya 15s Captain 1956, Biko Adema; Kenya 7s 2009, Sir Paul Okong'o, Mike Andrews; Kenya 1s Captain 1969. Front: Brian Granville-Ross; Kenya 1s captain 1964.](#)

Irving Allan Mclean was the oldest living former playing member of Nondescripts RFC having joined in June 1953. On the Kenya & East Africa rugby scene only Mike Robert Thomas Mabbs who debuted for the Nairobi Railway Club in 1951 aged 21 played here earlier. Mabbs is still going strong having turned 95 last month.

Irving Allan Mclean was born on 15 May 1926 in Natal, South Africa. He attended Durban High School where he learnt rugby and immediately after joined the South African Air force as a navigator or gun runner and participated in World War II. After the war he relocated to Scotland and played rugby for Edinburgh Warriors XV's tenants at the famous Murrayfield Grounds.

'I moved to Kenya in June 1953 and attended a Nondescript versus Kenya Harlequin game at the Civil Service Club, Nairobi. This was a Nairobi District & Championship match. At the end of the

game I was given a form to fill and that's how I ended up joining Nondescripts as all the Kenya Harlequin team had left' reminisced Irving Mclean in a 2018 interview with this writer.

'A one-man club man as he went on to serve Nondescripts for the next 70 years as a player, administrator and member until his death late last year, posited William Cherry Nondescripts club historian.

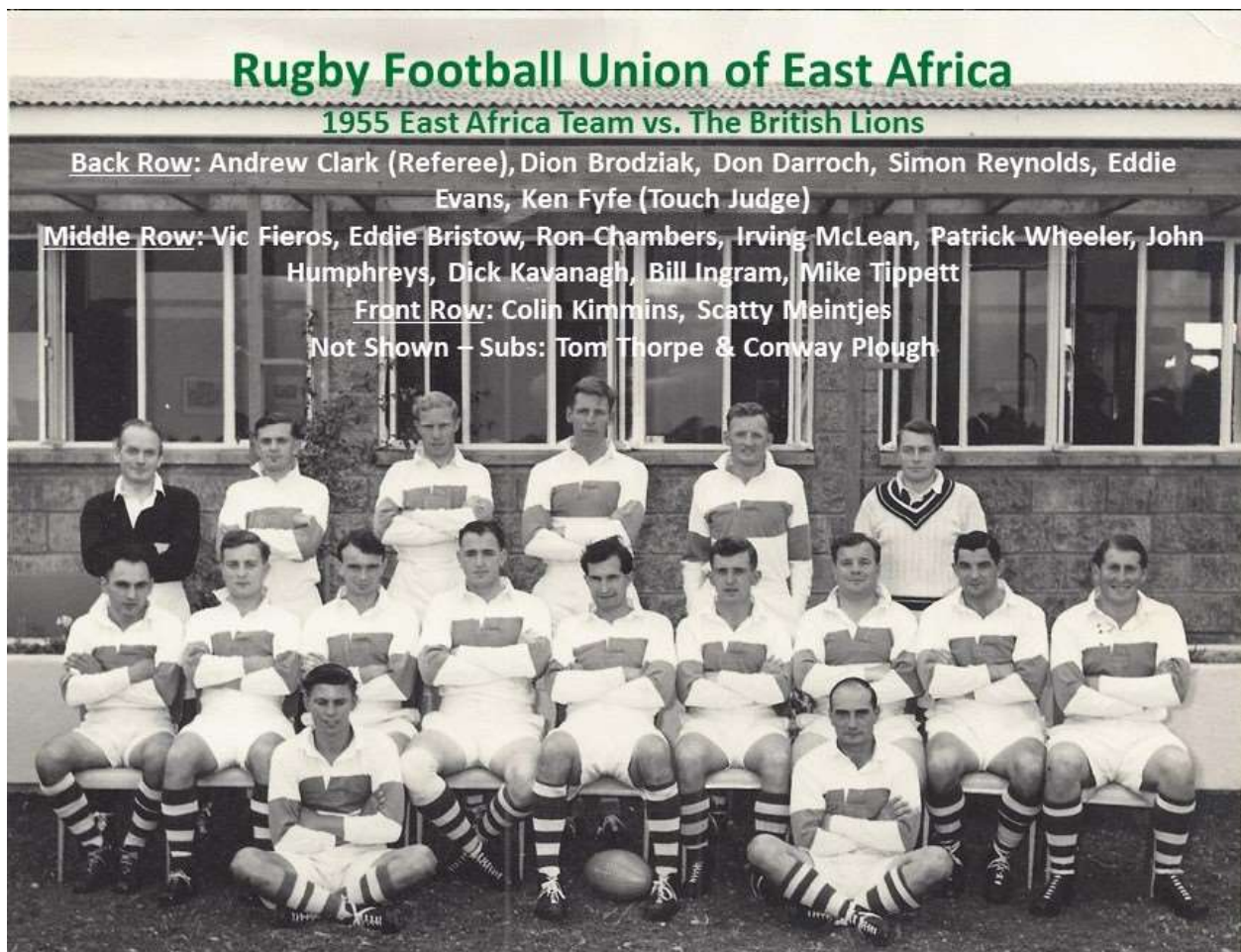


Irving was named captain of Nondescripts the following year and led them to Enterprise Cup victory against Eldoret RFC with a 13-6 win on 15 August 1954. Matheys Johannes Uys'Stompie' Jones, the former Eldoret captain was the first RFUEA guest of honour and presented the Cup to Allan Irving Mclean the Nondies skipper.

