

# “There is Nothing that I Learnt in Sport that Doesn’t Apply to Business, or Life”: The Continued Education and Career Development of Professional Sports People

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**Abstract:** The business of sport has always been popular in countries all over the world. This research shows the success of organizations such as RUPA (Rugby Union Players Association), Universities, Industry and Players of Rugby when they play together off the field in educating professional sports people. This research was completed over 3 years, with 2 different rugby organizations, the NSW Waratahs and the 2016 Olympic qualifying Australian Rugby 7s'. The use of the Curriculum, Assessment, Pedagogy and Collaboration (CAPC) model, shows a tailored education program designed specifically for professional sportspeople, not used to sitting in a classroom for any length of time. The CAPC model provided rugby players/students with guest lectures by industry experts and using their industry partners enabled students to tour major industry facilities to cement their classroom learning. Outcomes included 20 rugby players graduating from the advanced diploma of management program over a 3-year period. The collaboration of such organizations over a 3-year period also resulted in reciprocal university research for these sporting clubs, and their industry partners. The CAPC model designed for professional sports people bring sport, industry and education together off the field, a collaboration resulting in win-win outcomes for all.

**Key words:** collaboration, CAPC model, pedagogy

## 1. Introduction

This paper reviews the importance of education for professional sports people in terms of successful succession planning, post professional athletic careers. The paper reviews the importance of tailoring education programs to meet the needs of professional sports people today, and the use of collaboration with business and higher education providers to provide a career in the future. The three-year case study follows the development, delivery and graduation of 20 professional rugby players, and the development of the CAPC Model, encouraging the continued collaboration of sport, business and education providers. RUPA (Rugby Leagues Players Association) is a fierce advocate for further education of current professional rugby players, they have on their agenda “public speaking, study skills, vocational training, university studies, budgeting, marketing”, they identified the Advanced Diploma of Management as a program to address these skills in current professional rugby players.

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## **2. Curriculum, Assessment and Pedagogy (CAP) Literature**

Cohen and Harrison (1982) in their extensive study found there was no common definition of curriculum that was shared by Australian teachers in schools, which lead to some concern over just how effective curriculum development is. Even Popkewitz (1997) who researched curriculum history states that historically, curricula is a system of ideas, standards, reasoning of concepts within the school and the subjects it teaches. Popkewitz (1997) then states that modern curriculum theory is a systematic way in which to re-vision students via generalized systems of ideas, a way of inscribing rules and reason to create regulation. Does this also apply to mature aged, elite athletes in the way in which they learn?

Curriculum is a way to organize knowledge, and to discipline individuals as members of society (Lundgren, 1983; Hamilton, 1989; Englund, 1991). Flinders, Noddings and Thornton (1986) define "null curriculum" as being a concept of what schools don't teach. According to Eisner (1985) schools teach 3 curricula, the explicit (publicly announced), implicit (implied values and expectations) and the null (what schools do not teach). They conclude in particular than the null curriculum can have worthwhile applications in curriculum development, although it is difficult to define. Print (1993, p. 60) states that "knowledge and understanding of the curricular process is of vital importance in the preparation of effective curricular". Hawley and Valli (1999) state that curriculum is part of school operations and Elmore (2002) states a link between curriculum and Pedagogy. Pedagogy "refers to what takes place in the classroom and other teaching sites" (Gore, 2001, p. 124).

The literature suggests that teachers are not actively engaged in using models for curriculum development. Print (1993) identifies reasons such as time, lack of understanding and experience, little support from colleagues, and a misunderstanding of the term "model". Zumwalt (1989, p. 176) states the planning process including structure, order and direction helps for "co-operative curriculum planning".

Hayes (2003) sees curriculum as a shared vision for classroom learning, she also believes there is a strong link and commitment to be able to align curriculum, assessment and pedagogy (CAP). Bernstein (1973) says "curriculum defines what counts as valid knowledge, pedagogy defines what counts as valid transmission of knowledge and assessment defines what counts as valid realization of this knowledge". Allen (2004) defined pedagogy as "the art of teaching where different practices are informed by different educational philosophies". Gore (2001, p. 124) refers to pedagogy as "to what takes place in the classroom and other teaching sites". Pedagogy can "provide the university and the school communities with unique perspectives on teaching and learning" (Lytle & Cochran-Smith, 1994, p. 24). Studies by Newmann and Associates (1996); Avery (1999); Avery and Palmer (2001) all state authentic pedagogy in conjunction with assessment has a positively link to authentic performance of students. Some current definitions of pedagogy are listed in Table 1.

