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A FRENCH CONNECTION

Murus Sanctus Secure Cartier Queen's Cup

SUPA UNIVERSITIES NATIONAL SUMMER CHAMPIONSHIPS

University Teams Descend Upon Offchurch Bury

GOLDEN JUBILEE INTERNATIONAL TEST MATCH

England Defeat Peru at Beaufort

PLUS: Binfield Heath Club Focus, Importance of Authenticity & Keeping Your Toes Up



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Cover photograph:

Murus Sanctus celebrate their inaugural Cartier Queen's Cup win despite the drizzle.
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Understanding what it takes to overcome fear and self-doubt has been at the root of Paul 'Stalkie' Stalker's personal transformation. He has proven experience of working with Polo Teams, Patrons and individual players for the past 2 years achieving outstanding results. With individual clients, Stalkie's aim is to untap, nurture and focus their passion and potential on becoming the best versions of themselves in all aspects of their lives, whatever their starting point



Stalkie working with the Escobar family – Luis, Nico & Luca

Importance of Authenticity

Are You Letting the Real Polo Player In You Shine Through?

In order to take an elite team, from any sport, from good to great to world-class, the need for an authentic, no bullsh*t, no hidden agenda culture is key.

Every player needs to be allowed to express themselves but also to buy into each other, to understand what each of their team members bring to the team and how to communicate most effectively with each other regardless of seniority, playing position, language and cultural differences.

As I write this article, I'm struck by how Pep Guardiola has achieved this with

his awesome treble-winning Manchester City team, full of outstanding players who clearly share a common vision and purpose. And you can be sure the winners of this year's major team-sports tournaments such as The Ashes, the Rugby World Cup, the Women's Soccer World Cup, the World Aquatics championships, the World Rowing Championships (did I mention The Westchester Cup?!) will exhibit similar qualities.

And what of our very own glorious polo tournaments? From my experience, the

chances of victory are exponentially linked to how unified a team's culture is. Your polo team may have signed a multi-goal handicapper for the season, your very own Erling Haaland maybe, but unless they understand and embody your team values and mission, their pockets of individual excellence will only get them and the team so far.

When Manchester City won the FA Cup, the second of the three major trophies they were hunting down this season, it was Erling who was going round every teammate after the final whistle, giving each of them a determined hug, saying 'that's two out of three, two out of three'. And it was Erling, when interviewed after the Champions League victory against Inter, who said, 'I'm always happy for my achievements, but they're never possible without my teammates' and "Be kind, be generous, be comprehensive. But most of all be thankful".

Being authentic, being real on and off the polo field, brings a raft of benefits to a vibrant, winning team culture:

- It removes any of the negative moods, stress and anxiety you associate with polo and replaces them with an abundant, positive mindset
- It motivates players to choose the best course of action in most high-pressure scenarios
- It inspires players to become accountable for their behaviour and actions
- It encourages players to be a positive role model to other polo players, as well as to their families and friends

So, what are my top tips towards building such authenticity in your team and let the real you shine through on and off the polo field?

1) Players need to identify what their values are and build their purpose (or 'mission') around them

2) They need to behave in line with their values which will result in a brilliant, resilient polo mindset

3) They need to give the emotions they wish to receive

4) They need to communicate openly, yet empathetically

When coaching the mindset of my stable of polo teams and individual players, I have developed a program solely dedicated to achieving the above – that's how important I perceive it to be.

Here's an idea of the tools I have used



Stalkie working with Emlor

to turn around the fortunes of two teams last UK season, both of whom bagged more trophies and experienced more exhilaration and joy than ever before.

What Do You Value?

"Be yourself. Everyone else is already taken."
– Oscar Wilde

If you were to die today, would your last thoughts and feelings be of contentment and satisfaction with what you have achieved in and outside polo?

Would you be happy with the way that you have achieved your potential, with your legacy and the role model you have been to other players, patrons, family members and the whole team set-up?

If you consider all the various aspects of your polo life – such as your physical and mental health and resilience, your relationships with patrons, coaches, players and horses, your social life off the field – are you allowing the real you to consistently shine through?

When the doctors told me they thought I was going to die from cancer, I spent many days replaying moments in my life, wondering whether I was proud of what I stood for and what my legacy might be.

I scored myself about a 5 out of 10. Why? Because most of my greatest achievements in my personal and professional life up to that point had been undermined by my damaging behaviour (I was ruthless in achieving wealth and status, I abused my body, I wasn't a good husband or attentive father).

I fully believe that my behaviour had put me out of synch with my values in life. Deep down I'm sure I always knew what mattered, I just never felt entitled to live by it.

Where are you? What exactly are your

values? And do you behave in line with them? Are you being authentic?

