

Friday Focus



Motivation for Sports and for Life

Jeff Weaver

Table of Contents

Fan into Flame.....	3
Fear Factor.....	5
A Greater Goal.....	7
Move Some Rock.....	9
Becoming Great.....	11
Eliminating Ineffective Behavior.....	13
Play Like a Champion.....	15
What's Your Part.....	17
Keep on Keepin' On.....	19
Taking Control.....	21
What Time Is It?.....	23
How to Pull Off An Upset.....	24
Hungry?.....	25
The Power of Together.....	27
Power for Life.....	29



FAN INTO FLAME



The first part of 2 Timothy 1:6 says, “Fan into flame the gift of God which is in you.” You all have gifts that God has given you. Not everyone has the same gifts, but we all have some. Some of you may have gifts that are like little embers of a fire, slowly burning. They are there, and there’s lots of potential, but they aren’t fully being utilized. This week, I’d like to talk about how you can fan your gifts into flame, how to bring your gifts to life. In order to fan your gifts into flame, you need to develop three characteristics.

First of all, you have to be **humble**. Being humble doesn’t mean that you think less of yourself. It means that you think of yourself less. I have a good friend named Josh Moran that I played college football with that was second team all-conference our junior year. In our senior year, there were a few games that he didn’t start because we had a sophomore linebacker that was pretty good. Rather than complaining about not starting, Josh worked really hard. Being humble allows you to put the team ahead of yourself. It means that there is no position beneath you and no assignment too small for you. Being humble means you’re ok with scoring 3 Touchdowns in a game or cheering from the sidelines if it’s best for your team. Being humble means that you are on your team to serve your teammates, not to be served by them.

Next, in order to fan your gifts into flame, we have to be **hard working**. Another guy I played football with, named Danny Bruce French had all kinds of talent. In his senior year of high school, he finished fourth in the state of Kentucky in rushing yards. However, in college, he only lasted for two weeks before he quit. He didn’t want to work hard, didn’t want to hit the books, and didn’t want to put effort into practice. All his talent was wasted. When Chris Carter played for the Philadelphia Eagles early in his career, he was lazy and undisciplined. He usually got in arguments with his coach and had problems with drugs and alcohol. After he got traded to Minnesota, his life changed and he matured. He began to good work habits and retired as the second leading pass catcher in NFL history. He had the same talent in Philadelphia as he did in Minnesota. What was the difference? Hard work.

Finally, in order to fan your gifts into flame, you need to be **hardy**. Hardy is just a funny sounding word for handling adversity. In our first game of the 2000 season at Campbellsville University, we were playing Malone College at Fawcett Stadium in Canton. At the beginning of the game, we were dominating. We were marching up and down the field and scored two quick touchdowns to go up 14-0. But then, our starting quarterback tore his ACL and with the offense we were running, that was devastating.

Our backup quarterback was a freshman named Seth Crisp. Seth had several strikes against him going into this game. First of all Seth was a freshman and this was his first college game. Secondly, Seth was a wide-receiver in high school and only played quarterback for a few games in his senior year. However, the worst thing he had against him was that he was blind in his left eye, which made it difficult to run one of our plays. When he got in, he struggled somewhat, but at the end of the game; he threw the game winning touchdown pass. In sports, setbacks are going to happen. Not everything is going to go your way. I've seen far too many athletes with a lot of talent give up in the middle of a game because they've made a mistake or because they didn't get the break they needed. Charles Swindoll has a great quote about this when he says, "I am convinced that life is 10% what happens to me and 90% how I react to it."

So we've learned that in order to maximize our potential, we need to be Humble, Be Hard working and Hardy. Jesus gives us the perfect example of what this means. Philippians 2:5-11 says,

"You must have the same attitude that Christ Jesus had.

**Though he was God,
he did not think of equality with God
as something to cling to.
Instead, he gave up his divine privileges;
he took the humble position of a slave
and was born as a human being.
When he appeared in human form,
he humbled himself in obedience to God
and died a criminal's death on a cross.**

**Therefore, God elevated him to the place of highest honor
and gave him the name above all other names,
that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow,
in heaven and on earth and under the earth,
and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord,
to the glory of God the Father."**

Although Jesus was God, he humbled himself. His whole life was one of hard work and service. He handled adversity by totally trusting God and was raised from the dead. By Being Humble, Hardworking, and Hardy you can fan into flame the gift of God which is in you.

