

PLAYERS PERSPECTIVE WITH ANDY ELLIS



2013 ITM CUP PLAYER OF YEAR



ANDY ELLIS IS AN ABSOLUTE A CHARACTER OF THE GAME. AN AWARD-WINNING LANDSCAPE GARDENER, A FORMER MORNING RADIO HOST AND BAND MEMBER, A FATHER AND HUSBAND WHO HAS RACKED UP OVER 150 SUPER RUGBY MATCHES FOR THE CRUSADERS. WE CATCH UP WITH THE CANTERBURY RUGBY ICON AND FORMER ALL BLACK HALFBACK BEFORE HE HEADS BACK TO JAPAN FOR TWO MORE SEASONS WITH THE KOBE STEELERS TO SHARE WHAT HE HAS LEARNED IN HIS 13 YEARS PLAYING RUGBY IN NEW ZEALAND.

ON COMMITMENT

I was lucky that I grew up in a positive environment, but my parents were into commitment. If I ever decided I was going to give something a go, I had to give it a bloody good go and be highly committed. I remember that I decided I wanted to try and learn the piano, so I ended up doing it for four years! I soon learned that I had to be careful what I decided to have a crack at because Mum and Dad were going to make me stick at it. Now

I realise that it provided me with good discipline and work ethic. It made me appreciate that there were no short cuts - you simply have to work pretty hard. When you decide to throw everything at something, or really want to achieve a goal it is important to write down what that commitment looks like. Ask yourself how motivated am I to do it? Does it mean I am up earlier to train? By writing it down you can't escape from your plan - you can't hide from it. This is slightly different from the idea of choosing something when I was young and my parents making me stick to it. When I got to an age where I really knew what I wanted then I was able to set goals, and write down what the process looked like.

COPING WITH DISAPPOINTMENT

I think as a young player it is tough because you work hard for certain things and they don't always go how you want them to. One of the biggest disappointments for me was missing out on the Canterbury U19 team. I thought if I can't make it to the U19 team then I can't make it beyond that. After finding out I didn't make the team

I was driving home absolutely gutted and I pulled my car over and thought to myself, I have a decision to make here, will I stay positive and fight hard for my goals, or will I throw the towel in and focus on something else? I will give it everything I've got and have no regrets. I couldn't control the selection but I could control my attitude. I had the decision what my attitude was going to be, so I really embraced the challenge, worked really hard and had no regrets. By doing this, I knew I had done everything in my control and would see where it would lead. Off the back of that I got a few opportunities. I had the right coaches at the right games and got my chance. I ended up playing for the teams I had dreamed of playing for and although in reality it wasn't always a smooth run there were some incredible moments.

ON PERSPECTIVE

I always tried to put things in perspective and my wife was really supportive of that. When I didn't get back in the All Blacks I still had other wonderful teams to play in so concentrated on that. It is important

to make peace with the outcomes out of your control and focus on the positives and appreciate the things you have. With the All Blacks I never got a clean run. When you're young if you get injured or are not selected it is going to be tough to take and you will watch your team mates, but you have to use that as motivation. You have got a genuine choice - you can either work really hard to come back and be a better player or you can give up. If you choose the first option you have no regrets and then it makes it easier to be a peace with yourself. This certainly comes with experience and age.



2011 RUGBY WORLD CUP FINAL

ON HAVING BALANCE

Having a balance puts the rugby stuff in a better perspective. When I am busy outside of rugby I find I am more connected when I go to training. Rugby is an intense environment so it is important to have things going on outside of rugby so you keep it all in perspective and it helps the enjoyment. I am a person who likes being busy and I think that holds you in good stead for life after rugby. I was doing morning radio before training every day and I really enjoyed it and found it a great way to start the day.



ANDY ELLIS IN 2006 WITH THE DAVE GALLAHER TROPHY FRANCE V NEW ZEALAND

It would enable me to thrive more in training because I was mentally in the zone when I was at training. When I was doing landscaping for garden shows I would finish training after doing work ons and then go and do landscaping work for the shows. When you are training you have to give it everything - that is how you become the best. You have to make sacrifices through decisions.

ON SOCIAL MEDIA

I have no social media. I am a bit old fashioned. I see guys come off the field and the first thing they do is check their phones. I am lucky if I get a few text messages! I see a place for social media and it has some real positives for connecting to the fans but for me I would rather live in the actual moment.

PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT

The Personal Development Managers really help with the stuff when you get into the adult world. They can help with things you previously might not have had to think about like insurances, houses, wills, finances and careers. You get good support to make good decisions. As a professional player you can get fast forwarded into having to make big decisions quickly so it is important to tap into those resources around you. It is important to think about what you are going to do after rugby, even if it is not set in stone, just so a player can genuinely have an idea in the back of their head. It sews the seed. You have to talk about a plan, even on a casual basis then you are not losing sight that you have to have something after rugby. Verbalising your plans helps. It is difficult when you don't know

when your career is going to end and that could be through injury or deselection, which are out of your control, so you have to be prepared. As a player you do a lot of promotional events which can help with your networking for future careers. I have got interests in many areas so it is quite exciting. I have always tried to say yes to opportunities I have been given because I know they have been able to open some doors. I enjoy learning about new things, experiencing new things and meeting different people.

ON HIS JOURNEY

It is important to enjoy the social aspect with rugby because the friendships and connections are one of the things I will take away from rugby. You are always surrounded with people from different environments which is stimulating and as a player you know it is not forever, so it is important to network and make connections for life after rugby. I spent a week in the Baa baas, it was such a fun week and I made great connections and really enjoy seeing the guys after the games now. Rugby provides great friendships and it is those that will last long beyond the playing days.

ON HIS JOURNEY

It is essential to have a good solid support network that will be there through thick and thin. I am lucky my family and wife have been rock solid so I am very grateful for that. You learn a lot of your wisdom later in your career. I make sure that I really enjoy the moment, embrace it and try to enjoy it. Ride it with a smile on your face.



ANDY ELLIS AND RICHIE MCCAW, EDEN PARK, 2011 RUGBY WORLD CUP FINAL