

Jonny Wilkinson - My World

Contributed by Daniel Cann
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Jonny Wilkinson is one of sports most well known faces, a genuine star with crossover appeal. Thanks to a winning drop-goal that won England the Rugby Union World Cup in 2003 his celebrity status and legacy is assured. He will probably be reminded of that moment for the rest of his life, but as this book shows there is more to him than a few exciting seconds in a World Cup final.

This book written shortly after that famous England triumph is not a cash-in on that heady time. Granted, it is full of glossy photographs and has a coffee table book feel to it, but it is packed with fascinating insight about that rugby tournament and the man himself.

What becomes clear is how dedicated Wilkinson is. He is the best by virtue of an almost fanatical fitness and training regime imposed on himself. He reveals his near obsession at practising goal kicks and drop goals, spending hour after solitary hour until he, the perfectionist, is satisfied. A very private man who does not feel comfortable in the media spotlight he comes across as being a goal-orientated and driven individual. The book reveals that he has other goals in mind like learning to play the guitar and foreign languages. He seems to do everything with a fanatical dedication and zeal.

The reader will enjoy reading Wilkinson's take on England's World Cup campaign. He offers his own opinion on events and is modest and honest. He explains that many of the matches that led to the final were tough affairs and it was by virtue of teamwork and graft that got England to the final with host nation Australia. He recalls the media circus and the electrifying atmosphere of the Telstra Stadium. More interesting he openly confides of his anxiety and nerves not just for this match but also for all his matches. He is a complex individual and a deep thinker.

Obviously winning the World Cup was a huge triumph and he again describes his personal shock at how much support they received. One example is his shock at arriving at Heathrow airport at 4.30am to be greeted by 8,000 people when he was (perhaps naively) expecting to meet the players' families and a few well wishers. This is an endearing quality about Wilkinson, he is certainly not headstrong, and he seems genuinely surprised and even embarrassed at the attention he and his teammates received.

The rest of the book concerns itself with the rigours of training, his time with club Newcastle, injuries and setbacks of which he has had many. He also discusses his heroes from other sports such as Walter Payton, Michael Jordan, Boris Becker and Elery Hanley. It is all revealing stuff written in a thoughtful style, much like the way he plays rugby.

Wilkinson comes across as a very serious and philosophical individual, very mature for a young man. The book is full of quotes from him on his thoughts on the game and life in general. I found that I absorbed the book quickly as I enjoyed it so much. It will appeal to everyone, not just fans of rugby union. I found this to be one of the most revealing insights into what makes a sportsman tick that I have read so far. Excellent.