



### Rys Chadwick

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# The Rugby Advantage: A Positive Guide to a Positive Coaching Philosophy

**The Rugby Advantage is a professional, holistic coaching and wellness consultancy organisation founded on the concept of rugby's 'advantage law'. The Rugby Advantage aims to provide clients with an 'always gaining' mindset, thereby helping them become successful and happy in any aspect of their life.**

**T**he Rugby Advantage provides advice, strategies, motivation and knowledge to produce a change in clients thought processes, actions and behaviors so that they are well equipped to gain an advantage whilst in pursuit of their goals, and to change their lives in a positive way.

## 'Always gaining' mindset

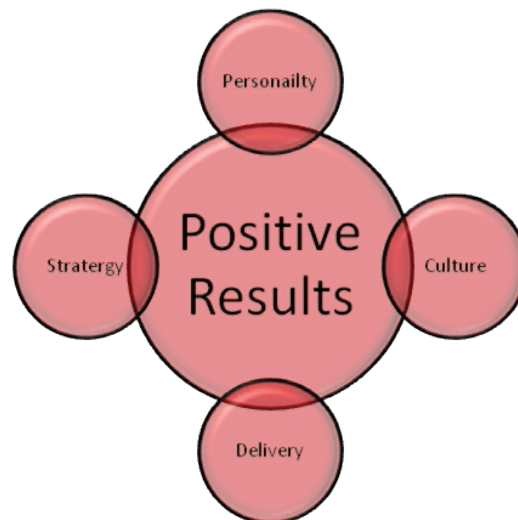
*What:* A person with an always gaining mindset is someone who demonstrates continuous development of themselves in every aspect of their life. They take every situation they find themselves in as an opportunity to gain an advantage from something or someone which then allows them to grow and improve their learning, skills, knowledge and experience.

*Outcome:* Developing the always gaining mindset allows for growth and stimulation of the brain which in turn reduces boredom and negative thought processes. This allows a person to focus, work on and take control of the positives in their life, increasing resilience, mental toughness and emotional intelligence. The end goal is becoming the best person that they can be.

The following is a description of how positivity can be used in coaching to produce positive results. I have found this system when applied effectively can work with a vast amount of people in many different environments. The important issue to grasp here is that what you are coaching – whether it is rugby, music, or corporate strategies – you are not coaching the content, you are coaching the person, and focus on subject matter actually figures as a very small percentage of the coaching philosophy and approach.



Presenting one's own positivity in coaching is essential. I have found that when you can get people to tap into their "state of advantage" (internal discourse, energy and physiology), the learning process becomes a lot easier and students buy into the coaching process more readily. If you can change the physiology of an individual – change the way they talk to themselves and focus their energy on the task at hand (learning) – positive "feel good" chemical reactions take place, ensuring that the subject will be in the "positive state of advantage" to be coached. This, however, is a journey, not a quick fix: it is something that has to be coached over time.



### Personality

In order for a rugby team to have maximum output on the field and be successful, all 15 players need to be working together simultaneously. An individual cannot be successful without the others. This is why, as a coach it is important to follow the "Fifteen Maxims" below: they provide the cornerstones to becoming a successful positive coach, with a maxim being any simple and memorable rule or guide for living.

#### Life maxims

1. *Integrity:* Do the right thing in any situation you find yourself in.
2. *Help:* Help people, you never know how they may help you.
3. *Humility:* Stay humble, no one is perfect and everyone has faults.
4. *Equality:* You don't know who people are or where they have come from.
5. *Respect:* Finding value in each individual.
6. *Enjoyment:* If you are not enjoying what you do you will never put 100% into it.

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7. *Passion*: Passion keeps you motivated.
8. *Live*: Live your life, not someone else's.

#### Advantage maxims

9. *Always gain*: Always look to better yourself.
10. *Believe*: If you don't believe that you will succeed, you never will.
11. *Risk*: Step outside your comfort zone; this helps you grow.
12. *Sacrifice*: Prioritise. What is actually important to you? What can you do without?
13. *Work*: A strong work ethic keeps you grounded.
14. *Confidence*: If you don't have confidence in yourself, no one will.
15. *Innovate*: Stay creative – think like there is no box.

### Strategy

Positive philosophy shapes how you choose to view the “game”. If you play a game which is focused on defence and fail to work on an attacking or scoring strategy, players won't enjoy the experience and will lack positive motivation. At any level of sport that you play (or activity you participate in), the aim is to score or better your opponent. It is a great feeling to score or get the upper hand, and people feel a great sense of accomplishment as a result.

