

Lachlan Lewis
2024 Keynote Speech

Good morning, Mr Featherston, staff, and boys.

'When the path is uncertain, we seek out footprints from journeys that occurred long ago, opinions from people who know no better than us.

We look for things that cannot be given but must be made on our own'.

An extract from motivational speaker Eddie Pinero encapsulates the idea that in times of scepticism, we often look for answers in the past. Whether these are paths left behind by those who have come before us or opinions that have been created by those who once stood in the exact same position as ourselves.

Yet the reality is, when facing adversity, when facing a challenge, or when facing the next chapter of our lives, the very essence of success lies within our ability to forge our own unique way. Not merely emulating what others are doing but focusing on what we can control ourselves.

All of this can be placed into one simple phrase: *Run your own race*.

We tend to measure ourselves in terms of how we compare to others. Social comparison theory is the idea that individuals determine their own worth based on how they stack up to others.

While comparisons can often set benchmarks and act as checkpoints, in many cases, they breed dissatisfaction, feelings of failure, and a loss of hope.

Frequently, I find myself comparing my achievements to others, whether it's SAC scores, sporting ability, what I'm wearing, or even simply how I act. Too frequently, I find myself trapped in an endless cycle of comparing my success to my friends, brothers, peers, and those whom I don't even know.

Like Spencer, I saw my brothers as irrefutably successful. For years, I believed I could never measure up to them. With a combined 6 years of first 18 football, four years of first 8 rowing, Vice Captains of Boats and football teams, Prefects, and seemingly unachievable ATARs, all whilst doing no wrong.

I saw their triumphs, their achievements, their highs, and moments of joy.

But I never took the time to acknowledge their hardships. I never took the time to notice their humanity.

Because the reality is, they are human. Just like every person in this room, every person that has come before us and every single person who will ever come after us, they had their flaws.

This idea isn't to take away from their more than impressive repertoire but rather to shed light on the fact that superficially comparing ourselves is not always positive, and in most cases, we are completely unaware of a person's full story.

For my brothers too, there were people who they considered better than them.

The concept of *run your own race* encourages us to be aware of the shackles of comparison and recognize that every journey, just like every person, is completely unique. The true essence of success does not lie in replicating someone else's path, but rather the ability to navigate our own challenges.

This is not a moment for saying you should travel alone. The most successful people in the world rely on a team to keep them afloat.

But success lies within taking responsibility for our actions, integrity within our work, accountability with our consequences, and accepting that only you can influence your actions, goals, and behaviour.

So why attempt to replicate what others are doing? Playwright, Oscar Wilde said, 'Be yourself; because everyone else is taken', another way of saying, 'run your own race'.

Each of us possesses a unique set of skills, a unique set of experience, a unique set of aspirations. Embrace the fact that success does not lie within copying another's success but rather the drive to find your own.

I find the story of Roger Bannister captivating. The first ever man to run the four-minute mile despite all experts believing it was an unachievable feat. On 6 May 1954, Bannister ran a mile in the time of 3 minutes 59.4 seconds, breaking the four-minute mile.

What's remarkable about this story isn't just the physical achievement, but rather the psychological barriers Bannister overcame. Ultimately, he didn't allow the opinions, actions, or attempts of others to dictate his own future. He ran his own race, inspiring countless others to do so and making the four-minute mile a benchmark for elite middle-distance runners today.

What can be taken from this story is that the journey you set out on, is yours, the path you take, is yours, the goals you set are yours.

It can be easy to lose sight of our own aspirations. Becoming swayed by the achievements of others. But as you navigate through your journey, remember that it is your journey.

Embrace the challenges, celebrate your successes, and accept that the path you take will be completely different from those running alongside you. Stay connected, help others but most importantly, run your own race.