

OFFICIAL EVENT EDITION

Southern Districts Rugby Club



The Wisdom of Rugby — The Rugby of Life and the Life of Rugby

PRESENTED BY SPORTSMART4LIFE

A word from the organisers



Southern Districts Rugby Club

A word from the organisers

Dear Sample Reader,

This copy is yours. Your name is on the cover, and it is inside on the pages too, because it was made for you and for nobody else. No two copies of this book are the same.

We wanted to give you something that outlasts a fixture list. Kit wears out. Medals go in a drawer. But a club is not the first team, it is everyone who turns up, and that is worth writing down somewhere you will find it again.

What follows are the real voices of this sport — players, coaches and writers, most of them talking about the parts nobody puts on a highlight reel. There is a section on pressure, and what the people who handle it best actually do differently. One on trust, and why a group that trusts each other beats a group that is merely talented. One on losing, which is the section we would ask you to read twice, because everyone in this sport has lost and everyone worth knowing came back. There is a section on joy, which is the reason any of us started. One on mastery, and the unglamorous patience it asks for. One on rivalry, and the respect that runs underneath it. And one on belonging — on being part of something whether or not you are the one on the field.

You do not have to read it in order. Keep it in the kit bag. Open it the night before a hard one. Let it fall open at whichever page finds you, and if a line is worth keeping, keep it.

The game has taught you things already — about nerve, about other people, about getting up. These pages are simply the same lessons in other people's words, gathered in one place so they are there when you need them.

Thank you for everything you give to this. It is noticed, and it matters more than the results ever say.

— **The Committee, Southern Districts Rugby Club**

Foreword

Rugby is an honest game. It cannot be played alone, it cannot be played without courage, and it cannot be played without the other side — which is why its people guard the handshake as fiercely as the scoreline. Wherever the game is played, from Test arenas to small-town fields where the whole district parks around the touchline, it teaches the same things: hold your nerve, lift your people, get up again, protect your joy, drill the basics, honour your rival, belong to something.

This collection gathers the voices of the game — the players, the coaches, the great watchers and writers who loved it best — arranged around seven themes that belong as much to life as to rugby. Each chapter opens with an image and an idea, then hands the floor to the voices themselves.

Read it the way you would watch a Test: sometimes for the collisions, sometimes for the craft, and sometimes for one moment of heart you will remember for years.

Ways to Walk with This Book

A collection like this is not meant to be read once and shelved. It is meant to be lived with — kept close, opened often, and put to work. Seven ways to begin:

- **The daily voice**
open anywhere each morning and take one voice with you into the day.
- **The reflection pause**
choose the theme your week is testing, read its essay slowly, and write one honest line of your own in response.
- **Match-day ritual**
before the big broadcast, read the theme the fixture will examine — rivalry before the derby, pressure before the final.
- **The team talk**
captains, coaches, teachers, parents: one voice a week is enough to open a changing room, a classroom or a dinner table.
- **The hard-week medicine**
when life tackles you, the defeat chapter is waiting. It was written for exactly that week.
- **The gift of a voice**
photograph the quote a friend needs today and send it with their name on the message.
- **The long read**
one theme per Sunday evening — a handful of weeks, properly kept.

However you use it, let it stay within reach of wherever you watch.

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THEME 1 OF 7

Teamwork & Trust

Fifteen jobs, one heartbeat — the game where nobody can even jump alone.



In rugby you do not jump — you are lifted. Every act of brilliance in this game is standing on somebody's hands.

Teamwork & Trust — in the game, in life

Rugby makes a promise no other game makes so plainly: nothing here can be done alone. The jumper does not jump — he is lifted, held in the air by teammates whose names the cameras never say. The try in the corner began ten phases earlier with a prop hitting a ruck nobody will replay. The scrum, rugby's strangest gift to the world, is eight people who succeed together or fail together, with no way of telling afterwards whose shoulder gave first. It is a machine built entirely of trust. That trust has mechanics, and they are teachable. It is the ruck hit at full speed to protect a ball you will never touch. It is the decoy line run at fifty percent risk of a collision and zero percent chance of glory. It is the tackle made on your goal line in the seventy-ninth minute when your lungs are gone and the only thing left is the refusal to let the man beside you down. Rugby people talk about the jersey being borrowed — that you play for the ones who wore it before you and the ones who will wear it after. That is teamwork stretched across time. The lesson travels far beyond the pitch. Families, wards, classrooms and companies all run on lifted jumpers: someone bending their knees so that someone else can take the catch. Be a lifter more often than a jumper. Hit the rucks in your life without checking who is watching. And when it is your turn in the air, remember whose hands are under you — and say so.

“Rugby has always been a game for all shapes and sizes. You have the superstars and the fast guys who score the tries, but you also need the workhorses. Unless they all work together as a team, it's really going to affect the performance.”

— Warren Gatland

Teamwork & Trust

Sit with the voice that speaks to you today.

“Despite the fact we were losing, we still had the feeling that we could really do something, against these players, against this team. I don't know why but we felt that way, even though we were quite far behind them.”

— Fabien Pelous

“We have so many problems in our country, but a team like this — we come from different backgrounds, different races, but we came together with one goal and we wanted to achieve it.”

— Siya Kolisi

“Leading from the front isn't a part-time role that you can pick up and set down as and when it suits. You have to do it all the time and every time.”

— Sean Fitzpatrick

“I play not just for me, but for everyone who never saw themselves in this game.”

— Zainab Alema

“I think humility is the number one trait a leader can have. Somebody once said to me, 'if it wasn't for your job title, would people follow you?'”

— Sam Warburton

“We can achieve anything if we work together as one.”

— Siya Kolisi

“To lead you need just one thing, and that is people who are willing to follow you.”