Fear Factor



In Rocky III, there is a scene where Rocky begins to train for his second fight against Clubber Lang. Normally, when you think of Rocky Balboa, you think of his hard training, but in this scene, something's definitely wrong. He just seems like he's in a daze and doesn't put any effort into his training. After his wife presses him to see what's wrong, he finally admits, "I'm afraid!"

Fear can paralyze us. Rocky Balboa is a great fighter, yet his fear is hampering all his ability. It can haunt us and keep us from performing the way we are capable of performing. It hinders us from being the best we can be. Fear rears its ugly head in many forms. For some of us it is a fear of failure. We can be so afraid to fail because if we fail, then we feel worthless or inadequate. As a result we either, choke under pressure or we just tank it because then we can have an excuse. The important thing to remember about fear is that it does not come from God. The first part of 2 Timothy 1:7 says, "**God did not give us a spirit of timidity.**" In this verse, the word timidity is the idea of fearfulness or cowardice. Since it doesn't come from God, you don't have to feel this way. The whole verse says, "**God did not give us a spirit of timidity, but a spirit of power, of love, and of self-discipline.**" You can overcome your fear by looking at the attributes He has given you.

The first thing God's spirit gives you is **power**. Sometimes we are afraid because we feel weak or incompetent. Most of the time when God tells someone in the Bible "do not be afraid" the reason He gives them is "For I am with you." God will be with you. The same God who created the universe, defeated armies, and rose Jesus from the dead is with you! How much more power do you need? Now because God is with you, that does not mean that you will win every game, never get hurt, and calls will always go your way. What it does mean is that he will give you strength to do your best and overcome obstacles.

The next thing God's spirit gives you is **love**. Now you are probably wondering, what does love have to do with fear? When you love God, you will begin to know him more. Knowing him more means that you'll trust Him. When you trust Him, you won't be afraid because you know that He will come through for you. Love also removes fear because we know that God loves us no matter what. Even if we lose or play badly, that doesn't change our worth to God. Love also gets rid of fear by giving us a love for our teammates. At the beginning of the first Lord of the Rings movie, Samwise Gangee is a fearful hobbit. He doesn't want to leave his home and doesn't seem too bold. At the end of the first movie, we see him chasing after Frodo as he's paddling away in a boat. Sam jumps in the water despite the fact that he can't swim in order to chase him. We



see how he cares so much about Frodo that he does anything he can for him.
Love turns cowards into conquerors

And finally, God's spirit gives you **self discipline**. Self discipline helps remove fear because it makes you feel more confident. If you are disciplined, you will practice hard and if you practice hard, you'll be prepared. When you feel fully prepared for your game, then you will feel confident, which is the opposite of fear.

So remember fear does not come from God! "For God did not give us a spirit of timidity, but a spirit of **power**, of **love**, and of **self-discipline**." You don't have to let fear hamper your performance! For as Teddy Roosevelt said, "It is not the critic who counts, not the man who points out how the strong man stumbled, or where the doer of deeds could have done better. The credit belongs to the man who is actually in the arena; whose face is marred by the dust and sweat and blood; who strives valiantly; who errs and comes short again and again; who knows the great enthusiasms, the great devotions and spends himself in a worthy course; who at the best, knows in the end the triumph of high achievement, and who, at worst, if he fails, at least fails while daring greatly; so that his place shall never be with those cold and timid souls who know neither victory or defeat."

A Greater Goal

From the movie "Rudy"

Jaime O'Hara: Last practice of the season and this animal thinks it's the Super Bowl!

Ara Parseghian: You just summed up your entire, sorry career in one sentence! If you had a tenth of the heart of Ruettinger's you coulda made All-American. As it is you just went from the third team to the prep team. Go on, *get outta here*.



Rudy is a great movie about a player who wasn't very big, strong, or talented, yet he was able to make the team at Notre Dame. In this scene coach Ara Parseghian is furious. Jamie may have had more talent, and may have been higher on the depth chart, but who was the coach more pleased with Rudy or Jamie? Why? Because Rudy made the most with what he had.

