

Final Book Review

Francis Wright

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Honor Pledge: Francis Wright

I was first introduced to legacy this year during the fall season of baseball. My head coach always gives inspirational quotes during our meetings after practice about 3 days a week and during the beginning of the fall he would read us his favorite excerpts from the book Legacy by James Kerr. While reading us the quotes it was something that interested me because I also want to get into coaching and lead a team to a hopeful victory the way that the head coach of All-Blacks was, or the veteran players. Our coach ended up reading us the first couple of chapters and I thought that it displayed the perfect parts of leadership and some great points about how leadership can be difficult especially in a mass setting. After listening to the beginning chapters of the book I thought it would be perfect to write my book review on this book because of my positive introduction to it so I bought it and read it. This book is one of the best displays for leadership and it is a story about how to get to the top of something by giving it your all and then staying at the top after so many years. Even though I do not have an interest in rugby and did not even know who the All-Blacks were prior to this book it has made me so interested in how all championship teams run there seasons and more importantly there off-seasons.

The All-Blacks are a rugby team who compete in the international Rugby union. They have been one of the best historical rugby teams of all time with a 76 percent winning percentage since they became a team in 1903, they also have 3 total rugby world cups. This winning record is not only a praise of raw talent but also a praise for leadership at each stage of the team. It is more about the traditions that were passed down from generation to generation during this team's history. Talent can keep a team good for a couple of years but when it comes to a historical mark of what the All-Blacks have done it is a direct correlation of good principles passed down from the time that the team was created to the point that they are at now which is still being one of the best rugby teams in the history for over 100 years that the team has been a team. Leaders on the

team and leaders on the coaching staff has made that possible. As somebody that plays competitive sports, I know how hard it can be to win a championship. Talent can only take a team so far and without leadership teams would be horrible. There's so many examples in history and in any sport that teams have had so much talent but are just unable to win anything, this is more than likely because they have very little to no leadership on the team. And the same goes for the opposite, bad talent teams sometimes win everything, and this is because they have great leadership.

The physical traits of the book struck me quickly as it was a smaller book and a short book being only 224 pages. The cover in my opinion was very simple but unique, it has a black background with big bold white letters, so it makes the letters really stick out. It also has an image of the iconic jerseys that the All-Blacks wear. The thing I find very interesting about the cover is the subheading on the cover, it reads "What the All-Blacks can teach us about the business of life". This is so intriguing to me because the words "the business of life" is something I have never heard of before. The way I interpret this is with the All-Blacks and how they went through being a successful team because of their leadership, how they can teach people that may not play competitive sports what the basis of leadership can teach everybody. The book provides 15 chapters or "lessons" that start with character and ends with legacy. I enjoyed how the book was organized and written with each chapter, specifically with how each chapter teaches 1 unique lesson and it is all kept in one theme with each chapter. Dividing each lesson this way makes it a lot easier for each reader because it does not overwhelm the reader with a ton of information in one chapter. The typography of the book also supports the Kerr's effort in making the book look clean, authentic, and professional. The pages are also filled with

quotes by the players and the coach. Also filled with tons of bullet points which makes the reading of the book a lot easier.

The book starts off with Chapter 1, with the first lesson being “character”. This chapter begins the first lesson of how tradition that has been passed down from team to team since the beginning of the team’s history. The tradition is named “Sweep the sheds” which at the surface level is to make sure you are cleaning the locker room and all the facilities when you are done using them, regardless of if it is a victory or a loss. All players must participate in the cleaning, so they become closer as a team and keep their discipline. “Doing it properly, so, no one else has to. Because no one looks after the All Blacks. The All Blacks look after themselves” (Kerr 1). This quote is supposed to mean that they do not want anyone to do jobs for them and instead want to do things themselves, no handouts. This chapter displays great lessons about what it takes to be a leader because it is always the veterans on the team that make everyone clean everything after the games or practice, and that represents the leadership that gets passed down from person to person. Leaders need to lead by example by being disciplined, humble, and eager to help others. Using this idea, Kerr demonstrates how keeping a grounded mindset promotes harmony and sustained success. This mindset promotes a culture in which each person assumes responsibility and ownership, challenging normal ideas of leadership as hierarchical.

