

## English sport 's eight deadly sins

By John Sinnott

**These are grim times for English sport.**



Eriksson took England to two World Cup quarter-finals

The euphoria of England's Ashes win in 2005 has been brutally punctured by a rejuvenated Australia as Duncan Fletcher's side have gone down with a whimper Down Under.

In 2003 England's rugby union team was on top of the world after beating Australia to claim the World Cup. Now the world champions are on their knees, managerless and rudderless.

England's football team are the ultimate under-achievers.

While Italy have claimed four World Cups, England can point to just one world crown and recent performances suggest Steve McClaren's side are not about to improve on that statistic.

Humphrey Walters, who was part of Clive Woodward's backroom staff during their 2003 World Cup triumph, has been applying business principles to developing winning teams and leaders for the last 30 years.



In the run-up to 2003 he estimates he made as many as 1,000 suggestions to improve England's preparations off the pitch.

As well as working with Woodward, he has also worked with Premier League football teams, major corporations, government departments, and industry and professional bodies.

Applying business principles to sport, Walters tells BBC Sport why English sport is guilty of eight corporate sins.

### **WALTERS ON BOARDROOM COMPLACENCY**

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In football, rugby union and cricket, supporters are captive customers.

In effect that means governing bodies know they can fill the stadiums regardless of what happens on the pitch and their income is guaranteed. That is a recipe for complacency.

You would never get away with that at boardroom level in a business in a competitive market.

Governing bodies historically have been complacent and assume business will just rumble on.

No business that is successful is complacent and to ensure that they have non-executive directors.

Non-executive directors are important because they provide independent and impartial advice, but governing bodies wouldn't have anybody, not in a million years as you'd be attacking their protection zone. ”

#### **WALTERS ON REPLICATING SUCCESS**

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When you win a World Cup as the England rugby team did in 2003 the first thing you should do is reflect on how you achieved that success.

You have to figure out what were the bad bits and what were the good bits. As I understand it nobody did that after the 2003 success.

You need to do that because when you are top of the tree that doesn't half energise the opposition.

And if you don't examine success, how do you know what to replicate in the future?

To win is great, but not to know why you have won is unforgivable. ”

#### **WALTERS ON SUCCESSION PLANNING**

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Any successful business would never lose its key workers who have achieved success.

You would tie them in even more closely because they will be the source of world-class performance tomorrow.

Why is it that only three players who experienced success in 2003 with the England rugby team are still there?

Equally I'm amazed the RFU has got rid of Dave Reddin. He is an absolute genius and the difference he has made has been phenomenal. ”

#### **WALTERS ON RECRUITMENT**

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What has happened in football and rugby is that the next guy standing tends to get the job.

No business would dream of appointing in that way - the best salesman often makes the worst sales manager.

I don't understand why Steve McClaren had to be appointed before the World Cup as that was a process that radically narrowed who was available for the job.

You have to open up the job globally. I'm quite pro having an Englishman running an English national team, but even so you have to cast the net wide. ”

#### **WALTERS ON VISIBLE ENTHUSIASM**

“If you want to see two coaches who come across as unenthusiastic then look no further than Sven-Goran Eriksson and Duncan Fletcher.

Compare them to Arsene Wenger and Sam Allardyce.

Both of those managers are unbelievably committed and are visibly enthusiastic.

You cannot go away from them without being energised.

Sport is about passion and enthusiasm, so why aren't our national managers more so?”



Fletcher's England side have struggled in Australia

#### “WALTERS ON PERFORMANCE RESPONSIBILITY

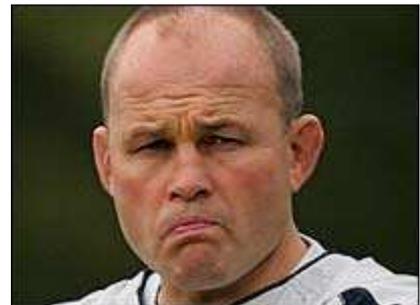
Given football and rugby have captive customers and given we produce so many more players in these sports than virtually than any other nation, why do we produce such mediocre performances?

In any other business that sort of mediocrity would see the chief executive have his head chopped off.

In our major sports everybody else gets their heads chopped off, except the person where the buck should really stop.

In corporate law if you do something wrong in your business they go for the chief executive and they would take your house off you.

Why doesn't the buck stop with Francis Baron as head of the England Rugby Football Union? The RFU has gone backwards and nobody has been held corporately responsible.”



Robinson had a disastrous 25-month spell in charge of England

#### WALTERS ON STRUCTURE

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How can you build a national team with a temporary work force?

How can you produce world class performance when you have no control over your work force, except when you see them for a month a year?

You can't control how many games they play and you can't control their training.

Nobody will grasp the nettle and drive through central contracts to ensure rugby's work force is permanent.

The people we play against in the southern hemisphere provide a wonderful working environment, unlike northern hemisphere teams.

It's like UN resolution 242 regarding Palestine and Israel. It just rumbles on and on and nobody does anything about it.

Football is even more problematic.

When a player is paid £60,000 a week by their club, that is where their loyalties will be.

606 VIEW

**Humphrey Walters argues that we are not getting the most out of our sportsmen. Do you agree?**

BBC Sport's John Sinnott  
606: [Have your say](#)

The only personal consequence an England international player faces for losing is bad press.

In business when you fail you're out of a job. ”

#### **WALTERS ON READING THE BATTLE**

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The body language of the England football team before that World Cup quarter-final against Portugal was dismal - grim-faced, no camaraderie, no banter as though the players were going through the motions.

I cannot believe that the substitutes stayed out on the pitch rather than going to listen to the half-time team talk.

Woodward made a point of keeping the players on the bench mentally involved. When the England rugby team visited the Royal Marines they talked to us about being 'reading the battle'.

Support staff have to be ready to step up to the plate and to do that they have to be mentally prepared. ”