Traditionally assessment has been used to grade students or satisfy the demands of external parties via a form of accountability (Shepard, 2000). Assessment however, should also be used to support the learning of students and encourage an enhancement of understanding of course materials. Some academics have shown a shift in traditional assessment methods to what is known as a type of continuous quality improvement known as learner centred instruction and assessment. This type of assessment involves classroom assessment techniques (CATS) which attempt to shift the focus from teaching to learning by linking it with various assessment tools.

**Table 1 Some Theories of Pedagogy**

Allen (2004)	"The art of teaching where <b>different practices</b> are informed by different educational philosophies".
Gore (2001, p. 124)	"to what takes place in the classroom and <b>other teaching sites</b> ".
Lytle and Cochran-Smith (1994, p. 24)	"provide the university and the school communities with <b>unique perspectives on teaching and learning</b> "
Newmann & Associates (1996); Avery (1999); Avery & Palmer (2001)	Authentic pedagogy with assessment creates a positive link to authentic performance.
NSW Department of Education and Training, Quality Teaching in NSW Schools, 2003	"the term <i>pedagogy</i> recognizes that how one teaches is inseparable from what one teaches, from what and how one assesses and from how one learns"
Haberman N.D.	Types of pedagogy can include "lecture/discussion, tutoring by specialists or volunteers, and even the <b>use of problem-solving units common in progressive education</b> "
NSW DET (2003)	"pedagogy that is fundamentally based on promoting high levels of intellectual quality, pedagogy that is soundly based on promoting a quality learning environment and pedagogy that develops and <b>makes explicit to students the significance of their work</b> "

However, current research has found that the link of the three criteria is not being used by teachers in the classroom in terms of the "framework of intellectual quality, relevance, supportive classroom environment and recognition of differences" (Gore, 2001, p. 124). Current and new teachers according to Gore (2001) are not producing what she coins "Productive Pedagogy" or student learning outcomes that can be measured. In fact, research by Newmann and Associates (1996) found in the United States that it was rare to find authentic pedagogy. This leads to the research problem: "Can a course be delivered to professional sports people using the Curriculum, Assessment & Pedagogy model in a Collaborative (CAPC) environment?"

The research problem then led to each of the following research questions:

- RQ1: Can Curriculum be tailored to meet the needs of professional sports people?
- RQ2: Can Assessment be tailored to meet the needs of professional sports people?
- RQ3: Can Pedagogy be tailored to meet the needs of professional sports people?
- RQ4: Can collaboration assist in the delivery of CAP to professional sports people?

### **3. How can We Deliver CAP with Collaboration (CAPC)?**

"Preparing for life after footy is crucial," says RUPA (Rugby Union Players Association) and NSW Waratahs Player Development Manager Lachlan McBain. "Not only does it ensure the boys have qualifications to fall back on once their playing days have finished but it also provides another avenue for them to focus their energy and take their minds off rugby." With the Waratahs already offering a comprehensive in-house Diploma of Business, the Advanced Diploma of Management seemed a natural progression (Sky's the Limit, 2014). "I was really keen to get this program up and running," McBain said. "Of the eight subjects students need to complete, two of the three core subjects deal specifically with leadership, so there is a great deal of benefit for our players in the short term as well as long."

As students from the NSW Waratahs and Australian Rugby 7's liked learning not so much from a textbook but from interaction such as listening to industry experts it was also decided to find out what they wanted to learn and how we could tailor their learning needs to the outcomes of the course. It was decided to refer to the guidance of the Classroom Practice Guide (NSW DET, 2003) as follows:

- What do you want the students to learn? We wanted a theoretical perspective of the course material to be

supplemented by practical examples that the students in their current roles could relate to, to enhance their learning.

