

Play the Game!

Rodney J. Marshall, Headmaster

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The highest aim of Coram Deo Academy athletics is to instill the classical virtue of courage in its participants. It is a good thing to assure the health, fitness, skill and teamwork of student athletes for lifelong recreational enjoyment and it is a good thing to demonstrate enthusiasm and school spirit but these are not primary. You students need to develop courage; we all know you will need it.

At Coram Deo Academy athletics advances the classical aims of well trained youth that will reign in life through Christ Jesus our Lord. Whether one day a student falls in battle or suffers for the sake of the Gospel, or simply prevails in the every day tasks of ethics in business and or mothering a family that adult will do so in part because he or she has learned courage on the pitches, the fields and courts of Coram Deo Athletics.

The Battle of Waterloo

It was the 15th of June, 1815 when the most decisive battle of the Napoleonic Wars, Waterloo was fought in a small area (10km by 4km) on the main road leading south from Brussels, the capital city of Belgium.

You remember these wars followed the failure of the French Revolution of 1789 when the aristocracy was murdered and replaced as a governing class by The Republic. The guillotine had sliced its way through king, queen and court and beheaded the flower of the French upper class. Democratic reforms replaced the once grand monarchy but the Reign of Terror left the country in ruin and anarchy; its population in fear and starvation. The French were ready for anyone to restore order affording a tyrant a fissure into fame and power. With resolve Napoleon seized the day. Not only did he capture the hopes of the common man and the reins of government he militarized the nation and embarked upon empire building conquests no less ambitious than Caesar's crossing of the Rhine, his occupation of Britain and march on Rome. No European nation

escaped Napoleon's lustful glare; no Dutch mother expected her sons or daughters to grow up in peace or even with a father. One region fell and another withered under his steel. He swept from one nation to the next; on land and on the sea his ships bristling with cannon, his infantry in disciplined array. Yet, finally at Trafalgar the Admiral Lord Nelson of the British Royal Navy defeated the French warships and in frozen Russia the Emperor met ignominious defeat. Unwilling to execute one of their own class, or at least one in like position, his counterparts in Austria, Prussia and their allies exiled the defeated prince to an isle off the coast of Italy, where he plotted his come back. When he escaped Elba, he deposed the restored Bourbon King, and renewed his rampage. Then he met Wellington.

It was the first clash of the Titans - **Napoleon Bonaparte** versus the **Duke of Wellington** - and it was a win all, lose all scenario.

Bonaparte had brilliantly outmaneuvered both the Anglo-Allied force of 77,000 under Wellington and the nearby 102,000 man Prussian army of **Field Marshal Blucher**.

Together the allied forces easily outnumbered France's 72,000 men and its detached right-wing corps of 33,000 under **Marshal Grouchy**, so the French emperor surprised the two by knifing between them and preventing their linking.

On June 16, Bonaparte had beaten the Prussians at **Ligny**, while at the same time Wellington had held a vital set of crossroads at **Quatre Bras** against an inept **Marshal Ney**.

Turning his main strength towards the British, Bonaparte detached Grouchy to keep the Prussians retreating and away from Wellington near Waterloo.

The emperor found the Anglo-Allied drawn up across a small ridge at Mont St John, just south of the village of Waterloo, and organized his troops for battle the next day as a massive storm drenched the ground.

At dawn it was decided the ground was too boggy to launch an immediate attack and so the armies faced off against each other.

The British position was linked with various strong points - the chateau of Hougoumont, the farmhouse of La Haye Sainte and the dwellings of La Haie and Papelotte - and while Wellington knew his troops could hold the French for a time, he was relying upon the promised arrival of Blucher on his left flank to ensure victory.

Bonaparte began the battle at about 11.30 am with salvos from his massed artillery and then sent an initial assault, intended as a diversion to draw enemy reserves away, against Hougoumont on the British right flank.

Far from luring in Allied men, the battle for the chateau would rage all day and would tie up more than 10,000 French troops in a bitter struggle against 2000 British Guardsmen.

At 1.30 pm, following a half-hour bombardment, D'Erlon's 1st Corps moved against the central bastion of La Haye Sainte.

Already hammered by the shelling and having suffered considerable casualties while holding off the French at Quatre Bras, the Dutch-Belgians under Bylandt were ordered to withdraw as more than 18,000 French bayonets advanced towards them.

The blue coats overran the orchard and garden at La Haye Sainte, forced a detachment of 95th riflemen out of a strong position in a gravel pit near the farmhouse, and then a small force separated and set to capturing the main building, which was being defended by the King's German Legion.

The remaining men under D'Erlon pushed on towards the small ridge the British were formed behind.

As the French moved from column to line formation the British 5th Division, under **General Picton**, stood up and fired a devastating volley into the surprised attackers. Then, before they could recover, Picton ordered a bayonet charge but was shot through the head and killed while leading it.