The next lesson Kerr brings up in this book is adaptability and the main saying that he brings up in this chapter is “Go for the gap”. This quote brings up the idea of exploiting your own weaknesses and figuring them out to improve not only as a player but also as a human being. Kerr talks on how resilient leaders and great teams learn from mistakes and keep improving. The All Blacks keep a growing mentality and aggressively seek out criticism. Their capacity to adapt not only guarantees their continued dominance but also shows that self-

awareness and a willingness to venture beyond of one's comfort zone are both necessary for success. The next lesson taught is about doing anything with a purpose, or asking yourself why with everything that you do. This chapter highlights the importance of aligning your personal goals with whatever organizational goals that you are required to be apart of. A personal example of this is when I am part of a baseball team and the goals of the organization is to win, I would then have to align my personal goals with that to try and put myself in the situation where I can help the organization win. The base of the chapter is when individuals and organizational goals are aligned their work becomes a lot more meaningful. Also, in this chapter Kerr talks about “leaving the jersey in a better place,” this refers to leaving the jersey their commitment to upholding the jerseys legacy for every generation after them.

The fourth lesson in this book is about responsibility and about being a leader, not a follower. Each player, according to Kerr, should take responsibility for there actions and expected to take ownership in there role on the team. According to Kerr, this strategy fosters respect and cooperation between people by enabling them to lead in their own unique ways. Teams gain resilience and self-sufficiency by assigning tasks to others and promoting initiative. As leaders prepare people to continue the team's legacy, the chapter also emphasizes the significance of succession planning. They use the saying “Pass the ball” to describe passing down the legacy. The best example I can think about in this chapter is when seniors in college show leadership to the younger kids and then as they get older and older they become the seniors and the leaders. The next lesson leans into learning and creating an environment that you can learn from. “Excellence is a process of evolution, of cumulative learning, of incremental improvement” (Kerr 51). This quote refers to the idea that no one is excellent and there is always a learning curve with whatever you are doing. You can never learn enough about a certain topic.

The All Blacks prioritize feedback, introspection, and flexibility, and they play with an attitude of humility and inquiry. They put a lot of effort into fostering an atmosphere where people feel free to question authority, question conventions, and welcome new ideas. This learning culture guarantees that the team stays competitive and flexible. It also promotes approachability in the team, so people feel okay with asking questions.

The next lesson is Whanau or 'no dickheads' which means a winning culture is filled with people who are not selfish and are in it for the team rather than in it for themselves. " 'On a good team there are no superstars,' Jackson's mentor, Red Holzman, taught him. 'There are great players who show they are great players by being able to play with others as a team . . . they make sacrifices; they do things necessary to help the team win' " (Kerr 63). This quote refers to good players that are not only great in talent but also fantastic in playing as a team. He refers to the idea of making sacrifices and this is a correlation to playing unselfishly and as a team. He dives deeper into how a toxic attitude from even just one player can disrupt unity and undermine the unity of the team. The basis of the chapter is to align team with unity and success rather than selfishness which ultimately will reflect failure. The seventh lesson is about managing expectations and pressure from outside forces. Kerr, in this chapter, brings up how because the All-Blacks are one of the most successful rugby organizations in history they are constantly being swarmed with expectations and pressure from the public. He brings up instead of letting it affect them in negative ways, they embrace the pressure and use it as a motivating force to produce at a much higher level. They strive to surpass even the highest external expectations and establish their own standards for success. They turn pressure into motivation and drive by concentrating on their principles, planning, and procedure. This chapter summarizes how

individuals and teams should confront obstacles with confidence and view them as opportunity for growth.

The eighth lesson is about being prepared in every aspect of life. The highlights of this chapter are about how preparation is extended beyond physical training for games and life but it is also about preparing the mental and emotional aspects. “ ‘Practise with intensity to develop the mindset to win,’ the All Blacks say. It’s a methodology called ‘Train to Win’ and Graham Henry describes it as one of the key strategic pillars that propelled his team to World Cup victory” (Kerr 79). This quote basically is the same as “practice how you play”. If you go out and do not take practice seriously then you will not take the game seriously. To develop resilience and confidence, the All Blacks use mindfulness practices, scenario preparation, and visualization. In keeping with the idea that brilliance results from constant labor and close attention to detail, they also emphasize small, steady progress. This chapter emphasizes the fact that all actions require preparation. The next lesson deals solely with pressure. This chapter talks about the importance of keeping a steady head when it comes to pressure. It involves things like emotional intelligence and self-regulation. In both on the field or in life it is so important to be able to handle pressure to produce better decisions and rise to any occasion with confidence.