What You Value Most Exercise:

Imagine a journalist is writing your obituary for your favourite polo magazine (*Polo Times*, of course). The journalist asks a patron, a manager, team members and other polo players to describe you.

What would YOU like them to say about you? Choose five words you would like them to use.

Example 1 – What would you like your team patron to say about you?

(Recent examples from current players: Kind, positive, friendly, inspiring)

Example 2 – What would you like your team manager/coach to say?

(Recent examples from current players: Real, always there for the team)

Example 3 – What would you like your fellow team members to say?

(Recent examples from current players: He always mucked in. No job too small. One of us. Had our backs)

The words you have just written down describe the emotions and behaviours that you personally value most. Now sense check your list of words – are these honestly what everyone would say about you?

When I ask players to undertake the 'Obituary' exercise, I make sure they seek real and honest feedback from their polo colleagues. Many people find it difficult being told how they really are, and many are too embarrassed to give people uncensored feedback.

That's why we tend to live a lot of our time in a state of limbo with our colleagues. On the surface, people are being nice and respectful to each other and there are few signs of dysfunctions such as conflict,

Paul 'Stalkie' Stalker is excited to announce the launch of his brand new book *Raise Your Polo Game*, which contains 60 videos activated by QR codes, exercises, case studies and insights allowing you to access support and guidance whenever you need it.

You can expect to learn:

- How brain training can empower you to rethink and reframe challenging polo situations
- To stay calm in the heat of the game and control the controllables
- To focus on what you're doing rather than what you're thinking
- How to use your focus, physiology and language to drive positive mental and physical health
- To understand 'why we do what we do' in our mindset, giving us freedom to play better polo, improve our relationships and lead fulfilling, purposeful lives on and off the field

For those who wish to flavour Stalkie's insights into what a peak polo mindset looks like, *Raise Your Polo Game* can be ordered online at <https://book.raisepolo.com> where you can also download two free chapters of the book.



shouting, and anger. But beneath the surface there are fragile egos, vulnerability, limited trust, a shortage of courage and a fear of conflict. Living in Limboland defeats all the benefits of teamwork.

The payback from becoming a role model will grow in direct proportion to the effort you make. Once you are happy with the words you have chosen to represent your values, these can form the basis of your own personal mission statement.

Your Polo Mission Statement

Imagine you are the boss of your own company and your job is to successfully market and sell brand 'you'. My mindset mentor Stephen Covey describes this in 'Habit 2' of his seminal book *7 Habits of Highly Effective People*:
 "Writing a mission statement can be the most important activity an individual can take to truly lead one's life. That statement is more powerful, more significant, more influential than the baggage of the past, or even the accumulated noise of the present..."
www.stephencovey.com
 What would you like your personal polo mission statement to say? Take time now to prioritise your values into your first draft statement.

Exercise: Write Your Personal Polo Mission Statement Draft

(As a guide, my own Personal Mission Statement is 'To make friends, spread love and happiness and to have faith'.)

My Mission Statement is:

Living in line with your values means backing them up with your behaviour. If, for example, you state that you love the game and wish to inspire other polo players – the love and inspiration will come back to you.

Give the emotions you wish to receive.

When you create an environment where your values are known and appreciated by others (and vice versa), there is a real opportunity for growth and development.

Bringing Your Values & Mission Alive

Focus on the positive things that you can do each day when playing polo to reinforce the behaviour and feelings that best reflect your values. Remember – what you focus on, you feel.

Exercise: Bringing Your Values Alive

Write your answers to the questions below.

Example 1 – What am I going to do today to contribute positively and inspire my team on the field?

(My Example: Turn up with a can-do attitude and actions)

Example 2 – What am I going to do today to improve my technical skills?

(My Example: Study the players, study videos of the players, ask experts)

Example 3 – What am I going to do today to delight and support my team off the field?

(My Example: Provide snacks and drinks for the team. Do 1-2-1 coaching and group coaching sessions)

Example 4 – What am I going to do today to improve my mindset and resilience for polo?

The paradox is to ask yourself what will happen if you don't follow through with your promised change of behaviour? What consequences will your current behaviour have upon your life and those around you?

When players are at one with their values and live in line with their mission, they will understand why they feel a certain way about events, relationships and situations in their polo lives. They will then reap the benefits of adjusting their mindset and behaviour to make every polo day a proud and meaningful day. ✕

Join Stalkie's Free Webinar: *Raising Your Polo Game*
 Stalkie will be sharing three of the top tips that have supported two of the teams he's worked with this

season, achieve new heights. Register by emailing polotimes@rygp.co.uk with your name, contact phone number and team name. Please follow the QR code to see a short Introduction video clip



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