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Australian Story: True Grit (David Pocock)

Airs Monday, February 22 and 29 at 8pm on ABC & iview – introduced by pro-surfer Mick Fanning

AN AUSTRALIAN STORY TWO-PART SPECIAL

In a television exclusive, *Australian Story* takes you inside the private life of Wallabies hero and international Rugby Union star David Pocock - travelling with him back to his homeland Zimbabwe. The program reveals the dramatic origins of the passion that so famously drives him today, both on and off the field.

Twenty-seven year old David Pocock made headlines around the world last year for his acclaimed performances during the Rugby World Cup. He is now widely considered to be one of the best players in the world.

He's just as widely known for his charity work, and for his commitment to supporting a range of social justice issues from same-sex marriage to climate change to homophobia in sport, and many more.

"David's passion is to see people in need get a fair go, like we've been given a fair go," says his father Andy Pocock.

Drawing on a rich archive of home movies, this two-part special program explores the Pocock family's idyllic life on a farm in Zimbabwe. Their lives were turned upside down in 2000, when David was just 12 years old.

Violence and political instability began to grip the country as President Robert Mugabe accelerated his process of land redistribution. White-owned land was ordered to be handed over for black resettlement. It quickly ran out of control.

"I remember being pretty scared, mostly just at night. As a kid, all the different scenarios are going through your mind," says David Pocock.

The situation came to a head for the Pococks when a neighbouring farmer and close family friend was shot dead. His son was seriously wounded after being shot nine times.

Fearing for their lives, the Pococks fled from their farm in 2001, leaving behind their extended family including David's much-loved grand-father "Pop".

"Still brings a big lump to my throat. In retrospect, it's the finest thing that ever happened for those boys," says Ian "Pop" Ferguson.

"I knew I had some trauma stuff in there that I needed to actually tell people about and talk through, but in my mind there were people way worse off. I've got this opportunity, I've got sport," David explains.

As a young teenager, David became obsessed with rugby, and by the age of 20 he achieved his dream to play for the Wallabies.

He got there through hard work and a sheer determination that both exasperated and worried his ever-supportive family.

"We didn't really get a look in. If it wasn't about his training, get out of the way, because he was just a bit obsessed at the time," brother Mike Pocock explains.

After a stellar early career, David Pocock's will and determination was tested by traumatic back-to-back, season-ending knee injuries.

Many thought it could be the end of his career. David was determined to get back on the field and, according to his coaches, by the 2015 Super Rugby season he was in perfect mental and physical condition.

"He went through a lot of pain to get to where he got to," says Brumbies head coach and Wallabies legend Stephen Larkham.

"But it was inspirational to watch him do it, and to be part of how he did it, and to see where he got to in the end."

David Pocock's partner Emma, also interviewed for the program, is more impressed by his achievements off the field.

"His physical presence and his personality can be quite jarring, because he's so big, but he's very soft and quite gentle," Emma Pocock says.

This intimate profile shows a complex man who uses his celebrity status. In doing so, he's inspired by the words of Gandhi, "Be the change you want to see in the world".

A gripping close encounter with a white rhino and her calf is one of many visual highlights of this unmissable two-part special.

INTERVIEWS INCLUDE: David Pocock, his immediate family, his partner Emma Pocock, coach Stephen Larkham.

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