— John Smit

“Over all is old Brooke, absolute as he of Russia, but wisely and bravely ruling over willing and worshipping subjects — a true football king.”

— Thomas Hughes

Teamwork & Trust

Sit with the voice that speaks to you today.

“Francois, thank you very much for what you have done for our country.”

— Nelson Mandela

“I pointed out that we had come so far and so close that if we didn't go back downfield and at least give ourselves a chance of winning it, we would have let ourselves down and let our supporters down.”

— Gavin Hastings

“I was lucky enough that the team I captained to win a World Cup was full of leaders.”

— Nick Farr-Jones

“You'll not do it unless you put your bodies on the line, every one jack of you, for 80 minutes.”

— Jim Telfer

“The '99' call was my idea. I had a word about it with the guys beforehand and, basically, said, 'Right, if one of us are in it, we're all in it. We stand together.'”

— Willie John McBride

“I can't do my role as an outside centre unless the hooker throws the ball in straight, the lifters get the line-out jumper up higher than the opposition.”

— Brian O'Driscoll

“During the match, all of the players played for each other and played for their country.”

— Brian Lima

“The Lions is far bigger than me.”

— Finlay Calder

Teamwork & Trust

Sit with the voice that speaks to you today.

“My ultimate goal is to grow rugby in Canada, especially women's rugby, and so I want to take as many involvements as I can that will help achieve that goal.”

— Sophie de Goede

“I wasn't a great captain in 1997. We had a really good bunch of players, a really good bunch of senior players. Guys put their disappointment of not necessarily being in the Test team behind them. We all won that series.”

— Martin Johnson

“That badge, we always said, represents four. You carry one on your jersey. That is a very personal thing.”

— Ian McGeechan

“My teammates and I make sure we pray and spend time with God before and after every time we play.”

— Osea Kolinisau

“Better people make better All Blacks.”

— Graham Henry

“Whoever is on the next one — make sure you go as hard as hell because it is a very special privilege to be involved in.”

— Alun Wyn Jones

“True leadership is the opposite of individualism, the opposite of one person standing above the rest. It's an encompassing, inclusive thing. I never liked the top-down way of leading.”

— Ruby Tui

“It is better to lead from behind and to put others in front, especially when you celebrate victory when nice things occur. You take the front line when there is danger. Then people will appreciate your leadership.”

— Nelson Mandela

SOUTHERN DISTRICTS RUGBY CLUB

More from Teamwork & Trust



Nobody does this alone.

“It's not just about the rugby, it's about the people you meet along the way and the memories that you create that I will look back on, remember and cherish.”

— Sarah Hunter

A few more from Teamwork & Trust



Trust, built in the ordinary weeks.

“The biggest thing it will say is, ‘You are special.’ You are very, very special. Be special for the rest of your lives.”

— Ian McGeechan

“People sometimes think that it is only the people that talk and stand in front of us that are the leaders, but invariably it is the leaders who say less and do more.”

— John Smit

“You try to create small fires around the ball in attack and defence. The French team tries to do that by putting a small company around the ball. About five players. We try to be quick.”

— Fabien Galthie

THEME 2 OF 7

Pressure & Nerve

The kick in front of the posts, the scrum on your own line — what the biggest moments ask, and how the brave answer.



Eighty thousand people hold their breath — and the kicker's whole world narrows to a ball, a routine, and a gap between two posts.

Pressure & Nerve — in the game, in life

Rugby is a game of collisions, yet its most frightening moments are the still ones. The place-kick in front of a hostile crowd. The scrum set five metres from your own line. The high ball hanging in the floodlights with three chasers underneath it. In each of these the game stops being about muscle and becomes an examination of nerve — and the great players sit that exam the same way every time. Watch a kicker closely. The tee is placed with ceremony. The steps are counted. The breathing slows while the stadium howls. What you are watching is not calm; it is a routine so deeply rehearsed that it can carry a shaking human being through the loudest minute of their life. Rugby's other secret about pressure is that it is shared. The front row packs down knowing the whole scrum arrives together or not at all; the defender on his own line trusts that the inside shoulder is covered. Courage in this game is rarely private — it is borrowed from the man alongside you and repaid in the next phase. Life sets its own scrums five metres out: the interview, the diagnosis, the conversation you have rehearsed in the car. The rugby answer applies. Build the routine before you need it, because the moment itself is a terrible teacher. Slow your walk when everything speeds up. Pack down close to your people and push at the same instant. And when your kick at goal comes — take your steps, trust the practice, and swing through it. Nerve is not the absence of fear. It is a drill that holds when fear arrives.

“Today will determine what we are. It will say everything about us. The biggest thing you earn in this jersey is a respect and a reputation, and to any person, that's the biggest thing you can have, for what you do and what you stand for.”

— Ian McGeechan

Pressure & Nerve

Sit with the voice that speaks to you today.

“A little bit of sense of relief but just a sense of, oh my goodness, we have done this, it's a dream come true.”

— Zoe Aldcroft

“There's not a whole lot of panic, it's quite calm and action-focused, next-moment focused.”

— Caelan Doris

“I enjoy life but I have this obsession that I look obscenely fat, with the result that I have been suffering from bulimia for many years.”

— Nigel Owens

“This is your Everest, boys. Very few ever get a chance in rugby terms to get to the top of Everest. You have the chance today.”

— Jim Telfer

“The players feel that responsibility passionately — that we are representing our communities and our people. That creates an enormous amount of pressure, and you have to learn how to manage it.”

— Sir John Kirwan

“It's a privilege to put it on once, twice, every time you put it on it's just a privilege, but it's also an opportunity to really express yourself, your story and have it told in a positive manner.”

— Sir Steve Hansen

“I've always been deliberately guarded in my public utterances, because whether I'm officially on duty or not, I'm talking as All Black captain and my words carry the weight and expectation of that position.”

