

Sitting in class I looked up at the clock at regular intervals, adjusting myself constantly, ready to fly out of my seat like the cork of a freshly opened bottle of champagne. The time was drawing nearer and nearer as I drifted of into a fantasy of the hours to come. Every detail of the match was being run through in my head, how would I tackle, how would I run, how would I kick? The blaring bell rang as my classmates and I autonomously rose to leave. I knew it was time and those around me simply didn't understand the importance of that particular evening.

As I rushed through the hallways, dipping and weaving through the hordes I catch a glimpse of my best friend, and he I. Approaching one another we exchange the same wild grin, for unlike the buzz of people around us he knew what I knew. "Ready to kick some rugby ass?" he exclaimed. Without a moments hesitation I shout back, "hell yeah!" and we come closer together, our hands being the first to meet, they strike against each other with the force of oxen. We continued through the hall, companions of ours joined with the same enthusiastic greeting, and we began to form a pack with same brotherhood of that of the wolf. But we were not wolves, we were Ravens, and we wanted a win.

From there it was a matter of waiting. Waiting for our ride. Waiting for other members of the team. Waiting in the car. Waiting to warm up. Like falling though an abyss it seem it would never end, but finally the sir (as they are called sirs in rugby) blew his whistle, sending my heart into a frantic flutter of excitement. He was calling for me, the captain, to decide extraneous thing such as, who would be kicking off, which side of the field we would be on and so forth. Coming back the team is already in position ready to commence at the drop of a hat. The game was upon us; my heart grew louder and louder, screaming with adrenaline, until the moment the ball struck my foot and we had prepared for, was now.

The game gruded on for over and hour, I stood as the wind hit my perspiring body and it sent a chill down my spine. The sir had just awarded us a penalty followed by what was a simple question that I now know I will never forget, "Would you like the penalty at the 22 or go for the kick?" A simple question yes, but under the most crucial of circumstances. The battle was nearing an end, and though we fought hard we slipped behind by three points, a kick for post could tie the game and send us to overtime. The idea was thought provoking, but I had great confidence in my comrades. Before I made an executive decision I gathered some background information by asking how much time remained in the match. Four minutes, I hastily calculated what our team could accomplish in that time and the results were favorable. The choice had been made; we would go for it all.

There was not an ounce of doubt in the faces of my teammates, they were as confidant as I was in there ability to out play the opposition. In that moment I knew I would never regret the decision, no matter the outcome. We looked back on the long year of training we had, and I looked back on the half of a decade I had put in with this team as well. We were not ready to be done, not ready for this to be the end, and we played with the up most ferocity that reflected the way we felt. However there was an enemy far greater than that of the opponent. The sir called for a scrum to us, and we were happy to get a chance at the ball, but the ball never came. Our opponent continuously collapsed the scrum, delaying time to prevent us from scoring. Time left was growing slim after the third collapse, which should have been a penalty for us, but there was our true enemy, the sir, not giving us another chance to finish the game once and for all. We all knew, but didn't care until now, that the sir was one of the other teams coaches. At that time we were waiting as we had in the beginning of the game to hold and run with the ball, our hearts pounding like a hammer on a nail. Time dragged on and on, collapse after collapse, coach scream from the side lines, we were helpless at the will of the sir. And finally he tweeted his whistle for the last time.

The game was over and I felt the shock of it roll over me like a freight train, collapsing on my knees I felt my eyes well with tears of defeat. I looked up, some were frustrated, some in shock but at some point they all looked to me and thanked me for leading them on that day. So as I knelt, my tears changed from disappointment to joy, joy for the years that had past and tears for the friendships I had made. I looked to my coaches and my family; they returned a looked that could only be described as admiration and once again my eyes swelled. I dug up the strength to stand once again and calling to assemble my team we cheered our cheer for one last time.

a story by Skip Grinnell