

Dear Raylene,

I write to you to offer the Southern Courier a truly remarkable junior rugby league story of great rivalry and friendship between what on a broader scale are the two major local NRL powerhouses the Eastern Suburbs Roosters and the South Sydney Rabbitohs. In junior rugby league the Clovelly Crocodiles sponsored by the Sydney Roosters play in the South Juniors competition. This is not unusual nor news worthy. What is, is the following. The Clovelly Crocodile under 11 first division side played against the Mascot jets last Sunday in a knock out semi-final with the winner going on to play in the grand final this Sunday.

The following events are the story. The two teams finished 2nd (Mascot) & 3rd (Croc's). They each played a semi-final the week before. Again this is not unusual. The results of those earlier games had these two teams playing each other for the right to compete in the grand final this coming Sunday.

For the loser their season was over. Again nothing unusual. What transpired is inspirational and a credit to the coaches, managers, players and administrators of the game and the respective parents. A fabulous story of how kids can become better people through sport. So here's the story.

The two teams played a knock out semi-final at Coogee oval last Sunday. They played 20 minutes a half. At full time the scores were locked at 18 all.

The ground announcer advised that there would be 10 minutes extra time. At the conclusion the teams were locked at 22 all. Because other games were to follow it was necessary for the two teams to play a replay last Tuesday after school at 4.30pm at Rowland park. Both sides attended and went back into battle. Remarkably at full time the teams were locked at 12 all.

Another draw. They then went into 10 minutes extra time. As the sun was setting and poor light fell across the ground the two teams battled valiantly. At the end of extra time they remained locked at 12 all. The officials declared another reply. This was to be played at Erskineville oval same time on Thursday ie today. Again the team's rallied and went back into battle. After another hard fought game the Clovelly Crocodiles won 12-10.

That is not where this remarkable story ends. Far from it. It's actually where it begins. The spirit in which the game had been played was unquestionable. Unfortunately the NRL is generally dogged by negative headlines. Well this is a victory story. The players embraced each other congratulating their efforts. The Mascot coach and staff addressed the Clovelly crocodiles congratulating the way in which the teams fought hard but with respect and within the laws of the game. It was uplifting to see 11 year old boys reminding us all it's a game that should be played hard but fair and enjoyed. What I want to make clear is this is not a story about winners or losers.

Far from it. In fact, if it ends up that way, it would be an absolute tragedy. This is about kids playing a game they love in the spirit it was designed for. My preference is that the story should not detail the score rather the epic battle between two teams that have

mutual respect for each other's ability and competitive spirit. Again the most remarkable part of the story is that it's is Rooster v South's (and Croc's v Mascot another long held rivalry) but in this instance it didn't matter who you supported as it was the manner in which the boys conducted themselves on the field of play.

So what is the objective of the story. League is not about thugs and hatred of the opposition. Two teams from different backgrounds one playing in another's competition showing mutual respect. A big congratulations needs to go to the hard working administrators. In this case I will be bias as I'm a father of a Clovelly Crocodile & I see the efforts that our administrators in particular the President Eugene Sangster and his wife Michelle do for this local football side. It would be nice for the Roosters administration to recognise their efforts and their juniors who play under their logo because they want to be a future Rooster. I'll stop there with the political commentary. I have copied Michelle in on this email. I believe your story (I'm being pre-emptive here) should include comments from them. It also needs to include comments from the Mascot President and the respective coaches. We would also be happy to arrange a group photograph of both teams to include in the story.

I implore you to include this story in your publication. Again the preference is that no scores are included as it's always difficult for the losing side and that's not the purpose. It's the manner in which 11 years old remind us of who we are and how we should act. And yes I am a very proud father but yes equally amazed at how this experience has had a profound change on how I view the benefits of rugby league. Happy to assist with any further information. I hope you too see this story as news worthy.

With thanks  
Keiran Wallington