— Richie McCaw

“Rugby shouldn't be something that creates pressure on you, it should be something that creates hope.”

— Rassie Erasmus

Pressure & Nerve

Sit with the voice that speaks to you today.

“Everybody handles pressure differently. I just try to stay as calm as possible.”

— *Handré Pollard*

“Being told I wasn't big enough or strong enough, that hurt and it affected me. The more I heard it, the more I wanted to prove people wrong.”

— *Shane Williams*

“I'm a firm believer that the way you train is the way you play on the weekend. On the pitch, my mindset switches.”

— *Eben Etzebeth*

“For me, Professor Hawking was the champion of MND, the exception who showed you could live with and survive MND. He did live. And that has to be my goal, my ambition, and my source of positivity.”

— *Doddie Weir*

“When the drop went over, it was a little moment of celebration, and then immediately I stopped and waited for Francois as we were running back and spoke about the next move.”

— *Joel Stransky*

“You have no control over what happens to you. Nothing! During the 2003 World Cup, I was not ready for all the extras.”

— *Frederic Michalak*

“T-CUP: Thinking Correctly Under Pressure.”

— *Clive Woodward*

“It was so nice to see that drop goal go over – I struck it pretty well for someone who doesn't normally hit them.”

— *Jeremy Guscott*

Pressure & Nerve

Sit with the voice that speaks to you today.

“Obviously very proud, very privileged. I've just got a huge amount of pride to add this to the CV, but obviously there's a lot of work to do once we get out there.”

— Alun Wyn Jones

“Any player suspected of having a concussion should be removed from the game. That decision should not be left to the player.”

— Sir Bill Beaumont

“In that moment of putting the ball down, for me it's excitement, I love it. I love those moments. It's the most alive you will feel on a rugby field, at least that's how I feel as a flyhalf and kicker.”

— Handré Pollard

“To actually accept that you have an eating disorder or a mental health issue is actually a sign of great, great strength. It is not a sign of weakness at all.”

— Nigel Owens

“Play like it's the last game of your life, no regrets — and you need to accept the results and go on. The bigger goal is out there.”

— Waisale Serevi

“As I was being introduced to someone she curtsied. That convinced me this was not normal.”

— Barry John

“In elite sport, pressure is constant. The challenge isn't removing it, it's learning how to function clearly within it.”

— Johnny Sexton

“I am the master of my fate: I am the captain of my soul.”

— William Ernest Henley

SOUTHERN DISTRICTS RUGBY CLUB

More from Pressure & Nerve



The moment before it starts.

“In South Africa, pressure is not having a job. Pressure is having a close relative who is murdered. Rugby should not be something that creates pressure, rugby should create hope.”

— Rassie Erasmus

A few more from Pressure & Nerve



Nerve is not the absence of fear.

"I learned that courage was not the absence of fear, but the triumph over it."

— Nelson Mandela

"I'd rather go down challenging South Africa than kicking the goal, missing, and regretting it for the rest of my life."

— Michael Leitch

"If you accept the pressure is going to be there and then work out how you're going to deal with it before it actually hits you in the face, it actually becomes a little easier to do."

— Sir Steve Hansen

THEME 3 OF 7

Defeat & Bouncing Back

The long walk to the tunnel — and the team that runs out again next week.



The scoreboard tells the truth for eighty minutes. What you do on Monday tells it for the rest of your life.

Defeat & Bouncing Back — in the game, in life

Rugby does not let you hide from a loss. There is no substitution deep enough, no helmet to disappear into. You stand under your own posts while the conversion sails over, you shake the hands of the men who beat you, and you walk the long walk to the tunnel with the mud of the evidence still on you. The game is honest about defeat in a way life rarely manages — and that honesty is the training. Because here is what the great teams do with a beating. They let it hurt properly, briefly. The bus is quiet and nobody apologises for that. Then Monday comes, the lights go on in the video room, and the tape is watched without flinching — not to assign shame, but to find the two or three moments that were truly theirs to fix: the missed tackle, the lazy line, the kick chased at a jog. The lesson is kept; the shame is binned; the jersey is handed back out on Saturday. Rugby's whole culture is built for the bounce-back — the next fixture always comes, and a proud team's response to losing becomes its actual identity, more than any trophy. Your own defeats will not come with a scoreboard, but they will come: the application declined, the plan in pieces, the season of work undone in an afternoon. Do it the rugby way. Stand under the posts and face it. Watch your own tape honestly. Fix what was yours, forgive what wasn't, and run out again next week. Getting up is not a talent. It is a habit — and habits can be trained.

“It went past being hungry; it was actually painful in your stomach. I could feel my intestines twisting in the middle of the night. I would scream to my grandmother and she would get me sugar water and it would settle it down.”

— Siya Kolisi

Defeat & Bouncing Back

Sit with the voice that speaks to you today.

“An overwhelming feeling that I've let my teammates down when they needed me the most.”

— Sam Cane

“I feel sad about that, it is not the end I imagined. But it does not matter much. I have already received a lot of warmth and applause throughout my career.”

— Mamuka Gorgodze

“The fire came from Rio, and if it wasn't for that moment, we definitely wouldn't have understood what it meant to be an actually good team.”

— Portia Woodman-Wickliffe

“Hunger is not just being hungry, the brief sensation of discomfort which lasts only a few hours until the next meal. Hunger is different. It's all-consuming.”

— Siya Kolisi

“Imagine what I could have done healthy.”

— Jonah Lomu

“Courage is actually sharing your feelings, understanding our vulnerabilities, and making sure that you get people around that care. That's courage. That's reaching out.”

— Sir John Kirwan

“It's hard to talk about these things because there's lots of disappointment and frustration. I don't think the refereeing was up to the level of what was at stake.”

