

INSIGHTS

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Cadel Evans – one tough hombre, one great role model

Finally, here is someone worthy of emulation by our kids. Cadel Evans showed all the qualities of grit, determination and mental toughness that most parents I meet would love their kids to develop.



Cadel Evans, supreme cyclist that he is, showed in winning the Tour de France that he is also the master of timing.

Not only did he time his winning ride to perfection, taking the coveted yellow jersey on the only day that mattered – the final real day of racing, but his win has come at a time when Australians are in desperate need of heroes and positive role models who display the types of attributes we want our kids to aspire to.

Federal politics isn't a hotbed of inspiration right now! The banal antics of our leaders in Parliament have become something of a national embarrassment. More disturbingly, the adverse public response to the Prime Minister Julia Gillard's carbon pricing campaign has been so bitter that for the first time in living memory, Australians en masse have shown little respect for the institution of prime minister.

The recent Murdoch phone tapping scandal was high drama, but somehow has reinforced what many have suspected for a long time. That is, that there is something fishy going on in high places. It's only the size of the stench that has shocked us!

It says something about the state of affairs when the only hero from the whole unsavoury event was Wendi Deng for delivering a mean right hook when she came to her husband's aid during a filmed Parliamentary Enquiry. That's how cynical we have become about public life.

Then along came Cadel Evans, and his winning ride. Finally, here is someone worthy of emulation by our kids. He showed all the qualities of grit, determination and mental toughness that most parents I meet would

love their kids to develop.

The story behind his success is fascinating, and worth relaying to your kids. He is no overnight success. He's been cycling at an elite level for over fifteen years, riding mountain bikes in the 1990's before switching to road cycling after the Sydney Olympics. He's worked long and hard to master his craft.

He didn't let disappointment deter him either. Twice runner-up in the biggest road race of them all, and on another occasion hampered by a broken elbow, he didn't let set-backs and bad luck derail him. Learning from these past experiences, and taking lessons in preparation from past winners, he came back stronger and more determined than ever to make this race his own.

But the race itself that brought him victory is the story that's worth telling your kids about. It's a story of working with others, but at the same time not relying on others to get the job done. According to press reports, Evans' BMC team gave him terrific support until he got to the final mountain stages. Without quality climbers in his team he took it on himself to attack the leaders alone.

Best of all, Evans held his nerve. Evans always said that the last three days would determine the tour. And so it did. He didn't panic, even when he experienced equipment failure and lost valuable time on the second last day. After receiving a new bike he fought his way back to the front in readiness to strike when it mattered.

Evans' feat was a shining story of resilience. His ability to hang in both physically and mentally when times were tough was astounding. Sure, cyclists are a breed unto themselves, as they are used to enduring pain that long days in the saddle can bring. But Evans' efforts were supreme even by cycling's lofty standards.

It's also a story of preparation and knowing what it takes to be successful. A loner by nature, Evans told his minders he needed 30 minutes a day of solitude for the sake of his sanity. For Evans to achieve success it was vital that he attend to his mental state, in the same way as he looked after his physical state. One of the lessons of the past he learned was the importance of carving out moments of calm, even at the busiest and most chaotic times.

As a parent and teacher there is so much to take from the Cadel Evans' story. It's the type of story that doesn't come along very often, and too good an opportunity to pass up. Besides, he's come along when there's a dearth of quality stories in public life that offer kids the type of inspiration and hope that they need right now. As Evans showed timing is everything. Now is the time to share his story.

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