There's a story in the Bible where Jesus is in the temple and he is watching people making their offerings. It says, **"While Jesus was in the Temple, he watched the rich people putting their gifts into the collection box. Then a poor widow came by and dropped in two pennies. 'I assure you,' he said, 'this poor widow has given more than all the rest of them. For they have given a tiny part of their surplus, but she, poor as she is, has given everything she has.'**" What is amazing about his story, is that the rich people probably gave a lot more money, yet the widow was the one who was praised because she gave what she had. For us as athletes, God has given us athletic gifts. However, it's not about how much talent you have or don't have, it's about making the most with what you have, maximizing your potential. Today I want to give you three reasons why you should make maximizing your potential your goal.

The first reason we should maximize our potential is that **it's a compliment** to God. When I got engaged, I had spent a lot of time and a lot of money on the ring that I gave my fiancé. She wears it all the time and constantly looks at it. Every time I see that ring on her finger it makes me smile. The fact that she is enjoying my gift brings me great happiness. The same is true with God. We compliment Him when we use the gifts he's given us to maximize our potential.

The second reason we should maximize our potential is because **it's controllable**. For many athletes, their goal is to be perfect or to win all the time. However, if we really look at these goals we realize that there is a lot about them that is out of our hands. Think about the perfect game for a quarterback. What happens if he makes all perfect throws, but every single one of his passes is dropped? He has a poor rating despite being a really good athlete. What about pitchers in

baseball? Many of their “perfect” games are because their teammates played great. You have just as much control over winning games as being perfect. For instance, if your team played against the best professional team, you would probably lose no matter how much you practiced and how disciplined you were. You don’t have control of the other team’s talent, so in reality you really can’t control who wins. Maximizing your potential is a great goal because it’s something you have total control over. If you spend all your time worrying about things you don’t have control over, you won’t be able to focus on what you do have control over.

The last reason we should maximize our potential is that **it is consistent**. If we make our goal something like winning a game, then what happens when you are no longer in position to win? One time in the 2005 football season, we got beat 63 to 12. At that point, what did we have to play for? The goal of winning was out of the question, so what do we do then. Our last game of the same season we won 55-7. If winning the game is our goal, what do we do when we are up by so much? However, in both of these situations, if our goal is to improve and to get better, then we still have something to play for and are motivated to play hard.

Let’s say one person has twenty pennies and another person only has five pennies. The person with only five pennies uses four of them and the one with twenty pennies uses only six of them. The pennies represent your athletic potential. One person has all kinds of potential but doesn’t use it. This person doesn’t have a lot of ability, but uses most of it. Which one do you think makes God happy? Even though the one was able to give more, he wasted more of it than he used. It isn’t about how much athletic potential you have, it’s about how much you use. You should focus on maximizing your potential rather than winning because it’s a **compliment to God**, it’s **controllable**, and it is **consistent**.

Move Some Rock

An American soldier was being held captive in a German concentration camp during one of the World Wars. Knowing it was his duty to attempt to escape, he made two attempts to escape from the camp, which was run by a ruthless commandant. After the second failed attempt, almost dead from torture and punishment, the commandant had the soldier chained to a huge boulder in the middle of the prison compound.



When the soldier healed from his wounds, he began to daily push and pull on the rock (using the chain) as hard as he could in a continued effort to escape. Early on, the concentration camp guards, the commandant and even some of his fellow prisoners would laugh as they watched him, in what seemed like a futile effort. As time went on, because of his determination in the face of such adversity, he gained some respect from the guards and the prisoners and they would bring him extra food scraps.

One day, in front of his guards, the commandant made fun of the prisoner's futile effort and stated to him that if he could move the rock beyond a tree in the compound, that he would give him his freedom. The tree was some fifty yards away. The commandant knew that the prisoner would die when the winter weather moved in.

The soldier, through his efforts and the food that was shared with him had hardened his body and had actually managed to move the rock a few inches, but nowhere near the tree. As he pushed and pulled on the rock day after day the soldier transformed himself into a rock hard man of muscle, but still he had only managed to move the rock a few more inches.

