



TESTOSTERONE DOESN'T COME WITH AN INSTRUCTION MANUAL

Maybe I am, after thirty years of service to rugby union, a dinosaur of the modern game but I just wanted to share with you my thoughts about what has been my motivation over this long and at times testing period of volunteer participation.

In my mind rugby is a rather silly game with way too many rules (which we quaintly call Laws). *It isn't the game as such that is critical or important to me.*

As boys enter puberty their testosterone level goes up around 10 times. That is why we have troubles with the puberty years where we have the early puberty boy, who is bigger and stronger and on high octane fuel playing with the little guy for whom puberty is yet only a distant dream.

When boys get this supercharged warrior hormone (that has been in our systems since the cave man had to defend his cave against dinosaurs) they need help in learning how to harness this 'gift' of nature.

I believe that rugby, along with the other contact sports, can help boys learn how to manage and control this new found chemistry.

When mothers are fearful of their sons playing contact sport and opt out they run the very real risk of their sons learning about testosterone and adrenalin whilst their foot is on the accelerator pedal or outside the party or night club at 3am.

If you agree with this old dinosaur, that rugby is as much about building men as winning or premierships then there are a few things that rugby needs to hold very dear – the not negotiable aspects if you like.

Concepts like teamwork, leadership, fair play, Code of Conduct, sportsmanship, winning (and losing) with

dignity, respect for all other participants and above all else Self Control take on much greater significance.

As a coach who has coached from U7s through to State and a National team at a World Cup I have had many a day where the match officiating has completely and utterly frustrated me but I have done my best to not share that with my players. Why?

Firstly if we externalise blame for performance then that becomes the team's mantra. We lost because of the referee, the weather, the field, the travel, the inflation of the ball. ***The very best lesson we can teach the boys is to take control and accept responsibility for their own performance.***

At our first game at the 2002 Women's Rugby World Cup we had a French referee who could not speak English (the team beat Wales 30-0). When we drew the same referee in our second pool game our captain learnt the French she needed to communicate with the referee. We adapted and beat the USA in our second game. *NOTE - The USA have almost 10 times as many women's rugby players as in Australia.*

If the boys can't accept and play under the direction of a referee, even if they think he or she is wrong, then they will do the same thing with the teacher tomorrow and the policeman next year and the judge or prison warden sometime in their future.

If the adults around these boys find excuses for them like the match officials, their coaches, their team mates then they are leading these boys toward a very dangerous place.

If the boys don't learn teamwork and how to do things for the greater good then the workplace and marriage may be difficult places for them in their future.

I ask that you consider how our silly game with too many rules may have some very valuable life lessons for our sons as long we adults who surround them stick to the script and our Codes of Conduct.

Don Parry (President Queensland Junior Rugby Union)