



NEW PLYMOUTH BOYS' HIGH SCHOOL
TE KURA TAMATĀNE O NGĀMOTU

Ki runga, ki raro, ki roto, ki waho rire rire hau pai mārire
He mihi mahana ki a koutou rā, ahakoa

Ngā whānau, ngā hoa, ngā māhita rānei
Nau mai, haere mai ki tēnei pō whakangahau

Kia whakahōnore ngā tohu mātauranga, hākinahina
Mahi-toi, tikanga-ā-iwi, hoki.

Koia nei te whai-hua o te pukumahi rawa o ngā tauira i waenganui i a tātou katoa
Anei te whakataukī e ki ra

Whāia te iti kahurangi ki te tūohu koe me te maunga o Taranaki
Heoi anō, kei a koutou te tauira, i tae atu ki te taumata

Tihei mauri ora

Warm greetings to you all, whether you are whanau, friends or staff.

Welcome to this evening of celebration, to honour these awards for excellence in academia, sport, arts and culture.

These are the rewards for our conscientious and hard-working students.

Their efforts are summed up in this well-known Maori proverb:

Strive hard to reach the stars and if you have to settle for anything less, let that not be less than highest peak on Mount Taranaki.

You award winners have set the bar and you are the example - for others to follow.

We will hear from our two leaders tonight. Haven't they done very well this year? Bradley Slater and Te Whatumanawa Ngatai Tangirua. I guess they are somewhat of a celebrity pair. They are a formidable team.

With other celebrity teams it is customary to mash the names together. If your names are mashed together you truly are famous.

We have Brangelina, Tomkat, Kimya. I think such is the power of Te Whatumanawa and Bradley they shall be referred to as Bratu from now on.

So you have a Tiger Jacket and can put your feet up, job done. The pinnacle of your life is the Tiger Jacket. You have worked hard you deserve the honour. Nothing matters now.

Nothing would disappoint me more if that was the case. The Tiger Jacket is the start of your journey. While you don't owe the school anything, you do owe yourself the courtesy of continuing to strive for excellence and progress well beyond this achievement.

My old headmaster often used to refer to books he read, in his speeches when I was at school. My eyes would glaze over and I thought what relevance is this going to be. Here we go again.....

Or he would talk about some event that happened 100 years ago.

So, let me tell you about a book I have just read. And in this book, is an event that happened over 100 years ago.

When I was reading this book, "Great by Choice" written by Jim Collins and Morten Hanson, I couldn't help thinking, this specific story in the book was the perfect topic for tonight.

It's about the harsh environment which reminds me of something Billy Connolly said. He said I am an environmentalist. I love the environment. I love the trees, the sea, all animals. Especially dolphins. They are delicious.

Picture this. The round trip trek was roughly 2,200 Kilometres, the equivalent of walking the distance from New Plymouth to Dunedin. The environment was uncertain and unforgiving, where temperatures could easily reach -28 Celsius even during the Summer. They had no means of modern communications – no cell phones, no satellite links, no radio.

This is the story of [Roald Amundsen](#) and [Robert Falcon Scott](#) who led separate teams, in an unofficial race to be first to reach the [South Pole](#) in the early 1900's. While they had the same goal, their preparation was contrasting. One leader led his team to victory and safety. The other led his team to defeat and death.

Amundsen prepared rigorously for years in advance of the journey. He learned what worked in polar conditions, going as far as to live with Eskimos to learn how they moved in sub-zero temperatures, what they wore, what they ate (which included dolphin) and reviewed every conceivable situation that his team might encounter en route to the Pole. He trained his body and mind with fanatic discipline. Scott presented quite a contrast to Amundsen. His preparation was limited, and what plans he made were based on his own intuitive conclusions, rather than direct research of the environment he was entering.

Amundsen stored three tons of supplies for five men, versus Scott, who stored one ton for seventeen men. Amundsen used sled dogs (learned from the Eskimos), whereas Scott used unproven ponies and "motor sledges" which failed within days of setting out. Amundsen carried enough extra supplies to miss every single supply depot and still have enough to go another 160 kilometres. Scott ran everything dangerously close to his calculations, so that missing even one supply depot would bring disaster.

Unlike Scott, Amundsen systematically built enormous buffers for unforeseen events. He designed the entire journey to systematically reduce the role of big forces and chance events. He presumed that bad events would strike his team somewhere along the journey and he prepared for them. The comparisons go on and on.

On December 15, 1911 Amundsen and his team reached the South Pole. He and his teammates planted the Norwegian flag and then went right back to work. They could not have known that Scott and his team were now desperately hauling their now human powered sleds, almost 600 kilometres behind. More than a month later, Scott found himself staring at Amundsen's flag at the South Pole. Amundsen had already travelled the 800 kilometres back North. Scott and his team turned back North dejected, just as the season began to turn.

The already menacing weather turned more severe. While supplies dwindled and Scott and his men struggled through the snow.

Amundsen and his team reached home base on January 25th, 1912, the precise day he had planned. Running out of supplies, Scott and his team stalled in mid-March, exhausted and

depressed. Eight months later, a British reconnaissance party found the frozen bodies of Scott and two teammates in a tiny forlorn, snow-drift tent, just 16 kilometres short of his supply depot. His whole team had perished.

I have shared this extract from the book, an extreme example I know, but it's relevance is this.

Of course, determination, attitude and talent is important.

Aim high, strive to be the best. But be planned, be meticulous, don't take short cuts, don't bank on good luck. Anything worth getting is tough. Anything worth winning is hard and requires careful consideration and planning.

Don't let that put you off and please don't let the Tiger Jacket award be the end of your excellence journey. Let it be the spark of the flame that burns brighter and brighter. There are no limits to what you can accomplish.

If you forget everything I have had said or were not listening just watch the movie, the true story, Rocky IV as that pretty much sums it up.

Rocky Balboa (the hero) trains for a fight against the Russian Ivan Drago (the villain) in the snow and a shack with fanatic discipline and Drago trains in a high tech gym (with much less intensity).

Ivan eats food made in a lab and yes you guessed it Rocky eats Dolphin.

No reira, tena koutou, tena koutou, tena tatou katoa.

P J Verić
Headmaster

Reference:
GREAT BY CHOICE FORTUNE
How to Manage Through Chaos
by Jim Collins and Morten T. Hansen October 2011

