



WARATAHS



the coaching room

A Partner for Life

Why Waratahs CEO Andrew Hore is learning how to lose



www.thecoachingroom.com.au



1300 858 089



Jay Hedley is managing partner of The Coaching Room. He has been working with Andrew Hore since April 2017.

Andrew Hore is chief executive of the [NSW Waratahs](#) rugby union club. The club had its worst season in a decade in 2017. This article originally appeared on [Boss Magazine here](#).

JAY HEDLEY

I'm a raging fan of the Waratahs, and I just happened to meet the club's former strength and conditioning coach John Dams. Through my relationship with him we found our way here. I coach Andrew and his entire executive team, head team coach Daryl Gibson and his coaches, and I now coach the players.

What enables me to work so closely with them, and facilitate change in their development, is I've got clean objectivity: I'm not attached to the outcomes, even though I am a fan of the club.

The biggest thing for the Waratahs is changing their culture to one that learns from loss – I call it learning how to lose. And they didn't understand how to do that properly.

The thing that makes Andrew such a unique leader is that his own vulnerability is what awakens people and helps them engage with him.

The Coaching Room does developmental coaching, which is quite different from performance coaching. Most coaching is about shifting the way you think about something to translating that into a shift in behaviour. We look at the human being through various lenses. One is the stages of maturation that a human being goes through. Wherever they are, we're about unleashing and accelerating their development through those stages.



Faces tell the story: The Waratahs contemplate defeat to the Jaguares in 2017. It was the club's worst season in a decade. - AAP

Once we begin to gain awareness that we have choice in how we make decisions about ourselves and how we perceive ourselves, that starts translating into connecting, relating and communicating with others in a very different way.

We're not psychologists. Psychology is really a remedial field – it's looking for what's wrong. It seeks to fix you because it's based on a medicinal model.

Personally, my view is that psychologists have no place in sport. I know that is contentious and psychologists will disagree with me, and they're welcome to.

In the field of high performance, we're not looking for what's wrong. We're looking for how the person is holding themselves back from their potential. We help them understand why they're holding back.

Look at high-performing athletes. Even though they are high performing, they need to beat themselves up after losing because that's what players do. It's expected by the fans, it's expected by the coaches that they will be remorseful.

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The Waratahs celebrate their win over the Brumbies in March. - Dion Georgopoulos

Instead of coming off the field, sitting down and going, "Wow, we left nothing out on that field and we still didn't win" they could say, "What is it we need to work on next? I'm so excited about the possibilities here."

We're not trying to fix any of that stuff. We're trying to help them see it and unleash it.

People are people and the same stuff comes up: doubting themselves and their mindset getting in the way. Athletes will say, “I’m just not able to train at the level I want to, the level I know I’m capable of training at, and I don’t know what the problem is.”

So we follow that thought all the way in and, really, it’s about success.



Kennedy Cherrington (left) of the Waratahs celebrates scoring a try with team mate Bella McKenzie against the Brumbies during the Brisbane Global Rugby Tens women's match between the New South Wales Waratahs and the Brumbies at Suncorp Stadium in Brisbane. - AAP

If you think about failing, it presupposes success. So when a sportsperson sees that, a light bulb goes on: “Oh my God! That’s what I’m really feeling, I’ve never seen that before.”

We facilitate the separation of thinking “I am my job” to “I do my job, but I am not it, I’m more than that.”

By helping the players see they’re more than that, by helping the coaches see they’re more than that, we help them get objectivity and learn to take multiple perspectives, not get caught in one. It enables them to identify the leverage point for change.

ANDREW HORE

My job is very, very public and because of that everybody you meet, who loves the game, has an opinion: when I'm in a pub or a bar, with rugby folk, or even at home. We get measured week by week when we're playing, and people assess your whole organisation based on the performance of your senior team.

I'm a type-A: passionate, I want to win, I want to be successful. I'm really driven. Looking back to when I started with the Waratahs, I wasn't drawing on some of my strongest leadership attributes because I was in a new environment. People sometimes forgive some of your behaviour because they see your passion, but is it really getting the best from those people?

I realise now I wasn't confident enough to know what skills to use and when. So I had to work really, really hard on that. I thought I was holding people to account through the systems that I'd put in, but I wasn't.

I wasn't systemic in my approach. So I'm changing the way I work. I have a terrible habit of living in the worst-case scenario. That can be extremely unhealthy, because I'm walking around in a world where it's raining every day and there are probably vampires.

So, one of the things I had to do was stop thinking about the worst that could happen.

Jay calls it looking at things through frames: you have a perception that's largely opinion, not fact, and so you enter a conversation or a situation looking through that frame. What I like about what Jay does is he unpacks that perception and identifies the bits that are based on fact.

At the club, we've got a problem dealing with conflict in a constructive manner. Things can get very personal very quickly. People close down and, although it looks pleasant on the outside, it's an untrusting environment. And that's the thing we need to unlock.



Andrew Hore: "One of the things I had to do was stop thinking about the worst that could happen. - Louie Douvis"

Once you get all those issues out and people have spoken about them, they get more confident speaking about it again.

Then they get into a pattern that means they can progress, and the next time something comes along they get better at dealing with it. It's about confronting an issue and putting systems in place that hold people to account without blowing the place to bits.

One of the things Jay has changed in my behaviour is taking the time to walk around and just check with my team leaders. It's been really, really good for my relationship with Daryl [Gibson, head coach].

Working with Jay has made an inordinate amount of difference to my personal life, too, particularly in my relationship with my oldest son.

What's really nice is Jay is now teaching my leadership group how they can help teach others. It's about getting them to account for their behaviour and then help those below them. That's where it often falls down, because you're saying to your people, "How do I have to change for you to change?"

That's the really hard bit. That's the bit people hate. They struggle with asking themselves, "If there's a problem, how have I contributed to this?" It's not generally our way at the club and it's definitely not the way in rugby as a whole.

This change in how we manage our business is actually wider than the team. We've got to change the leadership right throughout the game. So we've started working with the staff, because what we found was senior management were living the way we wanted to live but we were almost becoming our own little bubble – living and practising where we wanted to go with our leadership.

My leaders weren't then filtering that down to the next level. Now, we're confronting how leaders can help their teams to become high-performing.

This leadership development process doesn't happen overnight. It takes time, but I'd like to think we're on a journey and we'll stay on that path. Once you're engaged in the journey, you keep developing or refining the process.

If we are committed to this process, and we're deriving benefits, maybe the intervention won't be as intense as the one happening now, but there will always be a need to touch base and keep doing things.

Jay Hedley and Andrew Hore spoke to Theo Chapman.

Next steps:

To learn more about how we can support you
and your organisation...



Talk with **Jay Hedley**, Managing Partner

jay@thecoachingroom.com.au

0414369363