- Why does that learning matter? These adult learners although experienced in their current middle management roles had not been exposed to theories and practices since leaving school between 10 and 20 years ago on average. We wanted to cement their current workplace experiences with theories to justify their behaviours, and give them tools to manage people better such as leadership, and use of innovation.
- What are you going to get the students to do (or to produce)? Students would be required to attend 12 full day classes within a six month period at the Waratahs headquarters; it would be facilitated by the University of Newcastle Business School, with guest lecturers. Students must submit up to 8 assignments, and make a final presentation of their learning and application in the workplace for each of the topics covered. Support days would be provided so students could also get one-on-one time with lecturers to enable them to complete assignments.
- How well do you expect them to do it? At it is run by University Lecturers, it is expected that students write at a sufficient academic level, equivalent to an undergraduate degree, with correct referencing, and report writing skills. Students should be able to combine current workplace practices with the theories to support these practices.

This led to the challenge of how do we assist these adult learners to understand the application of theories if they are not currently implementing them in the work place. This gave the facilitators a gap in current pedagogy, as classroom lecturing will not be enough to help adult learners from middle management understand the concepts. It was decided that a more practical approach was needed, so the notion of authentic pedagogy was researched.

#### **4. How do We Deliver Curriculum, Assessment & Pedagogy in Professional Sport?**

The challenge for teaching professional sports people is that they are not used to long periods of time sitting in a classroom, so careful planning was essential in the delivery and course content organization. This paper reports on the findings from two case studies, the professional sports team in super rugby the NSW Waratahs and the Australian Rugby 7's (men and women's teams), who undertook further education by selected players in 2014 and 2016. Case studies are useful when the "boundaries between phenomenon and context are not clearly evident" (Yin, 2003, p. 13) and is therefore appropriate given the inextricable connection of curriculum, assessment and pedagogy (CAP). Eisenhardt (1989) defines case study as "a research strategy which focuses on understanding the dynamics present within single settings". Merriam (2009, p. 40) defines case study as "an in-depth description and analysis of a bounded system". Convenience sampling was used to select these cases with the intention of extending current theory (Eisenhardt 1989) by exploring this phenomena in sporting organizations, with varying organizational contexts. All case organizations were based in one NSW region in Australia (Sydney CBD), students were all paying members of RUPA (Rugby Union Players Association), and operated in the professional sports sector (rugby). The two cases discussed in this paper were selected as they provided interesting contextual contrast in terms of players, the game and location of delivery.

For the advanced diploma of management, each topic area needed to be assessed for how it would approach each of the items of curriculum, assessment and pedagogy. Under the current government legislation, the curriculum and assessment was dictated by NSW department of education criteria, but the one aspect of the course that could be tailored to the sports peoples need was pedagogy. The way in which the course could be delivered

**"There is Nothing that I Learnt in SPORT that Doesn't Apply to BUSINESS, or LIFE": The Continued Education and Career Development of Professional Sports People**

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could be tailored to the needs of people not used to sitting in a classroom for long period of time. It was decided that collaboration with business would be one way in which to achieve a productive pedagogy. The facilitators first approached RUPA (Rugby Union Players Association) to gain support for the use of business in the delivery of content, as guest speakers and as possible excursions so the students could gain an understanding of business outside of sport. Topics for the advanced diploma were assessed against possible business partners, these partners were part of a convenience sample mainly from current sponsors of the NSW Waratahs, Australian Wallabies and Australian Rugby 7s teams. Other businesses were sourced from local contacts established by facilitators.

**Table 2 Topics in the Advanced Diploma of Management Course**

<b>Advanced Diploma of Management Topics</b>	<b>Guest Lecturers/ Excursion Businesses</b>
Provide Leadership across the organization	Associate Professor Lisa Barnes, Head of School, Avondale Business School <b>Excursion to Palmdale Memorial Park, including crematorium and café.</b>
Manage Finances	Sydney Roosters (National Rugby Leagues club) Chief Financial Officer (CFO) Mr Manuel Vlandis. <b>Excursion to Sydney Roosters NRL club including tour of Allianz stadium, Sydney Cricket Ground.</b> NSW Waratahs CFO Phillip Van Schalkwyk
Manage Organizational Change	NSW Waratahs CEO Jason Allen <b>Excursion to Frank Baxter Detention Centre (jail for teenage boys)</b>
Manage Innovation and Continuous Improvement	RUPA CEO Greg Harris, and RUPA President Benn Robinson (Rugby Union Players Association = RUPA) <b>Excursion to Mars factory, tour of manufacturing plant.</b>
Manage Knowledge	Wallaby #523 Ross Turnbull, qualified Lawyer and past NRMA President Chairman of Hall Chadwick David Fairfull
Develop and Implement a Strategic Plan	Associate Professor Lisa Barnes, Head of School, Avondale Business School <b>Excursion to QANTAS safety training facility</b>
Develop and Implement a Business Plan	
Develop a Marketing Plan	Dr Anton Kriz, Newcastle Business School

The Figure 1 shows photos from excursions attended by NSW Waratah players and Australian Rugby 7's.



