

TRUE STORY

Rudy Ruettiger

Where did Rudy grow up?

Rudy grew up in Joliet, IL. He is the first boy and is the third of fourteen children.

Where is the *real* Rudy in the movie?

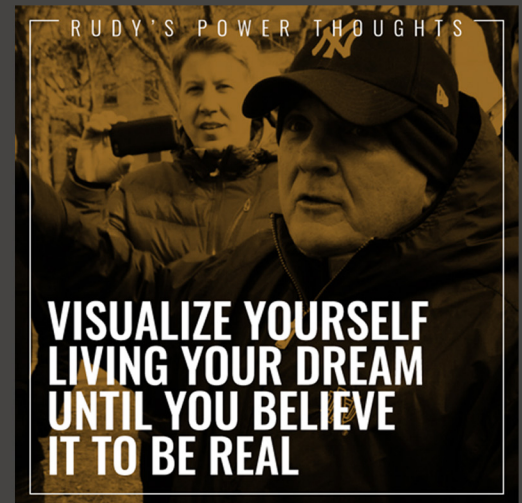
Rudy did actually have a cameo in the movie. Rudy was a fan in the stands during the last game where he made his famous tackle. He was sitting right behind Ned Beatty (Rudy's dad in the movie) and Ned actually tugs on Rudy's shirt when everyone was cheering. Rudy was wearing a coat and hat.

Has Rudy always liked football? Did he play other sports too?

Yes. Rudy has always liked football. As a small child he would watch the Notre Dame games on TV with his dad and his brothers. Rudy also loved baseball, boxing, wrestling, and water skiing. He was a championship boxer at Notre Dame.

What are Rudy's siblings doing today? Did they all graduate college?

All of Rudy's brothers and sisters are healthy and happily married. All of his brothers graduated college and most of them have their masters in education. His brothers love to teach and coach children. His sisters are wonderful mothers and are very involved with their church and schools.



Where did Rudy go to college before Notre Dame?

Rudy went to Holy Cross Junior College for two years and then transferred to Notre Dame. Holy Cross is located across the street from Notre Dame so it was easy for Rudy to stay involved with Notre Dame and spend a lot of time on campus. Rudy had to work very hard at Holy Cross for those two years. It was during his time at Holy Cross that Rudy was diagnosed with Dyslexia. In order to maintain a "B" average he really had to learn how to study. With the help of his teachers and tutors he was able to really focus on his grades and get the job done. After 3 rejections from Notre Dame, his Dream to attend this prestigious University had finally come true.

Describe Rudy's Notre Dame experience.

Rudy transferred to Notre Dame in the Fall of 1974. His focus at Notre Dame was his studies. Rudy was so inspired to actually attend this University, that had been such a Dream for him as a child, that he would do what ever it took to keep his grades up and earn the respect of his peers. While at Notre Dame, Rudy developed another Dream to play football for the Fighting Irish. Rudy walked on the team under the coaching staff of Ara Parseghian in 1974. He played his guts out and treated every practice like it was a real game. Rudy NEVER QUIT and won the respect of his team mates. It was this enthusiasm that eventually got Rudy in the game to live his second Dream. While in the game Rudy saw an opportunity make his move. He got the tackle. "When the ball moved I moved," said Rudy. Rudy didn't get the tackle because he was lucky. He was prepared. He persevered. He worked everyday and set his goals every day no matter how tough it got so when his opportunity came, he was ready.



Is the movie *RUDY* a true story?

Yes. The movie *RUDY* is a true story. Rudy's Dream was real, the tackle was real, the carry off was real. The struggle was real. The victory was real. The movie was made to tell a story that would inspire others – to let people know that no matter what the odds are, they can overcome them – they can win. No matter what your background, your grades, your size – you can find a way. It won't come easy. The message is clear that you need to struggle, you need to prepare to earn your Dream. It's all about The Dream, The Struggle, The Victory!

Did the team actually lay the jerseys on the coach's desk?