One day, as winter approached it rained all day and with mud on the ground, the soldier rested. That night it grew very cold and the temperature froze the ground and the water in ruts made by trucks that would drive through the compound. The prisoner, through a concentrated effort, managed to keep the rock from freezing to the ground and to move it on the ice in one of the ruts. Once on the ice, he slid the rock all the way past the tree. The next day the commandant, his guards, and the other prisoners were shocked in the morning to not see the prisoner chained to the rock in the middle of the compound. As they looked around, they were even more shocked to see him and the rock past

the tree that the commandant had pointed to when he made a promise of freedom.¹

The commandant, was enraged because of the circumstances that led to the accomplishment of the task and instead of giving him his freedom, he ordered the guards to kill the soldier. The guards refused and turned on their commandant ordering him to free the prisoner or face death himself. The soldier was freed.

In this story, the American soldier took advantage of the opportunity he was presented. Over the course of a game, you may have many opportunities come your way. The other team might make a mistake. You may be getting the ball. You might get into the game. The Bible says, "**So be careful how you live, not as fools, but as those who are wise. Make the most of every opportunity for doing good in these evil days.**" Like the American soldier, you can make the most of opportunities by being **prepared**, and being **persistent**.

First of all, you need to be **prepared**. The soldier didn't sit around and wait for his opportunity to happen. He prepared by working hard day after day even though he didn't see much progress. All this hard work made him strong enough to move the rock once he found his opportunity. If he hadn't been working, then he would never have been able to move the rock. In order to take advantage of opportunities throughout the course of a game, you need to be prepared. Get your rest. Do the warm up's at full speed. Know your assignments. At practice, put full effort into all your drills. If you only do your drills at half speed, you'll miss your opportunities when they come in the game because you weren't prepared.

You also have to be **persistent**. The soldier kept pulling on his chain, and pushing the rock despite the fact that he didn't see any results. In a game, there may be times when we may make mistakes or things aren't going our way, but you need to keep on being persistent because you never know when you'll get an opportunity. Some of you may not get a lot of playing time, but keep working hard and don't give up because many of you are only one injury away from getting in the game. If you give up, you may miss your opportunity.

There will be lots of opportunities that come your way. Make the most of them by being **prepared** and being **persistent**.

¹ This story was told by Coach Scott Mooney while I was at Campbellsville University in 2002.

Becoming Great

After defeating Sonny Liston to win his first title in 1964, Muhammed Ali proclaimed to the press, "I am the greatest!"

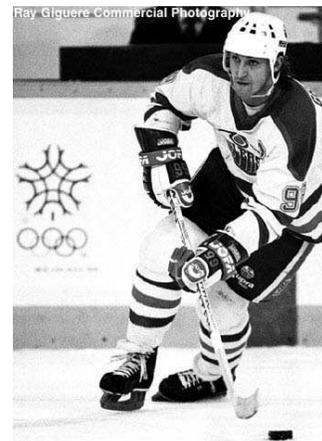


The sports world has given Wayne Gretzky the nickname, "The Great One". What exactly does it mean to be great? Is it winning percentage, championships, or fame? In order to answer this question, Jesus gathered his disciples together and told them **"You know that the rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their high officials exercise authority over them. Not so with you. Instead, whoever wants to become great among you must be your servant, and whoever wants to be first must be your slave—just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many."**

In that passage Jesus explained that greatness is being a servant. I'd like to give you 3 tips on how you can serve your teammates.

1. Put the team ahead of yourself

In his book Wooden, John Wooden tells about his experience when coaching Kareem Abdul-Jabbar. He explained that Kareem was so talented that he could probably score almost every time he touched the ball. However, Kareem was a team player and learned how to get his teammates involved. The team ended up being better because of it. Kareem sacrificed his stats so that they could be a better team. In order to serve your teammates, keep in mind what's best for the team, not what's best for you.



2. Give all out effort

You can't really serve your teammates unless you give them your full effort. It's like proposing with a ring from a Cracker Jack box. It's totally worthless because it's not your best. Like Yogi Berra says, "Give 100% and if that's not enough, give what's left." Give your teammates your best effort.

3. Share the Credit

There is an old quote that says, "It's amazing what can be accomplished when nobody cares who gets the credit." When you succeed, share the credit with your teammates. Heisman Trophy winner Troy Smith is an outstanding example of this. Nearly every time he is interviewed about his spectacular play, he

chooses to focus on the play of his teammates in a genuinely humble way. When you share the credit with your teammates, it is a visible sign that you are there to serve them and not just using them to inflate your own ego.