— Antoine Dupont

“I found hope – a sense that things can and will get better – and I clung to it in the same way you'd hang on to a life-raft if you'd been shipwrecked in a stormy sea.”

— Sir John Kirwan

Defeat & Bouncing Back

Sit with the voice that speaks to you today.

“The biggest disappointment of my career. Not because of losing, because of the way that it happened.”
— Serge Blanco

“I have never, ever thought 'Why me?' It was, 'Right, let's get this sorted' — it's like with rugby. If you don't get in the team, do you give up your jersey or do you fight?”
— Doddie Weir

“It was devastating. Everything went wrong in the last one and a half games of footy for our season.”
— Charlotte Caslick

“So much hurt right now. It's actually hard to find the words to explain it. It's hard because you are feeling so much hurt but at the same time you are so proud of the group in how they fought back.”
— Sam Cane

“I'm pledging my brain so the children of the people I love don't have to go through what I have gone through.”
— Steve Thompson

“Whenever you face hard times or injuries, support systems are everything. Support is everything.”
— Perry Baker

“I don't remember a single second of a rugby match I played. I have the impression that it wasn't me who played rugby.”
— Sebastien Chabal

“We were close to being world champions. What pleased me most was the three-week knock-out phase. It was an exceptional adventure on a human level.”
— Thierry Dusautoir

Defeat & Bouncing Back

Sit with the voice that speaks to you today.

"I am a self-confessed bad loser and I want to beat this not just for myself but for everyone with ALS around the world."

— Joost van der Westhuizen

"When the All Blacks lose a game, it doesn't matter who it's against, you lose a bit of your mana. It's like it's been taken away from you."

— Sir Wayne 'Buck' Shelford

"The Tour was magical. We weren't just expected to lose that game, we weren't given a chance on the whole Tour."

— Jeremy Guscott

"I had a great career and willingly gave my heart, body and soul to rugby. I just didn't know I was giving my mind too."

— Alix Popham

"Having a baby at 18 was not easy, nor was not knowing what to do. I was giving up rugby to put food on the table, so I worked as a teller in a bank. It was hard, I wasn't able to be paid for doing what I love."

— Bundee Aki

"You see us lifting the World Cup and I can see me there jumping around. But I can't remember it."

— Steve Thompson

"I think we are capable of doing what the English do, but are we working on this during training? I think we don't work on it enough, even not at all."

— Morgan Parra

"A lot of coaching is about results, and if you don't get the right results you're going to get criticism. But if all things are going well, then you can enjoy yourself."

— Warren Gatland

SOUTHERN DISTRICTS RUGBY CLUB

More from Defeat & Bouncing Back



The walk back.

“I am going to live as long as possible – to help find a cure, to give my kids a dad.”

— Joost van der Westhuizen

A few more from Defeat & Bouncing Back



And then you come again.

"I've learned as much from the losses as I have from the gains."

— Brian O'Driscoll

"Kicking a ball, the action which has brought me so much joy and opportunity, had now snatched away a dream I'd been working towards my whole career."

— Dan Carter

"I got bloody shafted from sevens, but here we are in fifteens!"

— Ruby Tui

THEME 4 OF 7

Joy & Love of the Game

Barefoot touch at sunset, the offload that shouldn't exist — playing because playing is the point.



Before the anthems and the floodlights there was a patch of grass, a ball that bounced funny, and the best hour of the day.

Joy & Love of the Game — in the game, in life

Ask any international where rugby began for them and nobody answers with a stadium. It is a backyard, a school field, a strip of beach at low tide — jerseys for corner flags, no referee, and one more try before dark that somehow took an hour. The ball itself is part of the comedy: it bounces however it pleases, and rugby people learn early to laugh at what they cannot control. Joy is the game's first language. Everything the sport later becomes — the anthems, the analysis, the collisions — is built on that original delight or it is built on nothing. You can still see it break through at the highest level, and it is always the loudest cheer of the day: the outrageous offload out the back of a tackle, the prop who finds himself galloping in open field to a roar of pure happiness, the winger who dives when he could have walked it over. These are children's moments wearing professional kit, and crowds love them because they remember. The players who last are the ones who protect that feeling — who would still turn up on a Tuesday for touch with their mates, who still love the smell of a winter pitch. There is a rule of life hiding in this. Duty is a good engine and a terrible fuel; the energy for your hardest seasons comes from the play you refuse to surrender. Keep your version of barefoot touch — the guitar, the garden, the Sunday ride. Do it badly, do it laughing, do it after dark. The day it stops being play, you have not grown up. You have only forgotten why you started.

“I still feel that love and passion for it and when you've got teams like the Black Ferns Sevens girls and the Black Ferns 15s girls, they make it so enjoyable that you really don't want to leave. You want to ride until the wheels fall off!”

— Portia Woodman-Wickliffe

Joy & Love of the Game

Sit with the voice that speaks to you today.

"I'm happy out. You've freedom — that's what you have. You can go out around the fields."

— Tadhg Furlong

"The initial emotion for all of us was obviously tears of joy, but for me it was relief. The fact that we've had this goal for so long and we finally achieved it, it was just like, 'oh, my gosh, yes, we can relax now. We finally did it.'"

— Michaela Blyde

"They'll be dancing in the streets of Hawick tonight."

— Bill McLaren

"I just wanted to laugh because of the joy that was bubbling up inside of me."

— Osea Kolinisau

"I'm overwhelmed. It has been such an incredible week. To be here and have the performance is so, so special. I genuinely couldn't think of a better way to end my career."

— Sarah Hunter

"This is Gareth Edwards. A dramatic start. What a score!"

— Cliff Morgan

"I always wanted to play with a smile on my face, have fun, because I think you bring the most out of yourself when you're having fun."

