



THE family of Springbok wing Chester Williams accept a framed rugby shirt and photograph from the UWC rugby team he coached at his memorial service at the University of the Western Cape yesterday. | PHANDO JIKELO African News Agency (ANA)

MEMORIAL

Emotional farewell to Chester Williams

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LEGENDARY Springbok wing Chester Williams was honoured at an emotional memorial service held at the University of the Western Cape (UWC) yesterday.

Williams was head coach of the university's rugby team, which he led to victory in the Varsity Shield and saw the team promoted to the Varsity Cup this year.

He died last week aged 49 following a heart attack.

Williams' captain at the 1995 Rugby World Cup, Francois Pienaar, entertainer PJ Powers and the Minister of Public Works and Infrastructure, Patricia de Lille, spoke at the memorial.

Williams' widow Maria was supported by their twins, Matthew and Chloe, her son Ryan Robson and other relatives.

Maria called her husband's team on to the stage along with their children as she thanked UWC's head of sports, Mandla Gagayi, for giving her husband a job so that he could be with his family.

"He never got the opportunity to represent South Africa as a coach. All his life he had to fight to get a position in South Africa. It is such a sad reality, but it is the reality, that's okay. He got

to represent UWC, who are our family. Mandla, thank you for giving him a job that allowed us to be part of his life," said Maria.

Maria told the team that her husband had loved being with them for the past two years, helping to guide them to greater heights.

Williams' father Wilfred said it was painful to lose a child at any age, but that he was at peace.

He said he was eternally proud of his son and the legacy he left behind.

Born and bred in Paarl, Williams emerged through the ranks of Boland rugby before being snapped up by Western Province.

He represented South Africa at the historic 1995 Rugby World Cup, where among the memories he gave the nation were his four tries against Samoa after returning from an injury that was feared would rule the country's only black player out of the tournament.

Acting rector and vice-chancellor Pamela Dube said that last week the university had been under a dark cloud following the murder of student Jessie Hess and the deaths of two academics.

Dube said the university was celebrating an outstanding mentor, coach and motivator to its students, who was a living example of human potential.

Powers gave an emotional rendi-

tion of the 1995 Rugby World Cup theme song, and her signature song *Jabulani*, bringing those in attendance to their feet.

De Lille, who is a close friend of the Williamses, said she remembered his humble spirit.

"I must thank Maria, Ryan, Matthew and Chloe for sharing Chester with us. We will forever be indebted to our son of the soil for his talented displays on the field. I must say that it is truly sad that his legendary status was at times forgotten by those who never saw the major contribution he could have continued to make in professional rugby in South Africa after he stopped playing," said De Lille.

Williams was revered and celebrated in Romania for the significant impact he made to the teams he worked with there, she added.

De Lille, who is a trustee of the Chester Williams Foundation, said the wing went out of his way to help drug addicts in his home town of Paarl.

Pienaar said news of Williams' death shortly after the loss of another teammate, James Small, had come as a shock.

Pienaar said Williams had never wanted to be the poster boy of the 1995 World Cup, he was too humble, but he had left a deep imprint on South African rugby history.