The tenth lesson is about authenticity or staying true to yourself. helping participants in understanding their motives, values, and areas of strength and weakness. Their actions are more in line with their individual and group objectives thanks to their increased self-awareness, which creates a more sincere and consistent approach to success. Kerr then talks about bad authenticity to compare the two, he explains, “Bad faith occurs when peer pressure and social forces combine to have us disown our own values. It is an accommodation we make with society to fit in, a psychological ‘selling out’ in which we forsake our own freedom and self-expression for the

conformity of the crowd. Worse, it stands between our self and ourselves” (Kerr 98). The chapter lesson is basically that true leadership and excellence comes from embracing who you are as a person and using that to contribute to the team, doing this will result in improved confidence and more meaningful relationships.

The eleventh lesson talks about sacrifice. When being a professional athlete at any level there are some sacrifices that must be made when sometimes it is hard to give up. For example, if you are trying to lose weight you must sacrifice fatty foods. ““What does self-sacrifice mean to you?” It’s a question Andrew Mehrtens asks the teams he coaches. ‘It’s everything in a team . . . Pushing yourself outside your comfort zone . . . It’s doing extra, doing extra from what you’re asked to do, or doing extra from what someone else will do. “Train harder than a non-All Black,” we used to say”” (Kerr 107). This quote is saying that sacrifice has to be done while doing extra work and bringing the team together. The next lesson is about language, which is inventing your own language or deciding what words mean the most to you for a topic. “Standards were slipping. So were results – the All Blacks had lost five games in a row. “The recently retired pair felt that no one was passing the principles on, so they decided to do something about it. It became known as ‘The Black Book’, and was for All Blacks’ eyes only, on pain of excommunication, almost. For a time it became the team bible and its collected wisdom, in the form of aphorisms, still informs the culture” (Kerr 112). This refers to the language on the team, when they started not to do good they changed to a team language that was basically a book of quotes that the team would live by and it ended up working in their favor and helped them move together as a team.

The next lesson is about a ritual that a team has or a routine. Rituals are used by the team to strengthen its cultural values, identity, and mental readiness. The haka, which unites the squad and helps them mentally prepare for the trials ahead, is one of the most recognizable rituals.

Beyond tradition, the ritual serves as a means of developing emotional ties, attention, and a feeling of purpose. “Rituals reflect, remind, reinforce and reignite the central story. They make it real in a vital, visceral way” (Kerr 124). This represents how these rituals remind them of the story which is to have a successful team. I believe rituals are helpful in a daily schedule and are very useful in being successful and doing things the right way. The next lesson is about Whakapapa, which refers to lineage or legacy itself. The chapter highlights that making a positive impact on something greater than oneself is the path to long-lasting excellence. Knowing one's role in the greater scheme of things, whether in sports, business, or life, motivates commitment and purpose, inspiring people, and groups to aim high and make a significant difference. The last chapter or lesson of the book is a small passage talking about the All-Blacks legacy and then has empty pages at the back, “The rest of the pages are blank. Waiting to be filled. It’s time to make your mark, they say. Your contribution. It’s time to leave a legacy. Your legacy. It’s your time” (Kerr 139).

In this book James Kerr presents ways that the All-Blacks demonstrate leadership and stay as one of the most successful sport organizations in the world for over 100 years. Kerr turned the team's achievement into universal lessons on leadership, responsibility, humility, and constant growth through engaging storytelling and perceptive analysis. Whether you're a team player, a leader, or someone pursuing personal development, Legacy offers motivational and useful teachings. There is commitment to perfection in all aspects of the game off the field is the reason why this book is so good for readers who are not involved in sports in any way.

Work Cited

Kerr, J. (2013). *Legacy: What the All Blacks can Teach Us About the Business of Life*. Constable.