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Craven maps out new road for Rugby

CAPE TOWN, Friday: South African Rugby chief Danie Craven has denounced apartheid and urged Rugby officials to help him create "total racial integration" in sport.

The president of the South African Rugby Board said yesterday that apartheid had to be abolished if Rugby was to be steered away from the abyss and if South Africa was to re-enter the international sporting fold.

His statement came after an SARB conference here which discussed a meeting earlier this year between Rugby officials and members of the banned African National Congress.

The statement came one day before a multi-racial South African Rugby side was due to leave on a tour of South America, where it is expected to play teams from Chile, Paraguay, Uruguay and Peru.

"I have never believed in apartheid," Craven said. "If there are consequences to my statement and if they want to get rid of me then I will pay the price for what I believe in."

Craven has been criticised recently for allowing SARB officials to meet the ANC to discuss ending the sports boycott. Craven said a senior Cabinet minister had chased him out of his office with the words: "I detest you for the despicable man you are."

A defiant Craven said he would meet any African sports administrator he wished.

"I don't care who I speak to. Whether they belong to the ANC or not is not important as long as we talk sport," he said.

Craven said he had been involved in a radio interview with the exiled ANC leader Oliver Tambo, who had accused South Africa of "killing their women and children".

He said: "I told him if he stopped killing our women and children we would do likewise... If I talk to someone it does not necessarily mean I have to agree with him. I will talk to any ANC man."

Next year the SARB should set out on the the path to total integration in sport, he said.

"I now ask everybody belonging to the old board to join me... so we can start this year and next year to embark on the total integration road," he said.

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