Greatness is in serving and as Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. commented, "Everybody can be great because everybody can serve." You don't have to be born tall, fast, or strong. You don't have to have the best jump shot or the prettiest swing. If you can put the team first, give all out effort, and share the credit, then you can be great. Remember, life is like tennis, those who serve well seldom lose.

Eliminating Ineffective Behavior

In an interview after Super Bowl XL, Seattle Seahawks coach Mike Holmgren was quoted as saying, "We knew it was going to be tough going against the Pittsburgh Steelers. I didn't know we were going to have to play the guys in the striped shirts as well." Many Seahawks fans blamed the referees for their loss in Super Bowl XL, but what has blaming the refs help them accomplish? The Steelers still won the Super Bowl and it wasn't a factor in them winning games this year. In fact, it is an ineffective behavior, because it doesn't help them get any closer to what they want. If we want to reach our goals in athletics and in life, we need to replace ineffective behaviors with behaviors that enhance our ability to reach our goals. Here are three ineffective behaviors and their positive counterparts.



1. We need to replace **complaining with action**.

During the last two years I was in college, my summer job was as a camp counselor for the YMCA. My first summer there, I had a group of teenagers who would always complain about the activities we were doing for the day. One day, I got fed up with the complaining and I told them that our next activity was to sit there and complain about everything they didn't like about camp. So they began complaining about the activities and the staff (One thing they couldn't complain about was the food, because they brought their own lunches). After about twenty minutes of this, one of the campers arrived at the brilliant conclusion, "This isn't doing anything for us." The problem with complaining is that it is not action. Complaining usually just makes you aware of a problem, but does nothing to fix it. An old Chinese proverb says, "It is better to light a small candle than complain about how dark it is." Instead of complaining what you can't do, look for something that you can do. Then do it! Replace complaining with action.

2. We need to replace **blaming with responsibility**.

If you could kick the person in the pants responsible for most of your troubles, you wouldn't be able to sit for a month. Blaming doesn't help you succeed. It only makes you feel better about failure. Instead of blaming someone or something else, look for what steps you can take to remedy the problem. Don't wait for people to change or circumstances to get better, because most likely....they won't. Replace blaming with taking responsibility.

3. We need to replace **criticizing with change**

Criticizing someone is extremely ineffective because you have no control over someone else. It only distracts you from what you need to do to reach your goal. If you can't even make **yourself** into what **you** want to be, how do you think you'll be able to make **someone else** into what **you** want **them** to be? Jesus said, "**Why worry about a speck in your friend's eye when you have a log in your own? How can you think of saying to your friend, 'Let me help you get rid of that speck in your eye,' when you can't see past the log in your own eye? Hypocrite! First get rid of the log in your own eye; then you will see well enough to deal with the speck in your friend's eye.**"

By focusing on what you can control (yourself), you can take steps that are productive. Who knows, the positive actions that you take might help the other person want to change too. Replace criticizing with change.

The Bible says, "**let us throw off everything that hinders.**" Ineffective behavior hinders us from reaching our potential. By **taking action** instead of complaining; **being responsible** instead of blaming; and **changing ourselves** rather than criticizing others, we can eliminate our ineffective behavior and replace it with constructive behavior that will help us reach our goals.

Play like a champion

From the movie "Rudy"

Rudy: Do you think you made it?

Jim: Unfortunately yeah.

Rudy: What is so unfortunate about making the team?

Jim: This is my third year as a walk on. I had scholarships to two Big Ten schools, but my father was an All-American so I get a lot of family pressure.

Rudy: I don't understand. If you haven't been cut, then you still have a chance.

Jim: What? A chance to play?

Rudy: Yeah!

Jim: Man, the only reason they keep me around here is because I'm a legacy. To them, I'm no more valuable than a tackling dummy.

How miserable. Jim just shows up at practice, gets it over with and goes back to his dorm. There's no fire, no passion, and no purpose.

In 1 Corinthians 9:24 Paul writes, "**Do you not know that in a race all the runners run, but only one gets the prize? Run in such a way as to get the prize.**" Everyone on the field plays the game, but not everyone plays well. When you get on the field, whether it's the practice field or the game field, play like a champion! Don't just show up, Make it count! If you follow these four instructions, you will play like a champion no matter what the scoreboard says.

