

Jamie Bishop, area director at Edrington Africa



By [Evan-Lee Courie](#)

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The sport of rugby is as eventful and dramatic as the passion and love supporters of the game have for it. For a brand such as The Famous Grouse, partnering their brand with a sport known for fans who usually wear their hearts on their sleeves is a move to showcase itself as a brand that embodies and celebrates the spirit of the game.



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The Famous Grouse's campaign for this year's tournament is the Spirit of rugby – this speaks to the literal fact that they are the spirit partner of the tour, but not only that, the brand espouses the spirit of rugby that lives within every fan who follows the game regardless of whether they can view it with thousands of fans at the stadium or alone at home as this year's conditions have necessitated.



Source: www.springboks.rugby

Jamie Bishop, area director at Edrington Africa (The Famous Grouse's parent company), speaks to what inspired the brand to get involved with the great game of rugby. "The Famous Grouse has more than 30 years of heritage with the sport of rugby, sharing many similarities with the sport such as skill, craft and an unwavering dedication to being the best of the best. We celebrate such common values through such partnerships."

■ **What does your job entail and what does your average workday look like these days?**

I like to think I have one of the most diverse and interesting jobs you could think of. As area director, I work with a team of 40 colleagues spread across Africa to import, market, and sell our Whisky brand across key cities and resorts on the continent.

My workday starts at 6am with some quick emails before an early morning gym session. Meetings and calls with colleagues and partners fill the day before heading back home to take the kids to the various sports they enjoy. A final blast of emails before an early bed means we can start the day on the front foot and drive on.

Every so often (and Covid-19 permitting), I get the chance to visit some of our customers and collector across Africa and of course responsibly enjoy a dram with them.

■ ***What excites you most about your role as area director at Edrington Africa?***

Above all, it's the incredible potential of Africa and what an amazing continent it is. Being able to physically touch, see and taste our products is something that always excites me and I love being able to share that passion with partners and consumers.

■ ***Can you tell us a bit about your career journey prior to your current role?***

Not your average route! I started as a professional soccer player in my native Scotland before quickly realizing I wasn't as good as I would have liked. I remained semi-professional and joined KPMG, qualifying as a chartered accountant.

I joined Edrington in 2012 and worked in both finance and strategy roles, predominantly in Turkey, Eastern Europe, and Dubai before progressing into commercial management in Russia.

After completing some project work in Nigeria and Kenya I was offered the opportunity to move to Johannesburg and jumped at the chance.

■ ***How would you define your brand?***

The Famous Grouse has been the number one whisky in the home of Whisky (Scotland) for over 40 years. You don't get more special than Scotland's favourite Scotch!

■ ***What are some of your most recent brand campaigns and the rationales behind them?***

The most recent would be the 'Spirit of Rugby' campaign that saw The Famous Grouse as the official whisky sponsor for both the Springboks and The British and Irish Lions. The rationale was to really look at the unique spirit associated with the game of rugby and the lessons we can learn from this in our daily lives and societies. We wanted to show how some of these unique behaviours we label as 'spirit' can be associated with our brand and thus why we believe the rugby occasion is the perfect time to enjoy our famous Whisky.

“ We do not remember days, we remember moments. Are you ready for yet another iconic moment in sport?

Cheers to [#TheSpiritOfRugby](#), with The Famous Grouse as the official sponsor of the British & Irish Lions 🏴󠁧󠁢󠁥󠁮󠁧󠁿 - since '97! [#CastleLionsSeries #TheSpiritOfRugby pic.twitter.com/TcPNpkeuHJ](#)— Springboks (@Springboks) [August 2, 2021](#) ”

■ **Tell us about your most successful marketing campaign.**

At the risk of sounding repetitive, I will go again for the Spirit of Rugby campaign. Given all the restrictions and barriers the team faced, achieving the point of difference we did through the association was excellent.

■ **What other sectors impact on your industry?**

The main ones would be consumer retail and the hospitality industry. This is where our consumers purchase and enjoy our product. With the recent unrest and the Covid regulations, retail and hospitality businesses have been hit hard. We want to support them into recovery and so we're always asking 'how can we work together to build back stronger?'

■ **With the Covid-19 pandemic, what are the biggest challenges when it comes to marketing?**

Now I think it's just about getting the timing and the tone of our communications right, in the light of the restrictions that apply to alcohol. Of course, we want consumers to engage and learn about our product, but we're committed to encouraging that in a responsible way.

■ **In your opinion, what do you think are the most successful channels for getting your brand message out there?**

Can I say, 'all of them'? Seriously – most channels have a role to play in the mix depending on message, target audience etc. What we can say is that in recent times we have diverted more of our mix towards social media and e-commerce platforms.

■ **When it comes to marketing efforts, what can brands no longer ignore?**

For us, the most important thing is social and behavioural responsibility around alcohol purchase and consumption. From a channel perspective, social and digital channels will continue to over-index as a consumer recruitment and information platform – particularly with the demographic projections here in Africa.

■ **What career advice would you give to aspirant young marketing professionals?**

I'd summarise those in three points:

- Trust yourself and your instincts. Data, analysis, and people can inform, but only you can decide.
- Learn from your mistakes but don't dwell on them. The world keeps moving on...
- Aim to be the hardest working person in the room. Every time.

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