**Figure 1 Excursions to Business Partners/Collaboration (Frank Baxter Detention Centre, QANTAS, Mars, Sydney Roosters)**

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Using the NSW model of pedagogy (NSW DET, 2003), each of the elements of intellectual quality, quality of learning environment and significance was then addressed, using the “CAPC” model (Tables 3–5).

**Table 3 Intellectual Quality**

<b>Deep Knowledge</b>	Gained from seeing personally the organization in terms of cementing classroom theory.
<b>Deep understanding</b>	Practical application of theory in a real world scenario, e.g., risk management of 100 young offenders from different backgrounds, cultures and ages at a Juvenile Detention Centre.
<b>Problematic Knowledge</b>	Seeing the razor wire around the detention centre and giving a scenario of what if a boy climbed the roof to get a ball and falls and gets caught in the wire, what is the appropriate WHS response.
<b>Higher-order thinking</b>	Developing a risk assessment plan for staff to rescue a child caught on a roof in razor wire.
<b>Metalanguage</b>	The language teachers and students use to discuss language is limited to the writing of reports for assignment submission and correct referencing style.
<b>Substantive communication</b>	This is reflected in the 3 presentations the students must make about each topic cluster. It is 10 minutes in duration and must relate the topic areas specifically back to their workplace.

**Table 4 Quality Learning Environment**

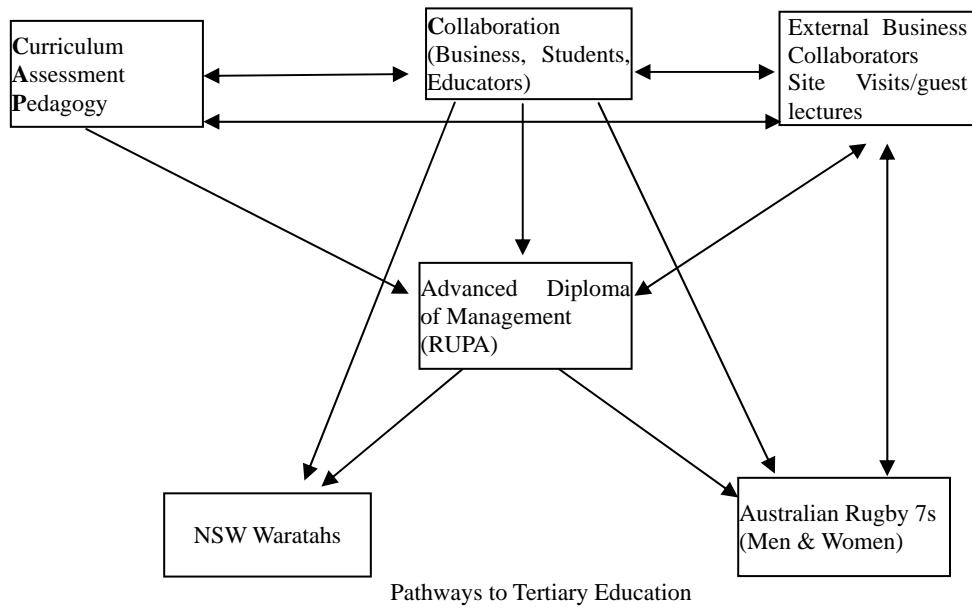
<b>Explicit quality criteria</b>	The use of industry experts (site visit presentations) and topic experts (university lecturers) maintains currency and quality through the use of highly experienced and well educated presenters and facilitators.
<b>Engagement</b>	The Mars visit “cook off” enabled the students to not only use the products they had seen being manufactured in the factory, but also allowed them to ask staff questions e.g. tomato sauce heart tick was an initiative to reduce the amount of salt in the product over 3 years.
<b>High Expectations</b>	Students were told in advance of the site visits, this allowed them to study the organization prior to the site visit and prepare questions, this pre-site visit work helped to create high expectations based on research done on the organization.
<b>Social Support</b>	This was encouraged during the individual presentation question time where students were asked questions and praised on their presentation and given advice to improve them going forward.
<b>Students’ Self-Regulation</b>	This is encouraged at all times particularly on the site visits as not only were they representing their own organization, but that of RUPA who had used their networks to arrange the visits.
<b>Student Direction</b>	At the start of the Advanced Diploma of Management, students were asked how they liked to learn, all responded that they needed practical application of the learning.