Continuing to advance, the British were threatened by cavalry, formed square and immediately found themselves cut off and under attack from infantry as well as horsemen.

Seeing the impending disaster, the British cavalry commander **Lord Uxbridge** ordered his heavy cavalry into action and the famous Charge of the Scots Greys began.

Realizing the importance of the position, neither side would give quarter and bloody hand-to-hand fighting tested the mettle, and resolve, of all.

To bolster his outnumbered defenders, Bonaparte sent in a division of the Young Guard and, when they too began to be forced backwards, he sent in two battalions of his elite Old Guard. In a stunning attack, the Old Guard shattered 14 Prussian battalions and by 7pm the French lines were able to regroup.

Just before 6 pm, Ney seemed to regain his military prowess, and launched a combined attack with cavalry, infantry and artillery.

This time the French were able to hold the British in square through the threat of cavalry attack. But this time the accompanying infantry and artillery tore great holes in the dense ranks with musket and cannon fire.

The British resolve, so indomitable in the years of war to date, began to weaken. Hours of absorbing huge casualties had left the army dangerously wounded and finally La Haye Sainte fell in the centre.

Ney immediately positioned an artillery battery there and in order to hold the centre Wellington called in all his reserves.

Despite staggering like a boxer awaiting the knock-out blow, the Allied troops held on only to be faced by a sight that had terrified many fresh armies - the advance of the Imperial Guard.

In one final attempt to deal with Wellington, Bonaparte threw his undefeated veterans at the recalcitrant thin red line, which buckled under the strain.

The moment of Bonaparte's victory was at hand when upon Wellington's command, 1500 Guardsmen stood immediately in front of their French counterparts and stopped the advance with a withering point-blank series of volleys.

The light infantry of the Guard finally reeled away in disorder and the sight of their retreat sent panic through Bonaparte's ranks.

The disintegration of a once-proud army into a mass of panicking men took place within a blink of an eye and Bonaparte's dreams, and reputation, lay shattered.

The British and Prussian pursuit after Waterloo was relentless and prevented any chance of French consolidation.

The Battle of Waterloo that ended Bonaparte's hold on power had been a costly one. Wellington lost 17,000 men and, Blucher 7,000, while Bonaparte lost 32,000, with at least another 7,000 captured. But this battle saved Europe from tyrannical rule for a time.

You can find more at:

http://www.napoleonguide.com/battle_waterloo.htm

Who were Wellington's troops? Where did these British youth find the courage for the last and decisive volley after years of marching and the fearful, exhausting combat of the day? The farm boys may have found it while hardened by days behind the horse drawn plow and the sons of merchants from six days a week of work with few entertainments. Some say the aristocracy of England those few British privileged to study at Oxford and Cambridge found it on the pitch playing football (soccer), rugby and cricket. Yes, cricket that strange to the American eye favorite of many an English schoolboy or college student. That sport in which a match continued from dawn to dark all day every day for four days.

The Duke of Wellington said that the British people won the battle of Waterloo on the cricket fields of Eton. Remember his officers were drawn from these men. English sport tradition asks outward triumph if possible, but far more, it calls the athlete to exhibit courage until the very end and treat his or her opponent with courtesy and fairness. This spirit thus instilled at school has repeatedly carried into the large affairs of the nation. It can be argued that this spirit can be learned without participation in athletic competition. True enough. The youth that learns to stand up against temptation in life and thought; the youth that stays the course in academic study when the body wearies of it and the mind would prefer ease and amusement; or the young

musician that repeats a phrase one more time to achieve perfection exhibits a similar tenor. Nonetheless he who rises after a fierce tackle or does not sulk when down trodden by pain and returns from an injury has prepared for the realities of life. The digger that withers not at the blistering serve, the striker that bolts back into action after an illegal spike to the ankle, the lineman that peels the grass from his mouthpiece all alike learn the courage to stand when the bayonets of life array against him.

Play the Game, by Henry Newbolt

There's a breathless hush in the (day comes to a close) Close to-night--

Ten to make and the match to win--
A bumping pitch and a blinding light,
An hour to play and the last man in.
And it's not for the sake of a ribboned coat
Or the selfish hope of a season's fame,
But his Captain's hand on his shoulder smote;
"Play up! Play up! And play the game!"

The sand of the desert is sodden red--
Red with the wreck of a square that broke;
The Gatling's jammed and the colonel dead,
And the regiment's blind with dust and smoke.
The river of death has brimmed his banks,
And England's far and Honor a name,
But the voice of a schoolboy rallies the ranks,
"Play up! Play up! And play the game!"

This is the word that year by year,
While in her place the School is set,
Every one of her sons must hear,
And none that hears it dare forget.
This they all with a joyful mind
Bear through life like a torch in flame,
And falling, fling to the host behind--
"Play up! Play up! And play the game!"