The team did not actually lay the jerseys on the desk. That scene was made to show the respect that the team had developed for Rudy. The scene was based on a very true concept called Respect, so the scene had to be dramatic enough to show the major impact that the team's respect had on Rudy and that all of Rudy's hard work and perseverance had on the team. In reality, the team captain, who speaks for the team, went to the coach and asked him to give Rudy a chance and let him play in a game. When his opportunity came, Rudy was ready!

Is Rudy still friends with the janitor?

The janitor in the movie actually represents three different people who were very influential to Rudy during that time of his life. When making the movie, they didn't want to leave out any important information but they did not have the time to develop all three people to show the impact that each person had on Rudy - so all three characters were rolled into one in order to tell the story.



In the game Rudy participated in, did the offense actually decide on the field to go against the coach's set play, while throwing a half-back option pass, scoring a touchdown, and allowing the defense to thus come on the field again, or was this just embellished by a Hollywood director?

The 1975 season was Dan Devine's first year and the team did not do well with his transition. But the team did come around the following year. Also, the NCAA handcuffed the coaching staff Rudy's senior year only allowing 60 ballplayers to dress. That was the only year that rule was there. The seniors who were in that game that day did whatever they had the opportunity to do. Meaning if they got a chance to score they would go for it. Regardless of the play that was called. It was not really meant for Rudy, but some of the seniors came running off the field and said "now it is your turn." The film makers took artistic license to modify the game so it would create other obstacles. It did happen but in order to show the teams support in the little time they had, that was how they decided to show it. The movie was more about the message of the dream, the struggle and the victory.

What was Rudy's height & weight when he played for Notre Dame?

Rudy was 5'6" and weighed 165 lbs.

What was Rudy's major when he attended Notre Dame?

Sociology

What is "De-Bob" doing today?

Real names could not be used in the movie to protect the rights of the actual people involved in Rudy's life at the time, however, the character that De-Bob represented is actually a Federal Judge today.

Was Rudy's family supportive of his dream?

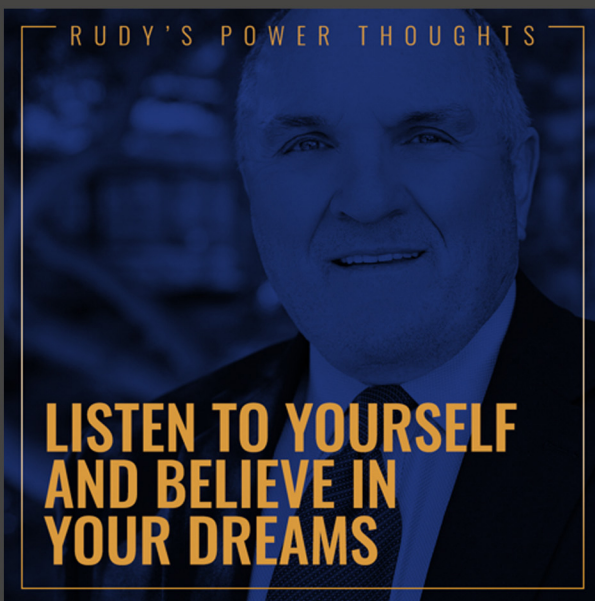
The Ruettiger family always wanted everyone in the family to do well. They just didn't want Rudy to get hurt. They knew he was putting everything on the line and that many odds were against them. It was hard for them to say "go for it" to their brother/son when they knew the road he would have to travel. Rudy still did what he knew in his heart he had to do. By living his Dream, Rudy inspired his family. Other brothers and sisters also pursued college and other Dreams and were all very successful!!

How did the movie RUDY get made? Did Hollywood contact Rudy?

