

PLAYING BY THE RULES

Text: II Corinthians 10:2-6

Key Word: Rules

Key Thought: Those Following God's Book of Rules Will Win in the Game of Life

Most of you know that I have walked with a limp most of my life just by playing some touch football in the playground at Central Public School in 1963 when I was 10 years of age. I had to resign to watching sports instead of playing in the games after that time.

I would like to say that I then engulfed myself in understanding the many types of sports but after this sermon (or should I say made up story) that I'm not even average. Yet I do love telling stories if they have a good story theme. So lets get started with this foundational thought for the changes to come.

I. THE COINS FLIP - *"The Coins Flip, you mean the coin flip don't you?"* No I wish I did make a mistake but it is just a sample of what is to come between this final game of the Dodgers and the Saints. The home team, the Dodgers called the flip "**Tails**" and tails it had to be. There was no place to argue with the head referee. Him and his entire group of refs presided over the entire season **from anything but a neutral point of view.**

II. THE FIRST KICK - The first kick from the Saints was an excellent start but that lasted only for a minute. The Ball carrier began his run to the goal line. His team members did everything they could (and many things they should have been penalized for) as he made his way to score the first goal. **Where were the red flags?** The whistles were silent until the Saints began to argue a host of complaints that fell on deaf ears of the refs. This can't be happening!

III. THE FIRST FIELD GOAL - To add injury to insult the place kicker missed his destination between the goal posts. Oh well, that happens and why it is so important to pay off the refs. **After all goal posts are built to be moved aren't they?** Dodgers 7 Saints 0. The home team fans burst from their seats because the saints were being humiliated and could do nothing about it. They could clearly see that without a major change that their team was about to win the trophy and bragging rights for being the top team. Complaints were just retaliated upon by the officials who even ejected a main player for speaking out against these atrocities.

IV. THE SECOND QUARTER - Everything the Dodgers did to break the rules was blamed upon the Saints. This is not to say the Saints were perfect. Their anger was about to burst when the coach called a "**time out.**" It was time to initiate their private weapon. The team chaplain stood proudly with his well-worn Bible and began to read at the top of his voice. These are the words of God as He inspired the apostle Paul.

IV. THE SECOND QUARTER (Contd.)

“I beg you that when I come I may not have to be as bold as I expect to be toward some people who think that we live by the standards of this world.

3. For though we live in the world, we do not wage war as the world does.

4. The weapons we fight with are not the weapons of the world. On the contrary, they have divine power to demolish strongholds.

5. We demolish arguments and every pretension that sets itself up against the knowledge of God, and we take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ.

6. And we will be ready to punish every act of disobedience, once your obedience is complete.”

II Corinthians 10:2-6

Half time was about to begin. As the whistle blew the Dodgers knew they were about to be defeated. They just heard God’s Word being pronounced as a game changer. **They could no longer dodge the truth that was about to defeat them.**

V. HALF TIME - The coach led those precious moments by asking all his team to pray quietly for a few minutes. Then inspired by the team chaplain he began to quote a few of his favourite verses of Scripture.

“God is our refuge and strength, an ever-present help in trouble.

2. Therefore we will not fear . . .”

Psalms 46:1,2

“The Lord is my light and my salvation whom shall I fear? The Lord is the stronghold of my life—of whom shall I be afraid?

2. When the wicked advance against me to devour me, it is my enemies and my foes who will stumble and fall.

3. Though an army besiege me, my heart will not fear; though war break out against me, even then I will be confident.

Psalms 27:1-3

V. HALF TIME (Cond.)

During the robust voices of cheer from the team there came a knock at the team door. The coach was summoned while his team shared accolades and high-fives. The coach returned with a strange look on his face. He told his team that their prayers had been answered. The entire group of referees had become ill. **They all ate from the same pot so it wasn't surprising that they were all diagnosed with food poisoning.**

A totally new group of referees were suited up and ready to call the game - **according the rule book.** It was now OUR game to take! Their team would no longer have to fight both the Dodgers and their slimy referees.

“Who's in it to win it?” The response was deafening and the Dodgers couldn't help but hear that call to battle.

VI. THIRD QUARTER

The main ref decided to start the second half totally different by tossing another coin - a single coin and giving the decision to call the coin while in the air by the Saints. They chose **“heads”** and heads it was. The Dodgers kicker sent the ball deep into the Saints end. **There was a field to be taken and a team to be defeated.** Eleven players against eleven players made it even ground.

It was almost unbelievable to see the ball carrier weave his way in and out of the openings provided as his team players paved the way for him to go. Touchdown followed by a proper field goal right between the pipes. Dodgers 14 because of their 2nd touchdown in the second period to 7 for the Saints.

VII. FINAL QUARTER

The Dodgers lined up to receive the incoming kick. Their pride was about to take a kicking. The first Saint to hit him caused him to fly in the air while the second one contacted him while still in the air and the ball flung into the air and right into the third player who took it for a touch down. Once again they repeated another perfect field goal right in the middle of the pipes. **Dodgers 14 - Saints 14. Seven minutes left in the game.**

VIII. TIME OUT CALLED BY THE DODGERS

The Dodgers huddled but had nothing left in their bag because they were so used of having others carry the game for them that it left them with little choice but to cheat and try not to get caught. They began to return the kick but only gained a few yards. The kick was perfectly positioned close to the sideline. The Dodgers tried to make it to the middle of the field where there would a place to run. Not this time though. Their retriever was tackled on their 40th line.

IX. RETURN GONE WRONG

They lined up at the scrimmage line and tried to just gain a few yards in their first down. They lost 3 yards instead. They decided to go for a long pass but the quarterback got tackled and fumbled the ball.

Saints on the Dodger's 34th yard line. First down on the scrimmage line 33, 77, 99 hike. The wide receiver was the only option for the quarter back. He threw the ball with precision and it was carried to the 3rd yardline before his receiver was tackled.

X. GOAL TO GO

First down and goal to go along with the victory brings you to what? Time out of course. Time to plan their final strategy. Watch for a player to be sent by the coach with the play. But that's not what's happening. Lets face it two minutes passes away quite quickly.

The Saints gathered in a huddle, bent their knees and bowed before God. With arms interlocked they began to give praise to God. Shouts of Hallelujah. Praises to their King. Glory and Honour to the One and Only God. All of the 11 players ended with "I thank God for . . ."

The Scrimmage line was nothing you would expect. They formed it in the shape of a V with five players on each side and the quarter back in the most open part of the V. After just three "Go God" shouts the ball was snapped and the quarterback walked into the slight opening to score the final touchdown. The final point was achieved to end the game with the Dodgers 14 and Saints 21.

The Saint's fans began increasing their ending chant - Matt 28, Matt 28, Matt 28. The announcer was baffled. There is no one by the name of Matt on their team or anyone with the jersey number 28. Then a young boy from the local cancer clinic who was awarded the prize of watching the game from the booth began quoting the Scripture he learned in Sunday School that was heard by everyone over the PA system:

*"All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me.
19. Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit,
20. and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age."*

Matthew 28:18-20

And so the story ends as you get handed the ball.

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Date: Jan 3/21

Place: FCA

Time: 10:30 Am

Song: Raise a Hallelujah

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