— Brian O'Driscoll

"It's a blessing, it's amazing and I'm happy about that."

— Makazole Mapimpi

Joy & Love of the Game

Sit with the voice that speaks to you today.

"I'm straighter than that one."

— Nigel Owens

"The laws provide players of different physiques, skills, genders and ages with the opportunity to participate at their levels of ability in a controlled, competitive and enjoyable environment."

— World Rugby Playing Charter

"I've been fortunate enough to work my way back up here and I am enjoying every single moment."

— Schalk Burger

"For me, that match against Wales is one of the best moments in my rugby career. That match against Wales also put our country on the map."

— Brian Lima

"Once the Springbok jersey has been taken away from you, you realise how much you've missed it. I am enjoying every single moment."

— Schalk Burger

"It's just amazing. I feel proud for my family, my club and my country."

— Philippe Sella

"I've always had a positive outlook. Do what you can do today and worry about tomorrow when it comes. And if it doesn't come, then you've a bloody good time."

— Doddie Weir

"I can't really believe it, to be honest with you. I've been a long time waiting for it and... yeah, I can't believe it. Happy days."

— Peter O'Mahony

Joy & Love of the Game

Sit with the voice that speaks to you today.

“To me, rugby is life. It's what I know — it's all I know.”

— *Jonah Lomu*

“My dream was to become a Springbok and farm — and I did both.”

— *Frik du Preez*

“I'm happy out. You've freedom, that's what you have.”

— *Tadhg Furlong*

“I loved every single minute on the pitch. Everything concerning rugby, even the tiresome training sessions, gave me an absolute pleasure.”

— *Mamuka Gorgodze*

“I just loved scoring; it was my job.”

— *Ieuan Evans*

“It's hard to explain — 12 years of work, passion, love, fear.”

— *Portia Woodman-Wickliffe*

“Rugby, to my eyes, has never been a profession but rather a passion. I had to do something else on the side.”

— *Imanol Harinordoquy*

“Rugby: it is a game, it's about meeting people, commitment, involvement, wellbeing, joie de vivre, efforts. It is happiness, quite simply.”

— *Philippe Sella*

SOUTHERN DISTRICTS RUGBY CLUB

More from Joy & Love of the Game



Why anyone starts.

“It's literally what dreams are made of.”

— Zoe Aldcroft

This copy belongs to: Sample Reader

Southern Districts Rugby Club · Joy & Love of the Game

A few more from Joy & Love of the Game



The part nobody has to be told to love.

“A small little operation down in Wexford, just humble little farmers.”

— Tadhg Furlong

“It’s such a dreamlike situation, your first All Blacks jersey — the whole country grows up wanting to earn one, and here was mine.”

— Dan Carter

“A Toulouse, ne pas jouer, c’etait prendre un risque. (At Toulouse, not to play running rugby was to take a risk.)”

— Guy Noves

THEME 5 OF 7

Mastery & Practice

Ten thousand quiet repetitions behind every effortless act.



The crowd sees one kick sail over in the eightieth minute. The empty field saw the ten thousand that bought it.

Mastery & Practice — in the game, in life

Rugby hides its craft inside its chaos. From the stands the game can look like weather — bodies, mud, momentum — but slow any moment down and you find a craftsman. The scrum-half's pass that arrives in front of the runner, every time, either side, took a decade. The front rower's binding and body height are a trade with an apprenticeship longer than most degrees, learned in a place the cameras cannot see. The fly-half who looks so casual dropping the ball onto his boot has kicked more balls alone at night than he has ever kicked in matches. Mastery in rugby is unglamorous and utterly democratic. The ball does not know your school, your size, your surname or your followers; it responds to attention, repetition and honest error, and to nothing else. That is the mercy of a craft — unlike opinion, it never flatters and never lies. And rugby adds its own hard clause: the basics are the highest skill. Under fatigue, in the rain, in the final quarter, every fancy thing falls away and what remains is whoever's catch, pass, tackle and clean-out were drilled the deepest. Champions are built out of boredom — the same drill, the same hundred passes, long after the session officially ended. Nearly everything worth doing in life obeys the same law: the language, the instrument, the trade, the patient art of being good to people under pressure. So choose your craft and find your empty field. Keep a private count of your repetitions, because the crowd only counts the visible ones. And when someone calls you a natural, smile — it is the name people give to work they did not witness.

“You can't be expected to appreciate the delicate strokes of play, the turns by which a game is lost and won—it takes an old player to do that—but the broad philosophy of football you can understand if you will.”

— Thomas Hughes

Mastery & Practice

Sit with the voice that speaks to you today.

"I've coached for 20 years and I've never worked harder. I'm getting too old for this. I'm 55. I should be in Barbados watching cricket."

— Eddie Jones

"There comes a time in your career you need to focus on yourself. It's not in my nature to be complacent."

— Sam Warburton

"Especially growing up, always being told I'm too small, I'll never make it. From a young age, I wanted to show that I can make the tackles that the big guys do, that I can do all the physical stuff."

— Faf de Klerk

"That comfort of knowing you've left everything on the pitch, that's a very, very special place to be."

— Brian O'Driscoll

"One thing I wanted to do, besides inspiring people, I wanted to be the fastest man in rugby. It's like Usain Bolt being the fastest man in the world — I'm the fastest man in rugby."

— Carlin Isles

"Hard work conquers all."

— Dan Carter

"I went on the double step, to the outside first and then wacked in as hard as I could to the inside."

— Cheslin Kolbe

"On the day of a game, the moment I put on the jersey I know that I am ready."

— Fabien Pelous

Mastery & Practice

Sit with the voice that speaks to you today.

“It hasn’t been easy being a small guy among giants.”