"First you dream about going to Notre Dame, it's the fantasy. Then the fantasy turns into reality then the reality into goals. When you get through that struggle of achieving those goals, you start the small steps toward the movie. You start talking about the movie, develop it in your mind, then on paper, then with people who know what they're doing. You go through a whole process of trying to find those different people, along with other elements, who can help you put the story together. Then they help define the story and put it in the right perspective. Then you have to sell that idea to people who can sell that idea to Hollywood. Then Hollywood has to buy into it in order to put up the money. It's just a combination of meeting a lot of people and eliminating a lot of people, then getting the people who are passionate about the message to help you. The writer was very sensitive to me and the story I wanted to tell, so we worked very closely together on it. The journey to make the movie took 10 years from start to finish."

What message does Rudy want people to get out of the movie?

"I want it to inspire you to the next level of whatever level you are at in your life. It delivers the message you can do it. It tells you that whatever odds are against you, you can get up and find another way to make it happen. I think it's classified among the top sports movies, but most people I talk to see it as more than a sports movie. The subtle spirituality in the movie is the magic. The dynamics of the human being... the struggle that I went through to show the preparation, from the academics to the friends to the naiveness of the Dream. I think that's why it worked. When I first pitched the movie it was like "who would want to go see a kid making a tackle?" I said, You're right....I wouldn't. But I want to know what makes that kid tick. I want to know what makes that journey happen. Why does he stick in there, why would he go through all that pain and aggravation just to get one tackle? And he's not even guaranteed that tackle. Not guaranteed even to suit up. Why would someone do that? And the answer always comes back to passion. It has nothing to do with the tackle or the football. It's just not quitting, and I think that's what we finally realize. To let the doors open as you go through life."



What advice would Rudy give to others who want to pursue a Dream?

“Do what you really want to do. Don't let the words of others hold you back. Take a step towards your Dream. As you move closer to your Dream, new opportunities will open up for you that you never imagined possible. Along the way, the journey will be full of struggle, but I learned that the greater the struggle, The greater the victory! As you go for your Dream, you will inspire others to live their Dream.

That's a tough thing to say to people because some are caught in this vicious cycle of trying to make it in life, whether financially or by achieving status or whatever, and all that doesn't matter. All that stuff that people think they need they don't need. What you basically need is the peace within yourself and the belief that you're doing what you feel the right steps in life are. It's not the fact that because this person has made a movie so should I, or that guy went to Notre Dame so I can too. There is a lot more to it than that. It's a matter of actually taking a step towards that goal and accepting responsibility and accountability for that dream. That's where people get stuck and don't chase the dream, because of those two things.

If you commit to something you have to follow through. And a lot of us don't do that. That's what I learned. And commitment introduces new opportunity. Again, it all falls back on accountability or responsibility. I used to never really follow through on anything. I left things hanging. But that changed. Once you make a decision, make the commitment. I still had to do what I had to do. Whether it was cutting grass or cleaning bathrooms or selling cars to pay the rent, whatever it took to keep that commitment.”

What impact does the movie have on people?

“The message definitely changes lives. When I speak, so many people come up to me and tell me how the movie has impacted their life. A dad told me how his son was inspired to live! His son wanted to quit on life – he gave up on sports and in school and had no other hope. He took his dad to the movie and it moved him! The message moved him to believe in himself again! Other kids have told me how they wanted to quit on their goals in sports or in school or how they thought they would never be able to go for their Dreams and that the movie inspired them to Never Quit on themselves. The movie is about a message.. and if I can do it, you can too!”

How did you get started in Motivational Speaking?

“Well I always wanted to inspire people from my heart. To some people, I didn't do that much. My Dream was big for me but may have been small for someone else. That's why I talk about the passion of the Dream no matter what the Dream is. I can inspire people to be their personal best and get it done! It's about a person's attitude that makes it all happen and you must have the courage to persevere.”