First of all, you have to be **dedicated**. In the movie, The Karate Kid, Mr. Miyagi asks Daniel if he's ready to begin. Daniel replies, "I guess so" Mr. Miyagi responds by telling him, "Man walk left side, safe. Walk right side, safe. Walk down middle, sooner or later get squished, just like grape. Same here. You karate do, "yes" or karate do, "no" "guess so" just like grape." Make up your mind whether you want to play or not and if you do, do it all the way, not half hearted.



Next, you have to be **determined**. In the news last summer, a man from China was watching the World Cup when his house caught fire. While his wife was getting their baby and evacuating the house, he grabbed his TV, went outside, plugged it in, and continued watching the game. Now that's determination! He wasn't going to let the fact that his house was burning down stop him from watching the game. Now that is a little twisted, but in football, you have to be determined to allow nothing to stop you. Ref makes a bad call? So what, you'll bounce back. Offense coughs up the ball, no problem, the defense will get it back. The coach calls a bad play.....well you won't have to worry about that if you play football for Ansonia High School. You have to be determined that nothing will stop you.

The next thing is that you have to be **disciplined**. You have to do the little things well. You have to perform the little things to perfection. Every detail needs to be done to the best of your ability. Little things can definitely hurt you. Just ask Luciano Mares of Albuquerque, NM. His house was severely damaged when a tiny mouse escaped from a pile of burning leaves, ran into the house, and caught it on fire. Even the smallest things can hurt you, so you have to be disciplined.

And finally, you have to be **delighted**. Your sport is a GAME. It's supposed to be fun! When you are dedicated, determined, and disciplined, you will be delighted with the sport you play. It is possible to be disciplined and delighted at the same time. Enjoy yourself playing the game!

In closing, I want to reflect on the verse in 1 Corinthians one more time. **"Do you know that in a race all the runners run, but only one gets the prize? Run in such a way as to get the prize."** When you step on the field, play like a champion by being **dedicated, determined, disciplined, and delighted**.

What's your part?

When I played football at Campbellsville University, I rarely got to play in games. I spent most of my time playing on the scout team, which meant I was going against our best defense every day. And believe me, they didn't take it easy on you. I still have some scars from playing scout team. Most people play scout team for maybe one or two years, and then they get some playing time in games. Not me. I played scout team for three years before I blew out my knee and couldn't play a fourth. Throughout that though, I still felt like I was part of the team.

1 Corinthians 12:14-26 says this,

“Now the body is not made up of one part but of many. If the foot should say, ‘Because I am not a hand, I do not belong to the body,’ it would not for that reason cease to be part of the body. And if the ear should say, ‘Because I am not an eye, I do not belong to the body,’ it would not for that reason cease to be part of the body. If the whole body were an eye, where would the sense of hearing be? If the whole body were an ear, where would the sense of smell be? But in fact God has arranged the parts in the body, every one of them, just as he wanted them to be. If they were all one part, where would the body be? As it is, there are many parts, but one body.



The eye cannot say to the hand, ‘I don't need you!’ And the head cannot say to the feet, ‘I don't need you!’ On the contrary, those parts of the body that seem to be weaker are indispensable, and the parts that we think are less honorable we treat with special honor. And the parts that are unpresentable are treated with special modesty, while our presentable parts need no special treatment. But God has combined the members of the body and has given greater honor to the parts that lacked it, so that there should be no division in the body, but that its parts should have equal concern for each other. If one part suffers, every part suffers with it; if one part is honored, every part rejoices with it.”

Just as there are no unimportant parts of the body, there are no unimportant parts of this team! The roles are different, but they are no less important. **YOUR ROLE IS IMPORTANT!** Since your role is important, I'd like to give you three tips on how you can play your role well.

To make the most out of your role, you have to be **positive**. In order to play an Xbox, you need more than just controllers. In order to build a car, you need more than just tires. On a football team, what would it look like if everyone was a Quarterback? If you only had 11 people on your team, how well do you think that would go? We need many different parts on a team, which means **YOUR TEAM NEEDS YOU!** Keep positive about your role, because it is very important.

