



Current Affairs Assembly

KS3 Self development

Assembly



Page
1 of 2

2011 Rugby World Cup

Aim:

To explore persevering to reach a goal

Introduction

Winning

Around the world, millions watched on TVs and big screens in parks and city centres. They held their breath. Jonny Wilkinson placed the ball, took a step back, drew his customary deep breath with his hands clasped in front of him, and kicked a magnificent drop goal to take England ahead of Australia – the score was 20:17. Twenty six seconds later, the final whistle went in the final game of the Rugby Union World Cup in Sydney. It was the 22nd November 2003. England had won the Rugby World Cup!

Looking Deeper

What are the goals?

Fast forward eight years to 24th November 2011. English Rugby Union is in the headlines for a very different reason. A damning report into the failure of the England Rugby team in the 2011 Rugby World Cup in New Zealand, has been leaked to the press. The report was investigating the reasons for England's poor performance in the World Cup. It reveals some of the reasons why the team played such a poor standard of rugby and were knocked out of the competition at an early stage.

The report records stories of the team's drunken behaviour in nightclubs and failure to train seriously. The team managers failed

to inspire the team, to instil the discipline needed to enable them to play their best game or to call them to account for their failure to practise and their wasteful life style. The players were found to have been involved in wild drinking games, and are accused of being greedy for big cash rewards, or of wanting an England 'cap' without any effort. The report even cites some members of the team mocking their fellow team mates who, determined to win, trained seriously.

Commentators say that the 2003 World Cup win was the pinnacle of four impressive years when the England team trained hard, practised for long hours and steadily improved, until that day when they lifted the World Cup. So where did it all go so badly wrong?

Perhaps the saddest twist to the 2011 story is that the team manager, Martin Johnson, this week resigned in advance of this report being published, apparently accepting some responsibility for the failures of the team. He is the same man who, as the victorious captain of the 2003 winning team, lifted the World Cup and held it high in Sydney.

To achieve success in sport, players know that they have to work hard and practice relentlessly to maintain high standards. Successful athletes take care of their bodies, eat strict diets to maximise effort and usually abstain from alcohol. Players in team games understand that the team is only as good as its weakest player, and that disharmony in the team can cause disaster.

This was well understood even as long ago as when the New Testament in the Bible was written. St Paul describes the need for athletes to persevere and train with total commitment if they want to win the prize. And he recommends that if you want to gain a prize, you need to keep your eyes fixed on it, and keep striving to gain it. (1 Corinthians 9:24-27)



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From what we know of the England Rugby team in 2011, it seems as if they overlooked this sort of advice.

Think for a moment, what do you think the prize was that they had their eyes fixed on?

Pause for thinking time

Was it:

- Bringing the World Cup back to England?
- And being known (as Jonny Wilkinson was in 2003) as great athletes and players with total commitment to improving their game?
- And being known as the greatest English Rugby team?

Or was it:

- Huge pay cheques?
- Having a 'good time' partying and getting drunk?
- Ridiculing team mates who worked hard to play great rugby?

Think again.

What can you learn from the failures of the England World Cup Rugby Squad?

Pause

What is the prize that you want to gain?
Have you got your eyes fixed on it?
Are you working and practising with total commitment to win it?

Reflection

In the New Testament of the Bible, St Paul describes the need for athletes to persevere and train with total commitment if they want to win the prize. And he recommends that if you want to gain a prize, you need to keep your eyes fixed on it, and keep striving to gain it.

Prayer

Lord God, help us to remember that you promise to always walk beside us, especially when the going gets tough, and we feel like giving up. Help us to keep our eyes fixed on the prize ahead, and do all that we can to win it!
Amen.

Keywords

Rugby World Cup
Perseverance
Commitment