

Revenge Body

My mum claims my P.E. kit never got dirty. I beg to differ as I get pushed over, on purpose I might add, by Harvey Ditchburn and then again by Peter Kidd, into the cold wet mud on the soccer field. Or is it rugby? I'm not sure what I'm supposed to be playing right now. I'm too busy trying to remember ABBA lyrics.

So, I don't have the aptitude, but I do have goose pimples and chilblains. It's bloody freezing. A cold wind is blowing down from the Arctic, across the North Sea and on to the playing field here at Laurence Jackson Secondary School. The wind freezes your nuts off in January, especially when you're not allowed to wear underpants for P.E. Just a flimsy pair of shorts with a negative thread count.

With three boys to raise, two who are good at sports and one who is not, there's just no reason to spend any money on a proper kit for Simon. I'm at a distinct disadvantage as I stand here in my Woolworth trainers made of one piece of molded plastic. They're about as flexible as a pair of wooden Dutch clogs. I can hardly walk in them.

P.E. is supposed to be *character building*. I'd say more like *character demolition*, particularly when you're one of the last to get picked for the team. Normally I'm second from last to be picked. The only kid behind me is the one wearing National Health Service glasses with lenses as thick as Coke bottles. And today he had an optician's appointment.

Here's my report card from Mr. Hurrell, who in the comfort of his nice fleecy warm Adidas track suit, has no right to judge me.

Name.....	COULTAS	Initials.....	S	P.E./GAMES
Form.....	5Q	Set.....		Position.....
				Exam/Year
Simon is a very quiet boy who obviously does not find P.E. easy. He usually opts for Badminton which he manages to play with others of the same ability. His cross-country runs this term were of about the same standard as last year although he came lower in the Inter-Form Race, 88th.				
				J.M. Hurrell
				Head Form / Subject Teacher

Mr. Hurrell has a huge Adam's apple. I gag when I look at it, and I feel like my throat is closing up. (Has anyone seen Mr. Hurrell's golf ball? Yes, I think he swallowed it.)

Badminton? I think I got to play badminton once in the sports center because they were doing maintenance on the playing fields. Come on Mr. Hurrell, what about soccer and rugby? What about those times I left it all out there on the field. (My dignity that is) And the many times I sacrificed it for the team. (By offering to stand on the sidelines) Give me some credit.

Actually, I should have been better at badminton, because for some reason, Mum once signed me up for lessons at the local recreation centre. This was one time when Mum's instincts were way off base. She should have signed me up for ikebana.

Yes, I am pretty good at cross country running though, because you guessed it, I have a lot of practice running away from Harvey Ditchburn and Peter Kidd.

Unfortunately the cross country route goes through town. It's awful. You feel like you're streaking down the high street, with the whole town watching, because remember, you don't have any underpants on. And your fruit and veg' are being jostled every which way – while you're running past old ladies with their own basket of fruit and veg' on market day.

"Ooh, watch it luv, you nearly knocked me over."

"Sorry, sorry. Do you mind if I hide behind you and your shopping trolley, while I catch my breath?"

To which granny replies "Wimp!" and sprints ahead of me to catch the number 93 bus, leaving me in the dust. It's humiliating.

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So with all this childhood trauma it's quite remarkable to think that here I am, 40 years later aged 55, voluntarily at the gym. Albeit the Tidelands Healthpoint Gym, where the average age of membership is, oh I don't know, maybe 73? Lots of leg braces, a walking frame and a wheelchair or two. So yes, Mr. Hurrell, I'm still playing "with others of the same ability."

I'm sweating like a gym rat on the treadmill working on my cardio, before it's over to the weights.

As I'm working out, I'm kind of hoping that the 55 year old Harvey Ditchburn has a ginormous beer gut and that the 55 year old Peter Kidd has a prostate so enlarged he can't sit down. Better still, that they both have erectile dysfunction. Because, guess what? "You two miserable little pricks – you aren't man enough to be on MY TEAM."

Whoa, where did that come from? With this much rage to fuel my workout my revenge body is going to be ripped and ready in no time. Cool!

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Phew, that's enough I'm pooped. Ooh, goody the gym radio is playing ABBA again: *The Winner Takes it All*.

How very apropos.

"The winner takes it all...The loser's standing small..."

Love that song. And yes, I do know all the words. Thank you very much.