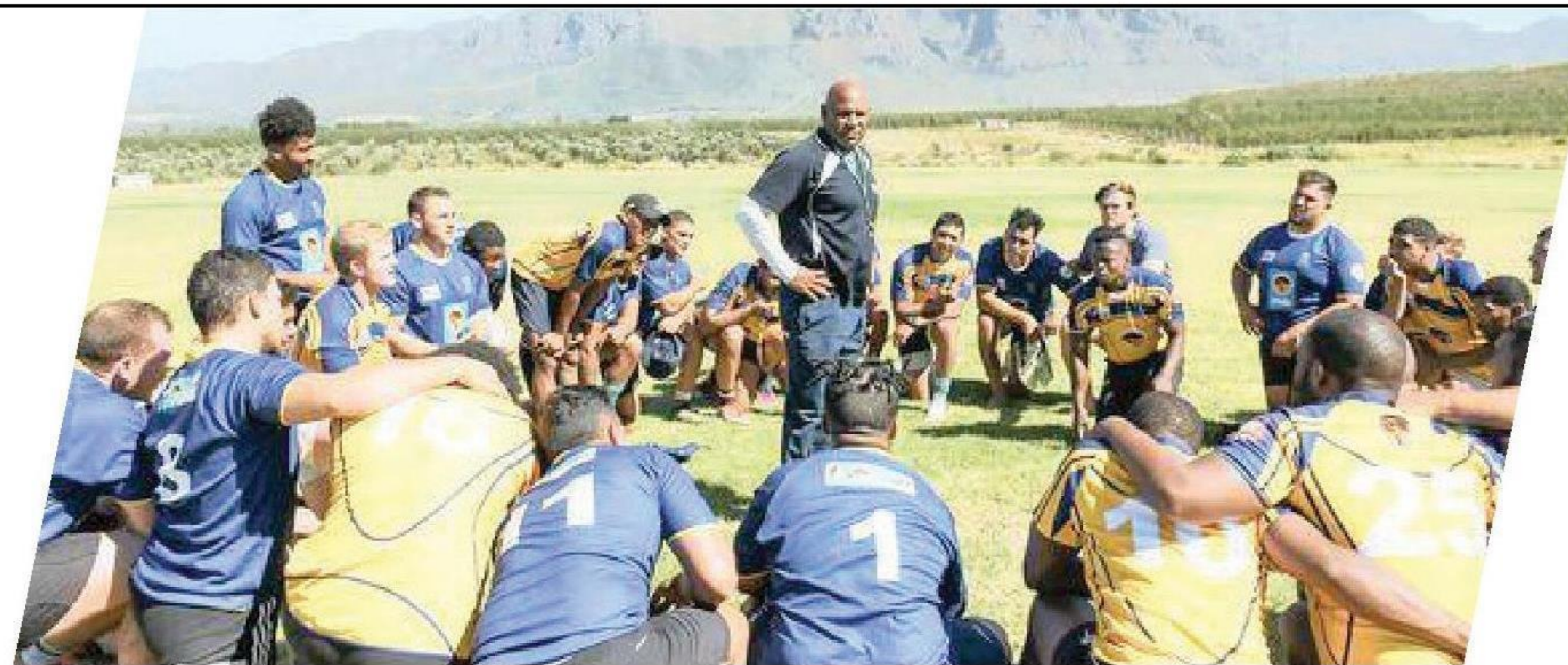


I've made no secret of the fact I want to coach the Springboks one day. What I hope, if that happens, is that nobody even notices how many black players are in my team

CHESTER WILLIAMS
 South African rugby player



ICYMI | IOL.CO.ZA
'GENTLE' WILLIAMS WAS MUCH BELOVED – UWC

"Chester was a man who belonged to the South African nation," said UWC's Rector and Vice-Chancellor, Professor Tyrone Pretorius after news broke of Williams's death.

TRIBUTE



WILLIAMS and his widow Maria. | IAN LANDSBERG African News Agency (ANA)

FROM left: Chester Williams scores against Argentina on debut for the Springboks in 1993; Williams in 2013, with Minister of Public Works and Infrastructure Patricia de Lille, then-mayor of Cape Town, and singer Vicky Sampson at an interfaith service on the Grand Parade in memory of Nelson Mandela; and Williams handing out gifts at the Red Cross War Memorial Children's Hospital in 1999. | African News Agency (ANA) Archive

Chester an 'icon of our country'

Springbok legend and coach hailed as a symbol of unity

JACQUES VAN DER WESTHUYZEN AND BULELWA PAYI

LEGEND. Icon. Gentleman.

Chester Williams was adored by South Africans and across the world. That much is evident from the tributes from many since the former Springbok rugby player's death from a suspected heart attack on Friday. He was 49.

President Cyril Ramaphosa tweeted: "Not you too, Chester? How can we forget the symbolic role you played with the team in winning us the historic 1995 Rugby World Cup.

"Your impact, both on and off the field, in forging unity amongst all South Africans remains your greatest legacy. *Siyabonga. Sithi ndlelanhle.*"

Williams starred not only as a try-scoring wing, but shaped young players' lives as a coach in Sevens, Super Rugby and,



most recently, at university level.

