

**Michael Conrad****Paper #3 Transcript:**

**Michael:** So, what is your name age and job title?

**Coach:** I'm 26 years old my name is Jon Conrad and I am the head coach of the Virginia Tech Men's Rugby team.

**Michael:** And where are you from? And how has this influenced your decision to become a Rugby coach?

**Coach:** I grew up overseas in Bangkok Thailand and in Thailand Rugby is the 2nd most popular contact sport so it was kind of a foregone conclusion; there was no football, so I took to rugby as my major sport.

**Michael:** What is the occupation of your parents and what do they think of you being a Rugby coach?

**Coach:** My family is still in Thailand my dad is an executive for Motorola, and my mom is just a house mom, she takes care of all the domestic duties back home in Thailand. They're a fan of me coaching, they just hope that one day it kinda, you know, goes beyond this amateur level and I can actually make a career out of it.

**Michael:** And what is a typical day of work for you?

**Coach:** Well, a typical day of work for me is constant. I'm focused on the team pretty much all the time. Aside from our practices which are 2-3 hours a day 4-5 days a week there is no break, it's pretty much constant at least through the season.

**Michael:** And, how many hours a week do you spend actually coaching?

**Coach:** Well, the physical coaching is about upwards to fifteen to twenty hours a week of physical coaching, all the planning outside of the physical coaching is an additional twenty-five hours at least.

**Michael:** And do you have any problems with students not being able to practice and do school work at the same time?

**Coach:** Yeah, it's a constant battle. Rugby is still at the club sports level pretty much, generally in America. There is always conflict with class and outside of practice things. It just something we have to sort of plan for and expect and move beyond as best we can.

**Michael:** How do you battle the problem of having students being able to attend practice for so long?

**Coach:** Well, we kinda moved practices beyond the normal, I guess, club sport practice time. We practice quite late in the evening eight to ten o'clock p.m. daily. And that's generally a service to us in terms of freeing up time for the students, but there are still challenges.

**Michael:** And what about actually playing? I'm guessing that you guys play on the weekends?

**Coach:** Yeah, games are weekends Saturday and Sunday, the odd mid-week match and of course the odd Friday night game.

**Michael:** How long have you been coaching and how long have you been coaching at Virginia Tech?

**Coach:** Well, this is my seventh year as a coach, as a defined coach, and at Virginia Tech this fall will be the start of my third season here.

**Michael:** How many students do you coach and what are some of the positives and negatives of coaching students that attend Virginia Tech?

**Coach:** Well, there's about ninety plus kids on the team so there's an enormous amount of planning and work that goes into running a team of this size, especially since we are quite a bit bigger I think than every other club sport on campus and our numbers suggest a varsity style team. Umm, the positives of coaching Virginia Tech students is that, first of all, it's an athletic culture and are very interested in high level performance. Those are the major things. The negative thing about coaching students at Virginia Tech is that they got quite a bit of work to do for school, especially our engineering students, which my players are of a majority of. Most of the kids on the team are engineers in training and, as everybody knows it's a huge amount of work that they have.

**Michael:** And how do you compare yourselves to the other Rugby programs that you guys play against?

**Coach:** Well, I think that generally speaking we are a higher level program. Not many teams, there are a few, you'll see a relationship between, you know, the practice times and level of competition that we play in all require a kinda much higher level of attention. So in our region I would say that, you know, five days a week two to three hours a day plus games on weekends is the norm. But if you kinda, you know, interpolate that or extrapolate that into the rest of the country it's quite a bit more work than other Rugby teams do.

**Michael:** What are some of the achievements you wish to accomplish for yourself and the Virginia Tech Rugby program?

**Coach:** Well, consistent performance at a high level is really the only goal. I mean, if you keep it that simple, then things like championships and titles will come, you know, naturally but as a simple answer consistent performance at a high level is really the only real goal.

**Michael:** And, the Virginia Tech Rugby program is a club sport. How do you see yourself going about making this program, or any other program, a varsity program?

**Coach:** Well, that's a huge challenge and I think that Rugby as a sport, despite its historical relationship to Americans in the United States, contends largely with football. Football is a massive challenge to Rugby players and Rugby programs because of, you know, obviously there is a valid future for football players in terms of their careers. Rugby is still a grassroots sport so all we can offer as a game is national level performance with a chance of maybe getting a contract overseas but, there is no professional Rugby outlet in America and that is our biggest problem.

**Michael:** Where do you see yourself in the future with regards to coaching Rugby?

**Coach:** Ah, that's a difficult question to answer. I mean, you know, every coach that goes to any school has got goals and when those goals are met, you know, like any sport you have to decide whether or not it's time to move on. I think that it doesn't matter where I coach, it just depends on first off all if I accomplish my goals at any given location and if there are opportunities else where that will allow me to improve myself and improve the game as a whole.

**Michael:** And, what are some of the rewards of being a coach?

**Coach:** Well, the biggest reward of being a coach is...quite clearly it's not a job, its work and I am not interested in a job you know. The difference is that I can really immerse myself fully into what I consider my life's work and by definition it's not something I have to deal with, it's something I choose to do. So, you know, having an opportunity to be competitive in a growing sport and coach very dedicated and talented young men is really, you know, that's the biggest reward.

**Michael:** How can the U.S., as a whole, embrace and make the best out of Rugby?

**Coach:** Well, I think that Rugby needs to understand that, you know, it can't continue to compete with football. I think that football is an ingrained part of American sporting society and rather become its enemy it needs to kinda move into a place where football isn't. I think that a lot of the times you have specific unions and teams in the country that play their seasons in tandem with football but really that hurts us. There's a lot of things that hold us back with that kinda system so moving Rugby to the spring where football is not in season is probably the best idea in terms of really getting ourselves out there as a competitive, as an avenue, for competitive contact sports.

