



FROM THE SIDELINES

Rugby as a Teacher



I imagine the scenario where the hard work that you put in or the pain that you expose yourself to benefits not yourself but others. Or, perhaps, where the ability to work together as a team to overcome a common obstacle is the only solution to achieving success. What about accepting responsibility for your own performance and ensuring that you and those around you learn from any

errors that you make so that you are better placed for the next time around? These scenarios happen on rugby pitches around the world on a daily basis: running in support of the ball carrier or being first over the ball in an attempt to steal a turnover. How about the rolling maul, the training ground move that comes to fruition on match day or the work that you put in to develop the pass off your weaker hand?

In our love of the game and our pursuit of our team's improvement, we take these hugely impressive attributes for granted and yet they are core principles for making the most of our opportunities throughout life in general. Having spent my entire career in education, I have been perfectly placed to hear the pleas from employers and universities for us to send them selfless, hard-working, resilient and determined individuals. Young adults who are willing to accept responsibility, to adapt to the many challenges they will face, and to learn from their errors. Without wishing to sound too much like Thomas Arnold, the founder of Rugby School, I cannot help but think that the rugby pitch is the ideal breeding ground for such attributes and that today's children will be immeasurably better prepared for their lives if they have benefited from the many challenges and opportunities that rugby offers.

Here at Aysgarth in North Yorkshire, as at many leading preparatory schools, we ensure that our boys (we are a boarding preparatory school for 150 boys aged 8 to 13) have the opportunity to do exactly this: games sessions take place every afternoon for every boy and our fixture list is broad in every meaning of the word: we arrange fixtures for every ability to ensure that every boy has the opportunity to represent the school and, at the other end of the spectrum, our top tier teams travel far and wide in order to find fixtures that are both challenging and formative. For example, last season saw the 1st team finish the season unbeaten in their regular fixtures and on their Scotland tour. The under 12s also completed an unbeaten season and this included a visit to the St Edward's tournament in Oxford, where they enjoyed victories over school such as Millfield, Bedford and Caldicot. Just in case that wasn't enough, our boys will be travelling to Rosslyn Park for the National schools VIs in March in the hope that they will emulate the victorious 2013 squad. As a teacher, I truly believe that rugby has a great deal to teach us all and it goes without saying that we should provide as many opportunities as possible for our children to benefit from this great game. Rugby helps to develop resilience and determination; to improve communication and cooperation skills; to develop physical fitness and, of course, to prepare the children for their careers and the lives they will live. Equally importantly, let us not forget that they will make many friends and have great fun along the way!



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