**Table 5 Significance**

<b>Background Knowledge</b>	All students had to complete research on the site visit companies prior to the site visit and prepare questions to ask staff, this enabled them to understand more about the organization prior to the visit.
<b>Cultural knowledge</b>	As all site visits were on traditional aboriginal land being the Darkinjung people, and this was respected at each site. This was also reiterated as being a challenge for Detention Centre as it takes children from all around the state of NSW and this means a variety of cultures, gangs, crimes and punishments.
<b>Knowledge integration</b>	This was done by the students in relation to research prior to the visits, asking questions on the visit and then presenting the information to the class.
<b>Inclusivity</b>	Students are asked to perform tasks as both individuals (e.g., presentations and assignments) but also as groups in the classroom and on the site visits.
<b>Connectedness</b>	By allowing students to visit real world businesses that range from the manufacture of food, to a youth detention centre and a crematorium students are given a wide range of very different businesses to analyze, what connects them all however is the theory is the same, e.g., Leadership is needed for each of these businesses.
<b>Narrative</b>	Demonstrated by student presentations.

After the first 2014 delivery of the advanced diploma of management to the NSW Waratah players, academics were able to form a close network between RUPA and the NSW Waratahs players and their business stakeholders. During 2015 and 2016, academics were able to use these networks for research, and university student learning. Students undertaking the bachelor of Business or Commerce were invited by RUPA and the NSW Waratahs to tour their training facility and to gain an understanding of the running of a professional sporting club where revenue was from members, television rights, ticket and gate sales as well as merchandise. Due to the close relationship that professional sporting clubs have at Allianz stadium in Sydney, students were also invited

to tour the Sydney Roosters facility and talk to the Chief Financial Officer (CFO) regarding the differences in revenue streams by Rugby Leagues clubs. QANTAS also invited the students to tour their training facility. The Australian Rugby 7's also invited a student in to research the possibility of a membership base for the 7's. The relationships were now becoming truly reciprocal. This reciprocal collaboration has resulted in students undertaking projects as part of their work integrated learning (WIL) with both the NSW Waratahs and Sydney Roosters. The NSW Waratahs project saw a student review the current membership initiatives and research other possible initiatives. The CPAC model is now shown:



**Figure 2 CAPC Model**

The 2014 class decided to create a business plan, marketing plan and strategic plan for the NSW Waratahs as part of their assessment tasks. This plan was very comprehensive and was presented to their coach Michael Cheika, who gave feedback to them for the future of the club. He also recommended that the business plan be put forward to the CEO Jason Allen. The students voluntarily made a presentation to the CEO who was so impressed he has now invited a player representative onto the planning sub-committee of the NSW Waratahs, and using their information will present a final business plan to the Board. The players were particularly proud of this achievement, and previously players were not consulted on the future of the club.

The 2016 Australian Rugby 7's class also prepared a business plan for the future of the 7's game, in particular the women's tournament. The women's rugby 7s team went on to win a gold medal at the 2016 Olympic games. The business plan was implemented upon the return of the teams from the Rio Games, some of the initiatives include the following (Australian Rugby 7's Advanced Diploma of Business Plan 2016):

(1) Create Own Fan/Membership Base

Create a membership opportunity for people to subscribe and become members of the Australian Womens & Mens rugby sevens teams. This can be linked to the Wallabies and also to the state teams, e.g., Waratahs. For example a member could buy a "Complete NSW Aussie Membership" to ARU, which would include membership of Rugby 7's, NSW Waratahs and Australian Wallabies, or a standalone membership to the "Australian Rugby 7s", which includes both men's and women's teams. Suggestions for membership would include 3 types of

memberships — adult, junior and family. Members pack would include, merchandise such as a hat, lanyard, flag, stubby cooler, poster and car sticker. Link membership to a Foxtel subscription (possible discount for new members taking out "Foxtel Sports packages"). Ticket discount given to members to see Sydney leg. Agreement with NSW Government for transport support to Allianz stadium for members. Results: To create a new **revenue** stream, creating passionate "**engaged**" fans. Possible increase in player salary to attract and retain good player's. Maintain current player's incentive system.

