

The 'Chokers' Tag - An Open Letter to the Coach

Dear Russ,

Firstly (and from the onset), let me immediately clarify that this letter is by no means an attack on you, your character, nor your coaching capabilities. I am NOT in any way having a dig at the coach here. It's a challenge though. A challenge on the thinking. And a challenge on the modus operandi.

As with the many countless conversations we have had before, wherein I'd express my merited insights to aid your cup-winning efforts at the ICC World Cup, failing that I now write this open letter and perhaps anticipating this time around, an acceptance and enactment of these invaluable understandings.

I firmly believe that the Protea's bid at the 2019 World Cup has already been scripted, barring only the forward thinking choices of the CSA Board, which relates candidly to this campaign approach.

You see, there is an endemic failure within the game to understand what's really happening. And this leads you (and relevant others) to misjudge your players and mismanage your team. And I am not at all referring to any political meddling, nor any forms of power-grabbing collusion.

Cricket thinking is medieval. And you are asking all the wrong questions.

You should NOT be asking WHAT and/or HOW to win the World Cup, but only WHY.

To quote a radical, free thinker: "It has become appallingly obvious that our technology has exceeded our humanity". The way cricket is played these days epitomizes Einstein's ideation. So then, the WHY is THE FOUNDATION and fabric of any playing approach, especially at (inter)national level.

If your WHY isn't rigidly clear, failure is inevitably guaranteed because of an easily shakeable base.

An example of this systemic flaw is evoked during pressured moments when the match is in the balance and your players simply ask themselves, 'What is our target runs per over?' and 'How will I score these runs?'...that's a 100% accurate tactic, yet the oversight of their WHY in such moments does precipitate into yet another CHOKE. This is simply (but complexly) due to your and their failure to have ALREADY solidified and habitually fortify their *raison d'être* (i.e. reasons for being) through your non-negotiable team culture and equally your prevailing leadership characterization. The team goes the way of their culture, which goes the way of their coach/leader.

Your counter argument might be grounded in your current record breaking ODI feats, your present number #1 ODI rating and your recent whitewash-after-whitewash achievements, but that is nothing more than shortsightedness. What obscurely lies beneath will haunt this team at inopportune times.

And yet, if I say these things to you (or other experts), I'm undermined and ostracized.

So that's why I have been cagey and cautious about publishing this open letter.

But Russell, I know you rather well. You were always disdainfully skeptical of such higher purpose abstractions and frankly averse to considering any forms of deep, meaningful approaches in your (and others) cricket play, unambiguously name-calling it as "your shit".

Therefore, I suspect you will persist in thinking it adversely unnecessary and ignorable.

But yet, CSA now perceptively thinks these abstract, "soft skills" leadership traits is their preferred way forward. Maybe this signals your time to 'adapt or die'.

And if in the likelihood of you suggesting that Protea Fire fills these gaps, I utterly disagree.

When I first shared this concept with CSA, the essence of our proposed initiative (i.e. our WHY) was sacrificed for pure marketing gimmickry. What we were attempting to eradicate then, is instead being reinforced now. The rendered outcomes being subtly fashioned as staged, egocentric boasting and sheer pedestal gloating, as opposed to honest, heartfelt and vulnerable patriotism.

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For the most part, Protea Fire is shallow lip service compared to our original intent for maturer expressions of this patriotism, so in contrast then phrases like “we know who we are and we know who we play for” or “we find a way boys...this team never ever gives up” are surrendered to aspirational, subpar niceties and provisionally promote absurdly fake propaganda. Nothing more.

And to compound matters even further, and possibly because of shortchange misinformation, CSA ludicrously funds these slanderous misgivings themselves. This heightens your egotistic pride culture amongst your players, dangerously inhabited in their psyches and practiced religiously through your environment. Your false sense of security is deceptive and misleading even to yourselves, a masked braggadocio which becomes obvious when the team eventually falls/chokes.

As means of introspection, (in 2012) when I rejected an analyst job offer with CSA (and potentially for the Proteas), it was because I felt my skills were best suited to functioning as a catalyst. I had then embraced that self-proclaimed role by challenging the status quo by way of thinking differently, which consequentially lead to my regret of playing an ideological hand in birthing this Protea Fire monster.

A penance to tame this beast is a reconcilable resolution.

Of course, if needs be, we are open to consider any such collaboration. Under different terms, I hope. Even so, Spirited Cricket is already proffering to redeem these grander aspects.

Because the spirit of Operation World Cup was actually for the *sacrificial service of others*.

Hence my dramatic, severed resignation from the Warriors (in 2012) to pursue instead this visionary, big picture venture...from analysis to catalysis...we have this dream that won't die, nor leave.

So then Russ, your commencing bid for the ICC World Cup 2019 is an ideal time to right these wrongs for the right reasons, which is our bettered service of country by rallying player and non-player together as champions...c'mon guy, we've pioneered champions before at the Warriors...let's partner up again to reignite our Rainbow Nation of Winners.

People are crying out for genuine nation-building and social cohesion accomplishments that actually serves one and all, irrespective of race, religion and rank.

These types of miracles are fueled by need, but delivered only by desire/hunger.

Are your players desperately hungry for sacrifice and service?

Their malnutrition due to World Cup fails is self-evident and they know not yet any better, until you coach them otherwise.

Are your 'fans' (and the general public) starving to support authentic role model champions?

We are famished.

Does CSA have the appetite for transformative leadership that is centrally focused around the soft skills of/for people? They have already announced their cravings and their integrity is baying for it.

To win the ICC World Cup 2019...ask everyone WHY?

It's THE question begging a proper answer.

Then do everything possible to live and play within your answer.

Last and most definitely not least, as a parting thought to benefit your campaign, remember: Champions win Championships...so the conundrum is that in order to **possess** a championship, you have to *already* **personify** a champion (within), i.e. be to have - **be** a champion to **have** a championship. (hint: not an ego-derived, swaggering persona) Because chokers *play to win* and often lose, but champions *play as winners* and never lose, no matter the outcome of the match.

Yours in Protea Fire sincerity, BigGuy.