Next you have to be **productive** to play your role well. Whatever your role is, no matter how small it seems, be the best at it that you can be! If you are the starting defensive tackle, be the best defensive tackle you can be. If you are on

the sidelines the whole game, be the best teammate you can be. You still have a job to do! You can yell pass, run, ball for the defense. You can encourage your teammates. You can watch the guy who you would be playing against for any weaknesses. But most importantly you have to be ready to get in the game! You are one injury away from playing! When I coached college football, I was a graduate assistant, which meant that I was the lowest on the totem pole. On game day, I only had one job. "get back coach" My only job was to go up and down the sidelines and make sure everyone was behind this white line. Since that was my only job on game day, I was going to be the best "get back" coach I could be. I would constantly patrol the sidelines in order to make sure everyone was behind the white line. It seemed stupid, but the trainers told me that it made their job so much easier so they could take care of injured players. So if you are not happy with your role, don't cry about it, be productive!

You have to be positive, productive, and the last thing you have to do is be **patient**. I know you may not like your role, but If you perform your role well, there's a good chance that you could be given another role. If you are on the third team, and you would like to move to first team, do you think that's going to happen if you aren't playing well on the third team? Be patient, and play your role well. Then there's a good chance you will be given another role.

Remember YOU ARE IMPORTANT! You can play your role well by being **positive**, being **productive**, and being **patient**. I'd like to close with a quote by John Wooden,

"I told my players at UCLA that we, as a team, are like a powerful car. Maybe a Bill Walton or a Kareem Abdul-Jabbar or Michael Jordan is the big engine, but if one wheel is flat, we're going no place. And if we have brand new tires but the lug nuts are missing, the wheels come off. What good is the powerful engine now?"

It's these little things that make the big things happen. The big engine is not going to work unless the little things are being done properly."²

Fulfill your role, the best that you know how.

² Wooden, John and Jamison, Steve. *Wooden*. pp.75-76 Contemporary Books. 1997

Keep on Keepin' On

Who holds the record for the most passing yards in a Super Bowl? Kurt Warner threw for 414 yards in Super Bowl XXXIV. He was also the NFL MVP that year. However, the road to the Super Bowl wasn't easy for Kurt Warner. In college, he didn't get to start until he was a fifth year senior. He was cut from the packers in 1994. He didn't even play football for a year. When he signed with the Rams, he was the 3rd string quarterback. Then, he was able to move up to backup quarterback. When both the starting quarterback got injured, Kurt Warner was able to start and the rest is history. Kurt Warner is an outstanding example of perseverance. Through his career he has continued to keep on keepin' on. I'd like to give you two reasons that you should keep on keeping on.



The first reason is that it's **stronger than failure**. This is the resume of a politician in the mid 1800's.

1831	Failed in business
1832	Defeated for legislature
1833	Failed in business again
1834	Elected to legislature
1835	Sweetheart died
1836	Had a nervous breakdown
1838	Defeated for speaker
1840	Defeated for elector
1843	Defeated for Congressional Nomination.
1846	Elected for Congress
1848	Defeated for Congress
1855	Defeated for Senate
1856	Defeated for Vice President
1859	Defeated for Senate
1860	Elected President of the United States ³

This politician's name was Abraham Lincoln. Lincoln endured failure after failure, yet he ended up becoming one of our greatest presidents. Former president Calvin Coolidge said it best when he said, "Nothing in the world can take the place of Persistence. Talent will not; nothing is more common than unsuccessful men with talent. Genius will not; unrewarded genius is almost a proverb. Education will not; the world is full of educated derelicts. Persistence and determination alone are omnipotent." Perseverance is stronger than failure.

³ Wooden, p. 101-102

The next reason we should keep on keepin' on is that it is **smarter than quitting**. I went to high school with a guy who had this tradition during football season. In the spring he'd run his mouth about how much he benched and how he was going to crush everyone. Two-a-days would come around and he'd get knocked around. Then, after two-a-days were over, he'd quit the team. He'd wait till after two-a-days were over to quit. Why go through the hardest part of the season and then quit? He did this three years in a row. What in the world did he gain from that ...other than being used as an illustration? You rarely gain anything by giving up. However, if you continue to keep on keeping on, you at least have a chance of something good happening. It's smarter than quitting.

The Bible says, "So don't get tired of doing what is good. Don't get discouraged and give up, for we will reap a harvest of blessing at the appropriate time." Keep on Keepin' on, because **it's stronger than failure** and **smarter than quitting**.