He made his debut for Kenya against Tanganyika at the Arusha Gymkhana Sports Club in Arusha on 10 July 1954 in a match won by the visitors 15 points to 9. That game was used to select the pioneering East Africa Tuskers team on a tour of the Copper belt in Northern Rhodesia and he was named captain.

He was unlucky to miss the tour to Northern Rhodesia (renamed Zambia from 1964) as a very important matter cropped up 'his forthcoming wedding to Mary, recorded the history book *Rugby Football in East Africa 1909-1959*. Jimmy Todd of Londiani RFC replaced him as captain.

Irving finally debuted for East Africa XV's against the British & Irish Lions XV's on Wednesday 28 September 1955 at the opening of the Rugby Football Union of East Africa Grounds (RFUEA), Ngong Road Nairobi.



The team sheet for East Africa was-Backs 1 Vic Fieros,Arusha 2 Don Darroch, Nondescript,3,Dion Brodziak, Nakuru 4 Gert Petrus Meintjies, Eldoret 5 Edwin Bristow, Nondescript 6 Ron Chambers,Tanga 7 Cecil Kimmins, Gloucestershire.Forwards-8-Willie Ingram, Londiani,9-John Humphreys, Nondescript 10-Richard Kavanagh,Dar-es-Salaam 11-Edwin Evans,Londiani,12-Irving Mclean,Nondescript,13 David Simon Reynolds, Nakuru/Uganda Kobs,14-A.M.Tippet,Rifle Brigade and15-Peter Wheeler of Londiani & Captain.Reserves-16-Conway Plough, Mombasa, 17-Tom Thorpe,Eldoret/Kenya Police. Irving played at lock but wore shirt number 12.

Those were the days both Kenya & East Africa wore shirt numbers 1-7 for the backs and 8-15 for the forwards. East Africa lost 12-39 with Ron Chambers scoring a drop goal and 3 penalties.

‘Irving Maclean established himself as one of the greatest locks of his generation due to his solid locking; powerful bursts and ability to win the line out ball captured the *East African Standard*.

Irving Mclean added value to his team by kicking penalties and conversions, a vital winning ingredient. The *East African Standard* for 9/7/1955 cast aspersions on his kicking ability.

The less said about Irving McLean’s attempted conversion, the better. He first captained Kenya XV’s against South African tourists Rhodes University Select XV’s on 11 February 1956 at the Nakuru Athletics Club.

Kenya lost 11-27. On 25 August 1956 Irving Allan Maclean again captained the Kenya Simba’s’ against Tanganyika Giraffe’s at the Arusha Gymkhana Club in Arusha. Kenya won that match 13-0.

Irving described captaining East Africa XV’s against the British Barbarians at the RFUEA Grounds, Nairobi on 29 May 1958 as the ‘pinnacle’ of his career. The locals lost 12-52 to the tourists. In total Irving played 4 times for East Africa XV’s the composite team made up of the best players from Kenya, Uganda & Tanzania. He played 5 times for Kenya Simba’s captaining them twice.

This was in a 2018 interview at the Nondescripts Red Lion museum with this writer.

Irving played until he was 42 in 1968 and later served on various managerial and selectorial committees for Kenya and East Africa. ‘I tried my hand at refereeing and in one game tired of the constant brawls walked off and sat in the stands. Once the two teams agreed to play without any more mischief I took to the pitch.’

An administrator as well with Kenya Central Province Rugby Football Union, Nondescripts, and Kenya Rugby Union he earned his Nondies honours caps in 1955.

Irving Mclean was Hon-Secretary of the Rugby Football Union of East Africa in 1964 and Hon-Treasurer in 1977 and 1978. ‘I had a stint in West Africa and was capped for Liberia XV’s against Sierra Leone XV’s’ continued Mclean. Irving was a giant of the game recalled Gordon Bell his Kenya Central Province RFU colleague in the late 1950s and 1960s in a 2017 interview. McLean lived in Nairobi-Kenya and on died 29 November 2023. He is survived by his wife Mary Mclean and son Chris Mclean.

BARBARIAN FOOTBALL CLUB
VS
EAST AFRICA
28TH. MAY 1958



PHOTO: G. LA'MAGNA
NAIROBI

By Paul D. Okong'o,

East Africa Rugby Historian