There are also similar kudos associated with the assist resulting in a score. The prospect of assisting and a desire to score, when coached in the correct way, can be very powerful. If the philosophy of the game is a positive one, where you as the coach promote scoring and trying everything you can to score, or enable other team members to score, and adopt an attacking position, players will inevitably enjoy the style of play more than a defensive stance.

### Delivery

#### 1. Engaging and challenging content

Content has to be engaging, and players have to feel that they are learning and improving. If these critical incentives are missing, there follows a fall in motivation, competition becomes easy and egos start to grow. The process of working towards a goal and not succeeding first time is a healthy approach, since succeeding all of the time can begin to get dull and uninteresting, and fails to teach or result in any improvement.

*The process of working towards a goal and not succeeding first time is a healthy approach.*

## *The coach must lead by example.*

### 2. Trusting relationships

Trust is a hugely important part of coaching, and one which is often overlooked. If a player doesn't trust the coach, it will become extremely difficult for that coach to get points across or to impose change for better. More importantly (and this is a relatively rare attribute for coaches in many disciplines), coaches need to have trust and faith in their players ability to be empowered and find answers, enabling them to model behaviours and approaches to tasks presented to them in a way unique to their personality or psyche. Otherwise players may feel trapped or caged, with no opportunity to call upon personal skill sets and specialities, resulting in a desire to rebel and/or break out. Coaches must empower and trust their players; they will then respond accordingly.

### 3. Teaching style

Coaches, like all people, have a particular personality, but once they start coaching this personality may appear to change. It is essential that when you are trying to teach someone that there is some compatibility of personalities between coach and trainee, gained by the coach adapting to suit the learner. This can sometimes be a difficult skill to master, but once harnessed, it can be incredibly powerful. The fundamental purpose of changing a coach's personality style to suit the learner is to allow the learner to feel comfortable and safe, thus providing a catalyst for learning.

## Culture

A positive culture stems directly from the coach and the team values which he or she instils, what he or she expresses, what he or she asks, shows and models. If the coach constantly contradicts himself, or herself, asking the players for something different, or to perform in a different way than he or she has requested previously, this will have a detrimental effect on the team culture, creating confusion and unease. Similarly, the coach must lead by example. For instance, if a desired underlying culture of the team is to be on time, then this discipline needs to be modelled by the coach, who under his or her own doctrine, should never be late (or, rather, should always be early!):

- The example the leader sets
- The attitude they express
- The expectations they establish
- The standards they enforce

## *Winning may be a by-product of achieving positive results*

### Positive results

Let's be clear, positive results may not be just winning, but winning may be a by-product of achieving those positive results. Every result has a positive aspect. Not all players may see this concept readily, but as long as players are learning, the coaching is demonstrably impacting them in a positive way, and there is growth, then this may be taken as a positive result. This basic concept of positive results is often something which players need to be taught as part of the coaching process. The media has certainly had an enormous impact on the interpretation of "positive results", moving the appreciation of sport to be one of winning is key; if you lose, there are no positives, which clearly is not the case if any lessons have been learned from that loss.

### Three lived experiences

#### James – professional rugby player

Right from my first interactions with Rys, I felt he took into account the individual as a holistic being. Reflecting on this, it has clearly improved my rugby; however I feel this was a knock on effect from increasing resilience, mental toughness and emotional intelligence.

I believe a common misconception is that a holistic viewpoint is always to make the athlete happy. I have learnt mental toughness in the lowest points of preseason, resilience when hurting in the 80th minute of a game and emotional intelligence when dealing with the realisation that you have let down your team mates in the heat of a game. These cannot be learnt in an environment that is always positive. That is not to say, however, an environment should be poisonous. Some of the best learning of skills and tactics have come in a safe and warming environment.

#### Gio – Female U18 USA Rugby Player

Rys's coaching style focuses on building team culture over a win record. He builds people, not just players, by pushing us out of our comfort zones and improving the way we react under pressure. By enforcing player responsibility and respect, we are all encouraged to be more mature and accountable to and for one another. We don't just do as we are told at training sessions: we figure out why and how the activity we are doing helps us to improve a specific aspect of our game. By doing so, we deepen our understanding of game play and sharpen our focus on what we may need to work on.

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brings nothing but stress,  
while being upbeat and  
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new person.*

**Nic – Male Former U18 USA Rugby Player**

The influence caused me to grow as a player as well as a person off the field. This type of positivity brings out the best in players. It reinforces what is done well and helps improve on what needs to work. In life, it teaches you how to take care of yourself, physically and mentally. This type of positivity in training wears off on the players, teaching that most of the time negativity brings nothing but stress, while being upbeat and positive brings out a whole new person.

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