— Cheslin Kolbe

“There are two kinds of rugby players, boys. There are honest ones, and there are the rest.”

— Jim Telfer

“I like the physical and brutal side of this game. I love it. The more stitches and broken bones, the more I liked it.”

— Bakkies Botha

“The harder and the smarter you work preparing for anything, the less a role luck will play.”

— John Eales

“We would question everything, change anything and leave no stone unturned.”

— Clive Woodward

“From a pure attacking point of view, I see the game as one of opportunities, and it’s about creating and seizing opportunities.”

— Gregor Townsend

“Don’t stop once you strike the ball, take your weight through it and finish past the tee.”

— Leigh Halfpenny

“If you are not physical in rugby, you may as well be playing volleyball or curling.”

— Eddie Jones

Mastery & Practice

Sit with the voice that speaks to you today.

“I owe everything to rugby. It gives you a sense of proportion, of understanding people, of fair play and discipline — which is the most important thing in broadcasting, in rugby and in life generally.”

— *Cliff Morgan*

“When you're on top of your game, change your game.”

— *James Kerr*

“Of course I have no regrets. I set myself the goal of the Games and I wanted to use all the means at my disposal to be in the best possible condition to achieve it.”

— *Antoine Dupont*

“It is always a pleasure to hear words like that, but honestly I don't spend a lot of time thinking about that. I am still young and have a lot of work still to do.”

— *Antoine Dupont*

“I'll be frank, I don't have a specific philosophy.”

— *Joe Schmidt*

“What the lawbook doesn't contain is an overriding principle which should be: keep the game going by blowing your whistle as little as possible.”

— *Wayne Barnes*

“Rugby owes much of its appeal to the fact that it is played both to the letter and within the spirit of the laws.”

— *World Rugby Playing Charter*

“Surgery done, now the real work starts.”

— *Pieter-Steph du Toit*

SOUTHERN DISTRICTS RUGBY CLUB

More from Mastery & Practice



The thousandth repetition.

“He made me think, just as he made all of us think.”

— Barry John

This copy belongs to: Sample Reader

Southern Districts Rugby Club · Mastery & Practice

A few more from Mastery & Practice



Hard-won, quietly.

“It’s performance that matters. If you put in the performance, you’ll get what you deserve.”

— Jim Telfer

“When you’re thrown in with schools lads, you realise how hard you have to work for everything, where you’ve come from and how much it means to your family and the people around you.”

— Tadhg Furlong

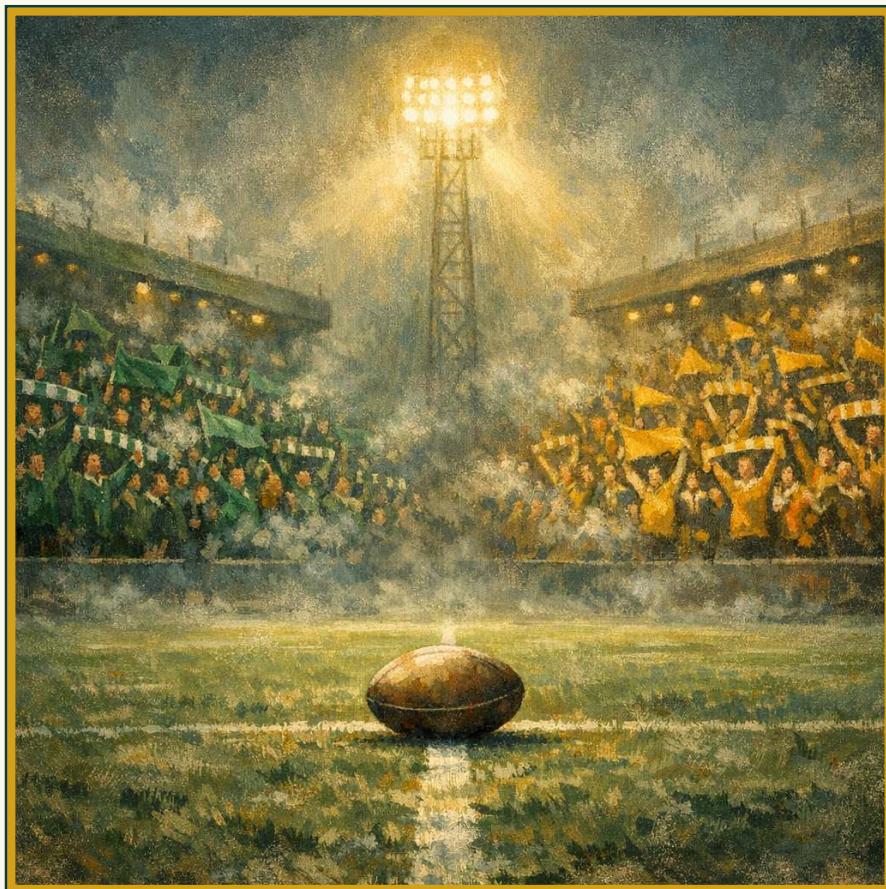
“I’m happy to be the first player to record five World Cups. This is a great achievement not just for me, but for all of Samoa and for all young players dreaming of becoming a Manu Samoa player.”

— Brian Lima

THEME 6 OF 7

Rivalry & Respect

Eighty minutes of war, a lifetime of respect — and the handshake that makes it sport.



For eighty minutes they are the obstacle to everything you want. At the whistle they are the only people who truly understand what you just gave.

