

The wonderful Billie Jean King once said “Champions keep playing until they get it right”. As a sportsman you can give blood, sweat and tears but sometimes when individuals or teams lose it is not always down to how much they put in but come game day whether they were the better side. Last Saturday, England, in the penultimate Group game of the Rugby World Cup, were simply outplayed and outclassed by Australia and as a result were knocked out of the competition.

Fans at home or at the packed rugby clubs and pubs let out a collective sigh as the final whistle went. As always everyone had a view where it all went wrong and then spent hours reading other people’s verdicts in the following days of media coverage. The result matters, of course it does, but only to a certain extent. Birds still fly, the sun still rises, and people whether they are children, young adults or veterans will still pull on their rugby shirt, pick up a ball and play the game they have grown to love.

That is what I saw on Sunday when I popped up to Borstal for a “minis” festival run by Medway Rugby Club. Unperturbed by the England result over 2000 (yes two thousand) children were playing rugby from 120 teams across the county of Kent and into South London. In Aylesford, regular tournaments are played at the Bulls club seeing a thousand plus children participate in tag or mini rugby. When the Webb Ellis Trophy came to the club, organisers told me they had never seen a queue so long to see the cup.

Of course it would have been great if the legacy of the World Cup had been a 2015 England team inscription on the trophy. But the real legacy is much deeper than that. It is at the grassroots, supported by the RFU, and it is alive and well here locally.