(2) Create Clearer Junior Pathways

To provide a pathway for junior players into the Australian Rugby 7's teams.

For example, private schools. Further support the national competition that is currently running in Aus.

(3) Strengthen current school rugby 7's programs

Need to create a competition for young girls, (at present no competition for girls over 12 years old at school level). Need to strengthen the current competition in schools for boys. Strengthen the state and national competition for children. Competition to be organized by the Australian Rugby Sevens, rather than ARU. Encourage scouting from domestic competitions into Australian squad. This could encourage further co-ordination of both domestic and Australian rugby sevens.

(4) More Exposure on Television for Both Teams

Foxtel allows for some overseas games to be aired on free to air television. Currently channel 7 has rights to Olympic coverage, with possible links to "7s on 7" notion. Further discussions with channel 7 post-Olympics. Also Pre-Olympics promotional appearances on Rugby HQ, channel 7.

(5). Professional Program — Own Identity

In 5 years' time we would like to be on par with how the super rugby programs are run, e.g., not only how we play but having the development players come through the system to add more depth to the squad. This could include an introduction to academy programs running in conjunction with full-time squad, e.g., Part-time contracts. Mentorship program involving experienced players and rookie players. The Womens rugby 7's game is the fastest growing sport in Australia as at 2017.

The case studies of the NSW Waratahs and the Australian Rugby 7's shows that this CAPC model suits their style of learning. Students like that the curriculum is designed with their future careers in mind, that the assessment tasks enable them to write business plans and deliver presentations as both a group and as an individual. Finally, the use of guest speakers and excursions complements the theory learnt in the classroom. The CAPC model in particular suits professional sports people not used to spending huge amounts of time in a classroom. The model complements their physical needs with their educational needs by stimulating them with a combination of classroom learning, guest speakers and excursions, and led to the unexpected external engagement with stakeholders from the University, Sports, and Industry. Truly a win-win situation for all parties.

### **3. Outcomes and Recommendations**

In answering the following research questions of:

RQ1: Can Curriculum be tailored to meet the needs of professional sports people?

RQ2: Can Assessment be tailored to meet the needs of professional sports people?

RQ3: Can Pedagogy be tailored to meet the needs of professional sports people?

RQ4: Can collaboration assist in the delivery of CAP to professional sports people?

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The CAPC model address curriculum and assessment as dictated by NSW department of education and training; however pedagogy uses a combination of classroom time, guest speakers and excursions to supplement learning. The use of collaboration between players from the NSW Waratahs, Australian Rugby 7's, RUPA, Businesses (e.g., QANTAS, Mars, Palmdale, Sydney Roosters & Frank Baxter Detention Centre) and education providers shows that collaboration can results in a stimulating classroom environment supplemented by relevant guest speakers. In 2014, NSW Waratah players graduated from their Advanced Diploma of Management, with the team winning the Super Rugby series that year. In 2016, players from the Australian Rugby 7's graduated from their Advanced Diploma of Management, the women's team going on to win a gold medal at the 2016 Olympic games. Whether there is a correlation between the offering of these programs and these victories is not researched here, however the skills students learnt in completing the advanced diploma can be summed up by one of the guest speakers Mr. Ross Turnbull, former Australian Wallaby "There is nothing that I learnt in SPORT that doesn't apply to BUSINESS, or LIFE" (2014).



rugbyplayersaus 1d  
rugbyplayersaus School's out! Congrats to these students on graduating from their Advanced Diploma of Management today (and also to the absent @domduff!) Who wore it best?  
lockym Hides @chuckytannard bald head  
rugbyplayersaus Is there a bit of pot & kettle there @lockym? @chuckytannard? connoisseurs Long way to go with your 3 subjects @henryhutchison  
\_brookie Yes @tanapenitani @\_\_hawt lockym @rugbyplayersaus @tanapenitani Glamorous @\_brookie nickbadger Few rough melons there boys...  
  
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## **Acknowledgement**

This quote is from Ross Turnbull (2014) in a Presentation to NSW Waratahs players completing their advanced diploma of management.

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**"There is Nothing that I Learnt in SPORT that Doesn't Apply to BUSINESS, or LIFE": The Continued Education and Career Development of Professional Sports People**

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