“After graduating from Notre Dame I pursued a few speaking opportunities just for fun – mostly I spoke for free and just enjoyed an opportunity to inspire other people. At that time, speaking wasn't my career, but I always had a vision of one day making that happen. I knew it was something that I could be good at – something I would enjoy doing and a way to deliver a message to people, based on my own life experiences and not just on information I read in a book. I wanted to inspire people to Never Quit on their Dreams – to tell them not to let the words of others hold them back – that no matter how big the struggle, the victory was still possible! I wanted people to know that if I could do it, they can too. Once we live our Dreams, we can inspire others to live their Dreams. When we surround ourselves with great information, that is what we become. Your heart speaks louder than your words or your actions.”

“My speaking career began when the movie was released in 1993. I received a phone call from a corporate executive who told me he just saw the movie RUDY and that he wanted me to speak to his company and to inspire his people with the same inspirational message he got from the movie. I told him that I could do that! From that one event, I received other speaking engagements. Then I started to get calls from various corporations, high schools, Universities, and community leaders to deliver the same message to their group. My speaking career had begun...and I will continue to speak for as long as God continues to Bless me to do so!”

Does Rudy have any children?

He has a daughter (Jessica Noel) and a son (Daniel Joseph.)

Did Rudy serve in the Armed Forces?

Yes, Rudy served in the Navy before he went to Notre Dame. Not only did Rudy feel good about serving his country, he was able to pay for a portion of his college education from the GI Bill.

What is the RUDY FOUNDATION for kids?

The mission of the Rudy Foundation is to help children reach their full potential cognitively, emotionally, physically, and spiritually. The Rudy Foundation developed a Character Education program, called the RUDY AWARDS™ Program, for children in Middle schools and Elementary schools across the nation. It's a simple concept. It's about helping kids choose a career path. We give scholarships to kids for self-improvement. It can be college or a vocational school or a career school that they chose to attend to better themselves. The money goes toward any improvement or path they choose. We start in middle schools and build a dream and give them money that goes into an endowment. It will always be there. When they choose what they will do they receive the money to help them. All RUDY AWARDS™ Winners are recognized with a Rudy Medallion, a school plaque, and a scholarship for further education and self improvement programs.

What is the best advice your mom and dad ever gave you?

“They said that the best thing a mother could do for her children is to love her husband and the best thing a father can do for his children is to love his wife. The more love your children feel from you and your spouse, the stronger they will become. The more they will believe in themselves and their dreams. The other very strong message I learned from them was for the mother and father to always stand up for one another, to always support each other and back each other up, especially in front of the kids. This also builds strength and character.”



What insights can you give to others who are striving for a dream?

“First of all, I would recommend that you read my book, Rudy's Insights for Winning in Life. It is a combination of real life experiences and the insights I learned along the way. Also, you can listen to free audio programs on my website that will help to inspire you along the way. Do what you really want to do. That's a tough thing to say to people because some are caught in this vicious cycle of trying to make it in life, whether financially or by achieving status or whatever, and all that doesn't matter. All that stuff that people think they need they don't need. What you basically need is the peace within yourself and the belief that you're doing what you feel the right steps in life are. It's a matter of actually taking a step towards your goal and accepting responsibility and accountability for that dream. That's where people get stuck and don't chase the dream, because of those two things.

I committed to something and did not want to quit on it. I think that's an important message too. If you commit to something you have to follow through. And a lot of us don't do that. That's what I learned. And commitment introduces new opportunity. Again, it all falls back on accountability or responsibility. I used to never really follow through on anything. I left things hanging. But that changed. Once you make a decision, make the commitment. I still had to do what I had to do. Whether it was cutting grass or cleaning bathrooms or selling cars to pay the rent, whatever it took to keep that commitment.

With any Dream, there is always a Struggle. The Struggle is gives us strength and Character, and prepares us for our Dream. The Greater the Struggle, The Greater the Victory! Don't let the words of others hold you back. Persevere! The closer you get to your Dream, new opportunities will open up for you.

By achieving your Dreams, you will inspire others to go for their Dreams too! Dreams create an exciting energy. The Power of Life is in your Dreams! Set your goals and take one step at a time. Step by Step you will get their. You will learn what you need to do. Step by step you will win! Surround yourself with positive information that will inspire you – stay away from the people who do not believe in you –You may be able to help them someday! Keep the Faith and Never Quit!”

