

ACT 1: PRE-GAME SHOW

Scene 1) The Choosing of the Teams

Enter the DUKE OF YORK and his FOLLOWERS engaged in a heated argument with the EARL OF SOMERSET and his FOLLOWERS. The mob makes its way to a Commentators' desk downstage centre, upon which two sets of jerseys are neatly piled: one white, the other red. Team benches are placed stage left and right.

- YORK Dare no man answer in a Case of Truth?
Then say at once, if I maintain'd the Truth:
Or else was wrangling Somerset in th'error?
The truth appears so naked on my side,
That any purblind eye may find it out.
- SOMERSET And on my side it is so well apparell'd,
So clear, so shining, and so evident,
That it will glimmer through a blind man's eye.
- YORK *(taking a white jersey)*
Let him that is a true-born Gentleman,
And stands upon the honour of his birth,
If he suppose that I have pleaded truth,
From off this Brier pluck a white Rose with me.
- SOMERSET *(taking a red jersey)*
Let him that is no Coward, nor no Flatterer,
But dare maintain the party of the truth,
Pluck a red Rose from off this Thorn with me.
- WARWICK *(taking a white jersey)*
I love no Colours: and without all colour
Of base insinuating flattery,
I pluck this white Rose with Plantagenet.
- SUFFOLK *(taking a red jersey)*
I pluck this red Rose, with young Somerset,
And say withal, I think he held the right.
- SOMERSET Well, well, come on, who else?
- SALISBURY *(taking a white jersey)*
Unless my Study and my Books be false,
The argument you held, was wrong in you;
In sign whereof, I pluck a white Rose too.

WESTMORELAND *(taking a red jersey)*
Prick not your finger as you pluck it off,
Lest bleeding, you do paint the white Rose red,
And fall on our side so against your will.

In pairs of two, opposing PLAYERS take turns grabbing a jersey and everyone puts them on.

YORK Now Somerset, where is your argument?

SOMERSET Here in my Jersey, meditating, that
Shall dye your white Rose in a bloody red.

YORK Meantime your cheeks do counterfeit our Roses:
For pale they look with fear, as witnessing
The truth on our side.

SOMERSET No Plantagenet:
'Tis not for fear, but anger, that thy cheeks
Blush for pure shame, to counterfeit our Roses,
And yet thy tongue will not confess thy error.

YORK YORK!

The YORKISTS rush to either side of YORK to create a scrumhalf.

YORKISTS Hath not thy Rose a Canker, Somerset?

SOMERSET LANCASTER!

The LANCASTRIANS rush to either side of SOMERSET to create a scrumhalf opposite YORK.

LANCASTRIANS Hath not thy Rose a Thorn, Plantagenet?

YORK Ay, sharp and piercing, to maintain his truth,
Whiles thy consuming Canker eats his falsehood.

SOMERSET Well, I'll find friends to wear my bleeding Roses,
And thou shalt find us ready for thee still:
And know us by these Colours for thy Foes,
For these, my friends in spite of thee shall wear.

YORK And by my Soul, this pale and angry Rose,
As Cognizance of my blood-drinking hate,
Will I for ever, and my Faction wear,

Until it wither with me to my Grave
Or flourish to the height of my Degree.

SOMERSET Go forward, and be chok'd with thy ambition:
And so farewell, until I meet thee next.

With a mighty roar the scrums break up and everyone exits to their respective benches. WARWICK lingers behind.

WARWICK And here I prophesy: this brawl to-day,
Grown to this faction in the Playing Field,
Shall send between the Red Rose and the White,
A thousand Souls to Death and deadly Night.

WARWICK exits to the York bench.

Scene 2) Intro to Marlowe and Falstaff

Upstart Crow Sports Network (UCSN) theme music kicks in as MARLOWE and FALSTAFF enter and make their way to the Commentators' desk. MARLOWE is your knowledgeable and sports-savvy type who often plays "straight man" to FALSTAFF's obnoxious and overbearing character. At their benches the two teams finish dressing into their rugby gear and then start running laps around the field in opposing directions. As they pass they sneer and gesture at each other.

MARLOWE Good evening rugby and Fringe fans alike and thank you for joining us for another fine evening of the Elizabethan Rugby Union. Tonight's game is brought to you by the legacy of Edward III: "He only started the Hundred Years' Tournament – he didn't lose it." And by Plantagenet Limited where: "Pride is Job One." I'm Christopher Marlowe and joining me tonight is a veteran of the Union, John Falstaff...

FALSTAFF Good to be here, Kit.

MARLOWE It's a bit of a departure from our regular fare at Robert St. Playing Field as we have the House of Lancaster vying with the House of York. At stake, the English championship and a chance to take on the French side in the upcoming Five Nations Cup. And that's no easy task, with France on the warpath and the loss of her best player – Henry V – England's not doing too well on away games.

FALSTAFF It wasn't like that in my day! When I was coaching young Hal, I always told him: "*'Tis no sin for a man to labour in his Vocation.*" And he took it to heart he did – he destroyed those French Daisies and *laboured* himself his birthright: the French Crown. Back then the game was raw and you didn't mind getting a little mud and blood on your jersey. Nowadays everything's bein' run by either Churchmen or Politicians – lyin' thieves all of 'em!

MARLOWE Men after your own heart, eh John?

FALSTAFF Exactly.

MARLOWE Let's take a look at the two captains: for York, none other than the Duke himself; and for Lancaster, his fierce opponent, the Earl of Somerset. John, what can you tell us about these two players?

FALSTAFF Well, it's not so much the players, Kit, as the teams themselves. Let's face it, the Yorkists – despite a long-standing rugby tradition – have been finishing low in the rankings for several seasons and are going to have an uphill battle against the favoured Lancastrians. But looking at the Captains themselves, I'd have to put my money on the Duke of York – he has a strong background in the game and has played consistently for other teams. Somerset, although technically Lancastrian, comes from their illegitimate line and is basically a wily bastard.

MARLOWE Thanks, John. We'll start off tonight's match as we always do for our North American audience with another edition of Holinshed's Chronicles.

FALSTAFF Right you are, Kit. Holinshed's Chronicles is a quick *Tudorial* on how we play this crazy game called rugby. Get it, Kit? Tudorial? TUDOR-ial? You know, like the TUDORS? One of the Royal Houses of England? A little play on words, see? (*beat*) You writer types are supposed to like that kind of thing.

MARLOWE We go now to our man on the pitch, Raphael Holinshed. Take it away, RH.