Back in the old days of amateur rugby, international tours by national teams and provincial sides were common, and produced some intriguing matchups.

Host nations might pit a county team, a national (uncapped) XV, or a multi-national compilation side to face the tourists. The most famous of these compilation sides remains strong today, the Barbarians. But there have been others, the French Barbarians, various "World XV" teams, and other assemblies of high-quality players in no actual formal capacity.

The purpose was to have a bit of fun playing rugby, and maybe give the fans a show.

With the advent of professional rugby, those sorts of games, aside from perhaps the tours of the British & Irish Lions, have fallen by the wayside.

But with the IRB trying to encourage touring, and even midweek games on tour, that might come back. This spring, an old-fashioned tour reminiscent of the amateur era will come to the USA. The Golden Lions of Johannesburg, South Africa, which used to play in Super Rugby but were relegated out for this season, will tour North America, playing a US Invitational XV in Irvine, Calif. on April 13, and a North American Barbarians side in Vancouver, BC.

Our previous report that they would go on to Chicago to play their namesakes, the Chicago Lions, on April 27 was based on repeated announcements by the team that this is so - it's not. Chicago Lions president Patrick O'Reilly says that game will not happen.

It's a tour that brings back memories for those who remember the heyday of amateur rugby. However, the games themselves won't be just about playing an exhibition, it will be an important chance for many USA and Canada hopefuls to make their mark against some professional opposition.

The Lions will get to expose themselves outside of South Africa, and to play enough games for their fans to follow them while they work to get back into Super Rugby. It will be interesting to see if Todd Clever, who played two season for the Lions in Super Rugby, will suit up against them on the tour.