Would you say looking back now that the movie exceeded your expectations?

“I'm going through my e-mails just this morning and I get a letter from a young guy who plays high school football. He tells me he didn't play much this year and had a sprained ankle that sidelined him. He says every night before his games he watches Rudy. He knows the whole movie by heart. And then I have another here from a kid who wants to play hockey but he's too small. And another from a 12-year-old boy whose brother wants to play lacrosse but has a blockage in his kidney and has been in and out of the hospital. He says his brother has worshipped Rudy since before he could walk and watches the movie almost anytime he gets a chance. He says that the best Christmas present ever for him would be a phone call from me. That's an indescribable feeling, you know?”

How do you handle that responsibility? Do you feel qualified?

“Oh yeah. Absolutely. Now I recognize that responsibility. How cool is it to get these heartfelt letters from kids like this? It means so much to them. . .and me.”

Did you realize that your story could have an impact like this?

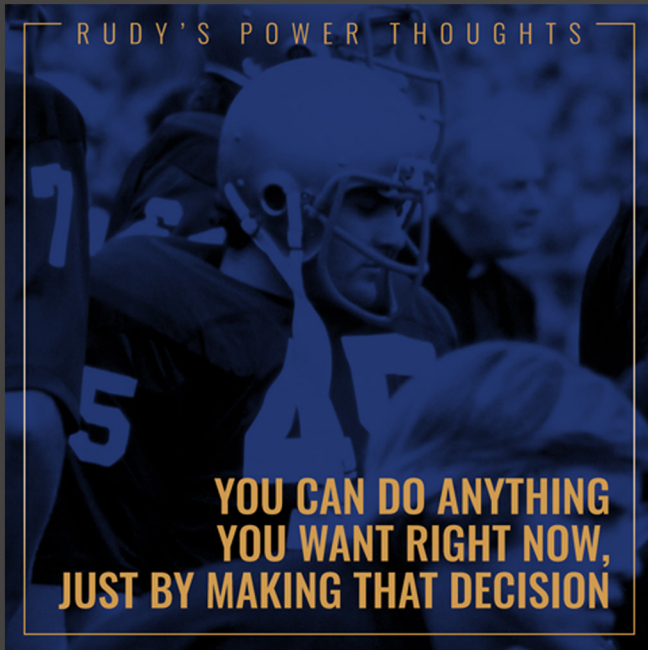
“You see the hope and inspiration when the odds are stacked against you so high. You stuck in there, you persevered, and you stuck to the commitment—and look at the rewards you're getting today. That's how I feel. That's the magic of it.”

Why wasn't Rudy's name on his jersey?

Rudy's name was not on the Jersey because it was a last minute decision to have him dress. There was no time to put his name on the Jersey.

What do your children think about their famous father?

They think their Dad is cool! They are very proud of him and have developed little "Never Quit" attitudes of their own.



How do you want to be remembered?

"I want to be remembered as someone that had a clear plan and passion for his Dream. Someone that wouldn't give up - someone who had persistence and an understanding of the "want to" - clearly as someone that had an unwavering belief system that Never Quit!"

Rudy, tell us about your experience in the NAVY. How did your time in the military help you in your college years? How did your military service, your patriotism and sense of duty to your country help to shape your success?

The experience in the Navy set my goals in order and gave me more confidence because I did something totally unexpected by joining the Navy. The time in the military helped me to understand that you must develop your self-esteem to get anywhere in life. The Navy helped my college journey many different ways. It really helped me to define the "want to" and the "know how" at Notre Dame. I eliminated the distractions and my goals were very clear. My Patriotism absolutely helped me. I grew up and understood the value of my father and his father and all the forefathers that have given us freedom --- I understood that commitment and realized that is was the "Team" that was important -- something bigger than myself.

DO YOU HAVE A QUESTION FOR RUDY? EMAIL US!

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