Rivalry & Respect — in the game, in life

Rugby runs on rivalry the way an engine runs on fuel. The old fixtures — nation against nation, valley against valley, school against school — sharpen everything they touch: the hits are braver, the tries sweeter, the silences afterwards deeper. Rivals do for us what friends cannot. They find our exact edges and push on them, season after season, until the edges move. The history of this game is a history of pairs who made each other greater, and who admitted — usually years later, usually with a smile — that they trained harder because a particular someone existed. But rugby's genius is what happens at the final whistle. The men who have spent eighty minutes trying to run through one another form a tunnel and applaud each other off the field. Opponents swap jerseys soaked with the evidence of the contest. In the sheds afterwards, the oldest custom in the game still holds: you sit with the other side, and you talk. Rugby calls this the third half, and it is not softness — it is the whole point. The contest is fierce because the respect is real, and the respect is real because the contest was fierce. Life hands everyone rivals, though we are usually too polite to use the word: the colleague whose work makes ours look ordinary, the old classmate whose progress needles us at midnight. Use them the rugby way. Envy studies a rival's trophies; wisdom studies their training. Want harder, play fairer, and refuse the modern habit of needing your opponent to be evil. Then, at the whistle, look them in the eye and mean the handshake.

“Look what these bastards have done to Wales. They've taken our coal, our water, our steel. They buy our homes and live in them for a fortnight every year. What have they given us? Absolutely nothing. We've been exploited, raped, controlled and punished by the English — and that's who you are playing this afternoon.”

— Phil Bennett

Rivalry & Respect

Sit with the voice that speaks to you today.

“New Zealand won the game and we won the dance.”

— Willie Anderson

“The haka is about our mana to go into battle, but more to the point, it is about total respect for the opposition.”

— Wayne 'Buck' Shelford

“We've wounded a springbok. When an animal is wounded it returns in frenzy. The lion waits, and at the right point, it goes for the jugular.”

— Ian McGeechan

“The true value of the haka is in connection, and as the opposition you need to decide how you are going to connect and not dissipate as a team in that moment.”

— John Eales

“Ka mate, ka mate! Ka ora, ka ora! — I die, I die! I live, I live!”

— Te Rauparaha (Ngāti Toa)

“I never felt it gave the All Blacks an unfair advantage, but it did let them own those moments before kick-off, and we were basically just passively taking it.”

— John Eales

“I was trampled, kicked and had my head walked on. So I punched the winger. No, I did not lose my cool. On the contrary I was perfectly aware of what I was doing.”

— Serge Blanco

“A few years ago Brian Smith coined a phrase 'Warrenball' and I don't know whether that was because he was jealous of how much success we had.”

— Warren Gatland

Rivalry & Respect

Sit with the voice that speaks to you today.

“The intensity of rugby just goes up by about 10 notches when we face each other. It's always, always my favourite game versus the Kiwis.”

— Isabella Nasser

“There's always a bit of tension between us and the Aussies. It just makes me excited to play them. And beat them.”

— Alena Saili

“He is a freak, and the sooner he goes away the better.”

— Will Carling

“There's so much history between the two teams. A lot of people are looking forward to it, and as a player, it's very exciting.”

— Ardie Savea

“For a Frenchman to be considered good enough for such an honour by his English peers is quite something.”

— Raphael Ibanez

“When you beat England at Twickenham you don't feel the need to make changes to a winning side, but there are areas we think we can improve.”

— Warren Gatland

“Four more years, boys, four more years.”

— George Gregan

“You do everything you can to win, but you don't cheat. Honesty, integrity and respect are equally important in sport and business.”

— Sean Fitzpatrick

Rivalry & Respect

Sit with the voice that speaks to you today.

“When you do a haka you're doing it out of respect for your opposition as well. Total respect.”

— Wayne 'Buck' Shelford

“Sir Clive summed it up best when he said everyone hates England. And it's true — because of the history that is involved, that long-seated rivalry. You can feel that hatred of England.”

— Eddie Jones

“The familiar French flair for seizing on an opponent's error to turn defence into attack.”

— Michael Melford

“They don't respect you. They don't rate you. The only way to be rated is to stick one on them.”

— Jim Telfer

“For the first time in my experience, the Lions were able to weld nationality.”

— Colin Meads

“My role was clear when playing against them: make the breakdown brutal. If McCaw or any of the New Zealand boys had to take a moment to look out for me, then I knew I was winning.”

— Bakkies Botha

“I'm the referee on this field. Stick to your job and I'll do mine. This is not soccer.”

— Nigel Owens

“Probably the most brutal game I ever played.”

— Buck Shelford

SOUTHERN DISTRICTS RUGBY CLUB

More from Rivalry & Respect



Opponents, not enemies.

“I want them standing back thinking, 'What the fuck is going on here?’”

— Paul O'Connell

A few more from Rivalry & Respect



Respect, earned the hard way.

“The greatest touring team I have played against.”

— Colin Meads

“Only we believed we would beat Tonga, and with this belief, we won.”

— Mamuka Gorgodze

THEME 7 OF 7

Watching & Belonging

Anthems, scarves and small-town grandstands — why we gather, sing, suffer and stay.



Nobody remembers the score of the first match they were taken to — everybody remembers whose hand they were holding.

Watching & Belonging — in the game, in life

Watching rugby is not the passive half of the game; it is the half that gives the game its meaning. A try scored in an empty stadium is just athletics — it becomes joy because a grandstand full of strangers agreed, generations ago and for no defensible reason, to care together. Rugby crowds have their own liturgy. The anthem sung so hard it frightens the visitors. The hush — unique to this game — while a kicker stands over the ball, ten thousand people governing their own silence. The roar for a scrum won five metres from the line, which to an outsider looks like nothing and to the faithful is everything. And afterwards, win or lose, the long slow river of scarves flowing out into the cold, everyone replaying the same three moments. This country knows better than most what a rugby crowd can carry. A nation once watched one match and felt, for an afternoon, like one thing — proof that what happens in the stands can matter more than what happens on the field. But the deep truth of fandom is smaller and closer to home. It is the parent and the child at their first match. The same seats for twenty years. The small-town derby where everyone knows every player's mother. Supporters teach a masterclass the modern world has nearly forgotten: turning up in the rain for a team that keeps losing is called loyalty; passing devotion down like an heirloom is called family; singing loudest when you are behind is called hope. Find your grandstand — in sport and beyond it. Then keep turning up. The feeling follows the faithfulness, never the other way around.

