



LETTER TO AMERICAN RUGBY

BY BLAINE SCULLY



It is with a heavy, but grateful heart that I officially announce my retirement from the sport of rugby.

Sport is special - it teaches, tests and offers feedback in its honest and sometimes brutal way. It inspires our passion to grow, to be better and always offers the challenge of next week.

But sport is also temporary. Understanding that reality is a fundamental first step to accepting life as an athlete. At some point, the game must move on. And that's okay. No matter how much we love it, no matter how much we care, it is important to remember, it's just a game.

The lessons that sport teaches, however, and the values it instills are for life. Hard work and preparation are usually rewarded, although not always. Dedication is a must and so too is learning humility - usually taught in the face of defeat (or injury). But in response to loss, we learn resolve and what it means to get back on our feet. Sport honors character and in my experience, good teammates.

Teams are the clearest way for the world to change for the better - groups of people working together in a shared purpose. All done in a messy and unforgiving environment - rugby is a perfect example of this.



It's a difficult thing to say that I will no longer be a professional or international rugby player. What I loved so much about the game is how it challenged me in every imaginable way. Whether it was in defense or attack, in the air or on the ground, in the meeting room or at training, the challenge was set. The question was always, "What is the response?" Facing those challenges, not alone, but with a group, a team that you respect and trust, will be what I miss the most. The people have always been the best part of the journey.

The opportunity to play rugby for a living and as a career was a gift. From Welford Road to the Cardiff Arms Park, I can honestly say that I poured everything I had into each jersey I wore, beyond proud to wear the badge for both Leicester Tigers and Cardiff Blues. My only goal was to be the best I could, compete with the top players in the world and positively impact the teams I was on. To the people of both clubs, you honored and humbled me when you accepted me as your own, making my wife and I feel like we were never far from home.

But my proudest moments are running out onto the field to represent the United States. For over 10 years, I have accepted the responsibility of the US jersey and hoped to live up to what it means to be an Eagle. After three Rugby World Cups, 54 caps and countless memories of wearing red, white and blue in cities from Sacramento to Tokyo, I am proud of what I did. But as the great Bill Russell said, "You play until there are no games left in your jersey." It's my turn to give it back.



You can't make tackles forever, at least not on the field, and I feel that I have done everything I could have hoped to as a player on a rugby pitch. I am a competitor and loved the day in and day out life of a high performance athlete. But the truth is, my career has never been defined by the number of international caps achieved or the contracts signed, but by the way I competed; the way I prepared each day as a professional; the type of teammate I was; the way I represented my country; the way I played the game.

For me this is more of an opportunity to say thank you than an opportunity to talk about achievement. A life in sport is almost impossible to manage without the support, guidance and encouragement of mentors, family and friends. During the highs and lows of life in the arena, and there always are, this is who we go to. They remind us that we are never as good as we think we are nor as bad - always a work in progress.

To the friends, teammates, opponents, coaches and fans, to the clubs and countries, and of course, the game itself, you have my deepest thanks for the experience of a lifetime. Many have given so much to allow me the chance to be where I am today.



People who have paved the way before me, have invested in me and tirelessly worked with me to help me achieve my goals. There are too many to be thanked. My career is less about what I have done and more about those who have empowered and supported me along the way.

To Sacramento - I want to thank my hometown and the people of it. Sacramento supports their own and it's important to me that I never forget where I come from.

To the University of California, Berkeley - The place where my passion for the game was refined and my true rugby education began. It is here that I learned what it meant to be a pro, a teammate, a leader. Coach Clark, Coach Billups and Cal Rugby have relentlessly supported my career. Coach Clark gave me the opportunity to become a Golden Bear, and Coach Billups, my mentor and coach, fixed me when I needed fixing and mentored me whenever I needed him, which was often.