"Chester was a true pioneer in South African rugby," said SA Rugby president Mark Alexander. "He was a much-loved South African whose influence stretched much wider than just the rugby world... he selflessly gave back to the game after he hung up his boots."

Bok coach Rassie Erasmus, who is in Japan with the national team preparing for the 2019 Rugby World Cup, said: "This was horrible news to wake up to... I played with Chester, and many of our management team knew him well.

"Many of our players are too young to remember the 1995 Rugby World Cup, but they have grown up watching highlights and know Chester as a rugby



WILLIAMS with former Springbok teammates Rassie Erasmus, now Bok coach, and Werner Swanepoel. | ETIENNE ROTHBART African News Agency (ANA) Archive

player who became an icon of our country."

Western Province Rugby Football Union president Zelt Marais said Williams, who played 63 matches for WP between 1991 and 1998, "will be remembered as one of the greats of the game".

The All Blacks, the Boks' biggest rivals and the team they beat in the 1995 World Cup final, tweeted: "Chester was an iconic figure in world rugby, a fierce rival of the All Blacks on the field and a friend off it. You will be missed."

Williams's alma mater, Klein

Nederburg Secondary School, tweeted: "Chester united our country and gave our people hope. We salute you."

Joel Stransky, Williams' former teammate and fellow class of '95, said: "(Williams) was a true gentleman and fantastic player, gone too young. Our thoughts are prayers to his family."

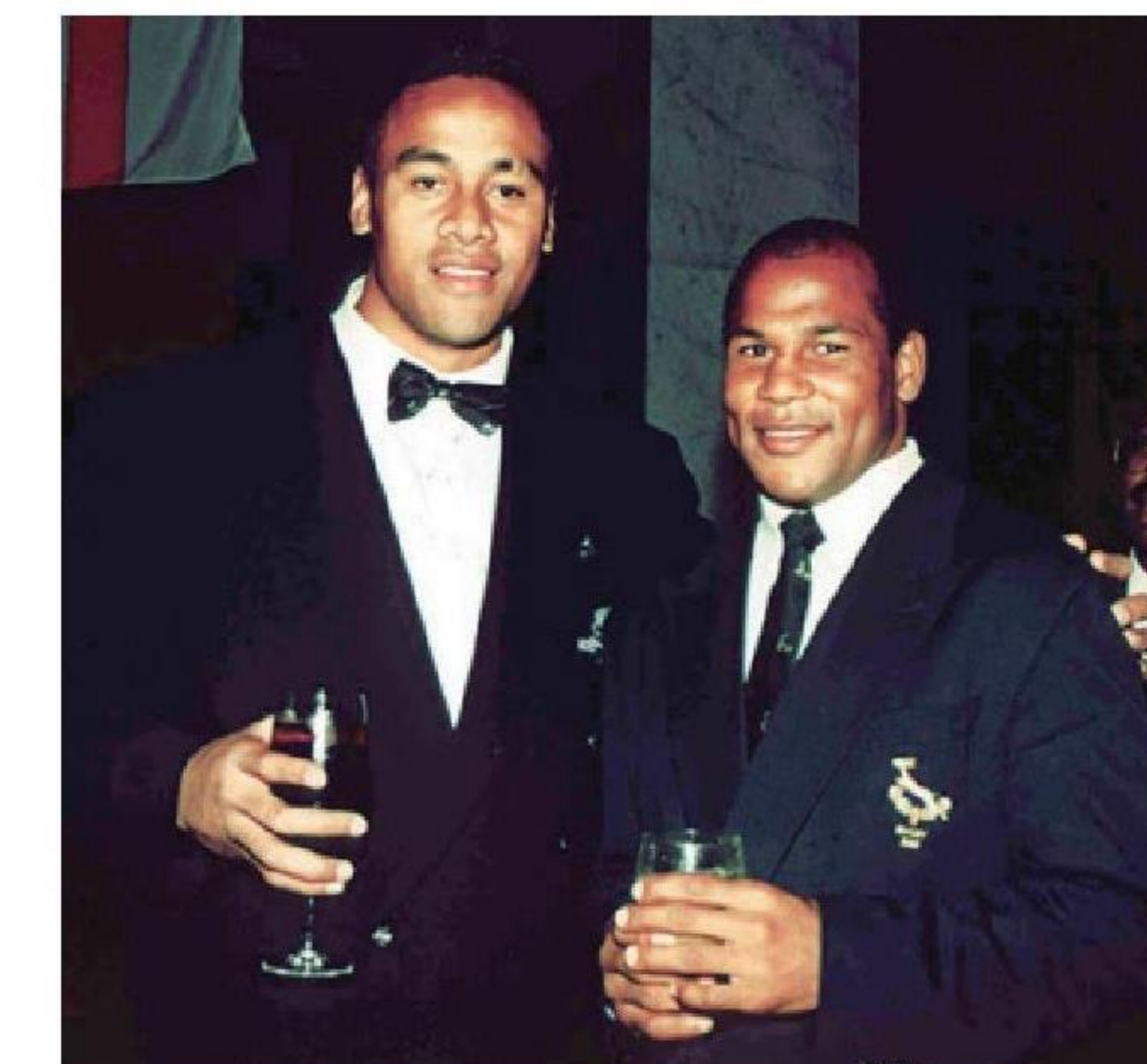
The Uganda Rugby Union, whose national team Williams coached between 2006 and 2007, said it was "deeply pained", while UWC, where Williams was head of rugby, said: "Farewell... you transcended barriers of all kinds and will always stand as a beacon of transformation, determination and talent."