“The best moment of my career was getting the opportunity to pull on the Springbok jersey for the first time and run out for my country, to understand the privilege that it was, and the responsibility that was bestowed on me.”

— Bryan Habana

Watching & Belonging

Sit with the voice that speaks to you today.

“You can win a gold medal, but the greatest prize is to know that you are a child of God.”

— Osea Kolinisau

“To sell out Eden Park has been a dream of ours for a long time.”

— Stacey Fluhler

“I have a deep connection and love for any team that wears the black jersey, and particularly the Black Ferns and the All Blacks.”

— Sir Wayne Smith

“It is more powerful than governments in breaking down racial barriers. It laughs in the face of all types of discrimination.”

— Nelson Mandela

“To play for Italy was a dream, to play for my culture and my family.”

— Sergio Parisse

“I always think about and look back on how hard life is back home. That's what has motivated me forever. I carry my family with me.”

— Semi Radradra

“It's a culture. It's a religion in Fiji.”

— Bobby Naicker

“You can't be what you can't see. People say if you can't see it you can't be it.”

— Zainab Alema

Watching & Belonging

Sit with the voice that speaks to you today.

“We can change South Africa on the rugby field.”

— Danie Craven

“The crowd was insane tonight and just to show an appreciation back to them and thank them for their support.”

— Sarah Hunter

“A lot of people's impressions of my character came from what they saw of me in the dressing room at Croke Park in 2007. It's just too intimate for people to be sitting down with a cup of tea and a biscuit watching it.”

— Paul O'Connell

“When you pull on a jersey, it is not just a piece of clothing for the day, a convenience. Loyalty, honour and trust — these are the things that mean a lot to me.”

— Sergio Parisse

“Sport has the power to change the world. It has the power to inspire. It has the power to unite people in a way that little else does.”

— Nelson Mandela

“I'm really upset with the thought I'll never pull on a green jersey again.”

— Rory Best

“It's a song of the people.”

— Max Boyce

“It means a lot for me, but also for boys from rural areas, the boys who didn't go to private schools.”

— Makazole Mapimpi

Watching & Belonging

Sit with the voice that speaks to you today.

“Rugby football is a game for gentlemen in all classes, but for no bad sportsman in any class.”

— Walter Carey

“They said nobody cared about women’s rugby. Well guess what? We are here. We are here firm.”

— Ruby Tui

“To be able to host an incredibly important tournament like WXV in our home nation and try to really catapult the game into a different stratosphere here in North America would be the ultimate prize.”

— Sophie de Goede

“The French XV no longer makes people dream. We need to get back to winning, because it’s the showcase of our sport.”

— Bernard Laporte

“Why I played rugby was to represent my country and to wear that black jersey and the silver fern.”

— Aaron Smith

“It is something that is very special and it ignites the imagination in children and adults.”

— Alun Wyn Jones

“We play for the team, but we have the impression of playing for all the Basques.”

— Imanol Harinordoquy

“When the whistle blew, South Africa changed forever.”

— Francois Pienaar

SOUTHERN DISTRICTS RUGBY CLUB

More from Watching & Belonging



Belonging, in the stands.

“A day out of Hawick is a day wasted.”

— Bill McLaren

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Southern Districts Rugby Club · Watching & Belonging

A few more from Watching & Belonging



The people who turn up.

“One of the greatest times of my life was my team's victory at the World Cup. But the most important time in my life was the day I became a Christian. Nothing could compare with that day. Without my faith I would be nothing.”

— Jason Robinson

“When the weekend smell of liniment could almost make you cry.”

— Rupert McCall

“If the greatest writer of the written word had written that story, no one would have believed it. That really was something.”

— Cliff Morgan

This copy belongs to: Sample Reader

Southern Districts Rugby Club · Watching & Belonging

About Southern Districts Rugby Club

Southern Districts Rugby Club is a demonstration client, invented to show how a branded edition looks and reads. In a real edition this page carries your own history, your own words, and the details your people would want to keep.

Website: sportsmart4life.co.za

After the final whistle



Until the next one.

Between the Whistles

The final whistle is only ever half true. Somewhere a ball is already spinning towards the posts — a training session ending, a touch game starting, a child asking for one more try before dark. May the voices in this collection walk with you between the whistles of your own life.

SportSmart4Life is the intelligent spectator's toolkit — learn the games you love, watch them smarter, and let the wisdom of sport walk into your life. Explore the sports, SpectatorIQ and the Voices of the Game at sportsmart4life.co.za.

Go Deeper with SportSmart

This collection began as a way of watching. If the voices in these pages made you want to watch with sharper eyes — and let more of the game walk into your life — here is where the journey continues.

- **The Rugby Spectator Module**

eight tools that teach you the game itself — read the play, know the laws, follow the season's plots, and grow your Fan IQ match by match.

sportsmart4life.co.za

- **SportSmart4Life Membership**

the intelligent spectator's home — modules across 80+ sports, one member dashboard, and wisdom tools that turn watching into wellbeing.

sportsmart4life.co.za

- **SpectatorIQ — the Quiz Show**

test your sports brain in our quiz show — ladders, live rounds and power-ups across every sport we cover.

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- **Voices of the Game**

the living library behind this book - thousands of verified voices to explore, sport by sport and theme by theme.

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Every quotation in this collection is real, verified and honestly attributed — that is the Voices of the Game promise.