

MAD-MONDAY, MANAGEMENT AND MANA - EARNED OVER TIME, LOST IN A MOMENT – A CASE OF INDIVIDUAL BEHAVIOUR AND ORGANISATIONAL MORAL GOVERNANCE WITHIN A PROFESSIONAL SPORTS ENVIRONMENT.

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ABSTRACT

This case examines the consequences of a post-season celebration that left individuals, their professional sport organisation, and their sport, with reputation damaging outcomes. The case can be used to demonstrate the value of stakeholder analysis; and to explore issues of ethical and moral behavior at multiple levels relating to individual athletes, team management, and franchise and national body governance. It may also be used to explore issues that span athlete education, misogynistic attitudes, risk, crisis and media management – and the locus of responsibility for on-field/off-field athlete behaviour.

Keywords: Ethical Behavior, Organizational Moral Governance, Risk Management, Crisis Management, Professional Sport

CASE OVERVIEW

The case examines inappropriate post-season behaviour of professional rugby players ‘celebrating’ the end of a long and arduous playing season. In particular, it recounts rapid successive revelations and separate allegations of verbal abuse of presumably gay men, and of misogynistic and inappropriate sexual behaviour towards a young woman at a so-called end-of-season Mad-Monday event.

The case revolves around the Waikato Chiefs *SuperRugby* professional rugby union franchise. It examines its management, its governing Board of Directors, and its governing body, the New Zealand Rugby Union (NZRU), first as they become aware of allegations; then, in terms of the actions they take; and then as they respond to criticism of those actions by politicians, women’s right groups and the media.

The case analysis can be structured in three parts. Part A requires development of a chronology of events and stakeholder analyses surrounding the Mad-Monday celebration. Part B requires evaluation of the actions and decisions taken by the Chiefs management, its franchise board and the New Zealand Rugby Union (NZRU); and then of media, public and governing body responses to those actions. Part C could choose to address the development of what would be an appropriate media and communications plan for such situations, the development of a crisis management plan, or of a strategy to address the underlying issues, for example, the need for athlete education in changing sexist and misogynistic attitudes towards women and minority groups.

The presentation focuses on Part A and demonstrates how the framework of Badaracco [2], Freeman’s stakeholder approach [3] and Mitchell et al.’s typology analysis [6] may be used to identify stakeholders, their attributes: orientation, stakes, interests, opinions, power; responsibilities, and, in particular, stakeholder dynamics. The case facilitates an analysis of stakeholder dynamics by conducting analyses at different points in time – first, when the Chiefs had become back-to-back *SuperRugby* champions, then when allegations first entered the public arena, and then later as anger, disappointment and frustration surfaced within and without of the rugby community.

The analysis can be used to demonstrate how stakeholder credibility, the acceptance of their viewpoints, and their power to influence other actors, can fluctuate over time as circumstances change. As such, the

value of the analysis can be demonstrated in how it may inform managerial attitudes and decision-making in relation to risk management, crisis and media management, as well as in relation to athlete education.

For Part B, the case may be used to explore moral reasoning and dimensions of ethical behaviour, employing a variety of frameworks, attributed to Badaracco [2], Kohlberg [4]; Snell's adapted Kohlbergian model [7]; or Lumpkin, Stoll and Beller's framework [5] linking moral knowledge, moral values and moral reasoning. As a precursor to Part C, the case may also be used to explore the efficacy of the Chiefs' management of what was an emergent reputation-threatening legal and media crisis, and of its media/communications processes using, for example, the frameworks of Sonnenfeld [9] and Augustine [1].

The case has value in that the incident(s) took most people by surprise, given the reputation and mana of the team and its leaders, and the past behaviour of the players, many of which were highly respected members of the national team – the World Champion All Blacks who had helped shaped team culture! but not been present at the Mad Monday event. Such high regard is explained below..

The Chiefs

The Chiefs were formed in 1996, as one of five regional franchise teams initially licensed by the New Zealand Rugby Football Union (NZRFU) governing body to compete in the original *Super 12* international interprovincial competition in 1996, involving the leading southern hemisphere rugby playing countries – South Africa, Australia and New Zealand.

The Chiefs had their first *Super Rugby* Championship successes in 2012 and 2013, under the leadership of new head coach, Dave Rennie, a former Wellington Lions and Manawatu Turbos coach in NZ's national provincial championship, the ITM Cup. Rennie had previously coached the Lions to a championship title in 2002, and had won World Under-20 titles with the New Zealand Under-20 team in 2008, 2009 and 2010 before joining the Chiefs in 2012. His success as a coach at the Chiefs was considered to be based as much on his values and integrity as on his coaching expertise and experience.

Rennie, with lineage to the Cook Islands, and of Cook Island Maori heritage, fostered a team/club culture at the Chiefs that harnessed and celebrated the predominant Waikato Maori culture with Pacific Island and European cultures. His teams were noted for their embrace of Maori values, as much as their unity, selflessness and courageous play. They were regarded as proud ambassadors for rugby, their communities, their families and their fans. The Waikato region also took great pride in their achievements and how the Chiefs conducted themselves on and off-the-field and in their support of local communities. They were widely thought of as exemplars of what could be achieved with shared values, vision and a strong team culture.

Following their successes in 2012 and 2013, the Chiefs failed to make the playoffs in 2014 and 2015, only to be beaten semi-finalists in the following season to the eventual 2016 winners, the Hurricanes. Their last match in 2016 was on Saturday, July 23rd 2016.

The Mad Monday Incidents

The post-season event took place at the Okoroire Hot Springs Hotel near Tirau, not far from their Hamilton base, on Mad Monday, August 1st 2016, just two days after the *Super Rugby* final on Saturday, July 30th.

As players arrived at the hotel, one or more players were alleged to have made comments interpreted as homophobic within ear-shot of members of the gay community. The comments were relayed through social media – and attracted immediate and growing attention from mainstream media and human rights

groups. The players were initially unaware of these developments and their celebrations unfolded with drinks and banter. But later in the day, organisers of the Mad Monday event had arranged adult entertainment for the male-only group – a stripper – who also later alleged that she had been verbally abused and inappropriately touched by some of the attendees. As this second set of allegations gained media and public attention, pressure built on the team, team and franchise management, and the NZRU, to address the allegations, to address matters relating to an alcohol and sexist culture within the sport, and do so in full view of public scrutiny.

Whilst Parts B and C of the case address these matters, the Part A stakeholder analysis provides the background necessary to develop an understanding necessary and appropriate for decision-making and managerial action.

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