Spokesperson for the Williams family, Public Works and Infrastructure Minister Patricia de Lille, said funeral arrangements were expected to be announced tomorrow.

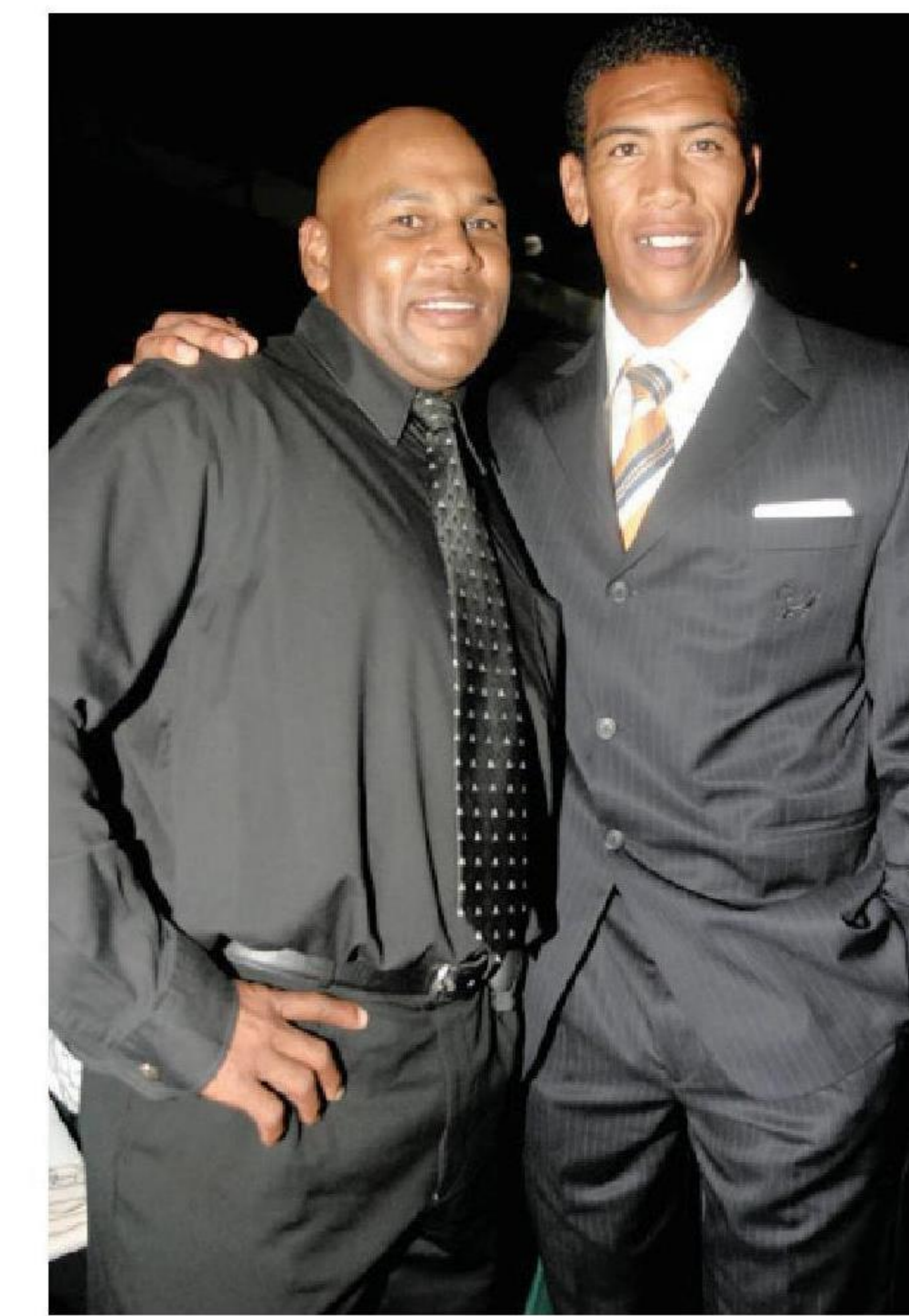
"His wife Maria and the kids have taken the news badly and so has Chester's father," she said.

De Lille said the Williamses had recently been discussing plans for his 50th birthday next year.

She added the country would forever be indebted to the "son of the soil" for his on-field exploits as well as for being a symbol of unity.



WILLIAMS and All Black legend Jonah Lomu. | DAVID ROGERS



WILLIAMS and fellow ex-Springbok Ashwin Willemse. | PABALLO THEKISO