Taking Control

When I played football, this may shock you, I wasn't the most gifted athlete in the world. I wasn't the fastest, biggest, or the strongest. Throughout high school and college, I realized that there were a lot of people that had more talent than I did. I played wide receiver in college and most of our linebackers were faster than me. One thing I realized though is that I didn't have control over how much talent the other players had. My college coach, Ron Finley, would always say, "There are three things in football you don't have control over; the referees, the weather, and the other team. The only thing you do have control over is yourself." That made a lot of sense to me because it allowed me to focus on the things that I had control over. You can't let those things that you don't have control over affect the things that you do have control over. You can take control of your performance by focusing on three areas that you have control over.



Coach Ron Finley

You have control over your attitude. The Bible says "a cheerful heart is good medicine, but a crushed spirit dries up the bones." A positive attitude is refreshing and sustaining, but negative attitudes are draining. Football can be no fun when you mope your way through practices and games. One thing that has helped me keep a positive attitude is changing my perspective. When I was in college I played scout team for three years. I rarely got in games (when it was close). My claim to fame is getting in on the hands team in our homecoming game my junior year. They kicked it deep, but I blocked the heck out of my guy. Despite not getting a lot of playing time, my perspective helped me keep a positive attitude. I viewed every drill and every play on scout team as an opportunity to compete. I realized that the only way that I would be helpful to the team is if I gave my full effort. Also, I wanted to please God with my performance and the only my best effort could do that. Changing your perspective can change your attitude. For instance, if a bad play happens, you can always remember that there is still a whole game left. You have control over your attitude.

The next thing you have control over is your effort. Like I said before, I was no superstar. I didn't have the athletic ability to turn on "cruise control" and still win. I realized that if I wanted to compete, then I had to put my full effort into it. I'd go diving for balls and block as hard as I could. I gave so much effort that I almost gave myself a concussion before a game because I was laying out for a ball in warm-ups. The Bible says, "Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart, as working for the Lord, not for men." Put full effort into whatever you do (that includes football). I hate to see a team get beat because they didn't put forth full effort. Last year against Bethel, they scored a touchdown against us because we didn't hustle downfield to cover a punt. That touchdown ended up being the difference in the game. The thing that burns me up the most about that play is

not that we lost the game, but the fact that we had control over that. We have control over effort.

The last thing you have control over is your preparation. You control how well prepared you are for a game. By practicing well, you prepare yourself to play the best you can in the game. When you step on the field, you don't want to have to think. You want to get on the field and naturally do your assignment. You want it to be a habit. Also, practicing well helps you to master the techniques that will help you. Sometimes, you can overcome superior athletic ability by having good technique. When I was in college, I was known for my good pass patterns and my good hands. I wasn't very fast, but I could get open because I would run my routes correctly. That came from a lot of practice on my own, running routes and working on my hands. In any sport, having proper technique can get you a long way. Proper technique comes from good preparation.

In closing, don't let what you can't control negatively affect what you can control. You can take control of your performance by focusing on your attitude, your effort, and your preparation.

What Time Is It?

“Napoleon Dynamite”



Uncle Rico: Back in '82, I used to be able to throw a pigskin a quarter mile. How much you want to make a bet I can throw a football over them mountains? Yeah. If coach would've put me in fourth quarter... we'd have been state champions, no doubt. No doubt in my mind. You better believe things would have been different. I'd have gone pro...in a heartbeat. I'd be makin' millions of dollars and... livin' in a... big ol' mansion somewhere. You know, soakin' it up in a hot tub with my soul mate.

The thing that's so funny about Uncle Rico is that he's stuck in the past. He's caught playing the “what if” game. What if the coach would have put me in? What if I'd have gone pro? The sad thing is that many of us act like Uncle Rico at times, only it sounds more like, I can't believe I dropped that pass. What if I would have caught it? I can't block that guy kicked my butt last play. Or, we could get a big head, thinking “wow, we really whipped them last week.” Sometimes we get stuck in the past as well, only instead of being stuck in 1982; we're stuck in the previous play, or the previous week. If you look at this clock, it will tell you the most important time. NOW. What time is it? NOW. We should focus on the present for two reasons.



First of all, **you can't change the past.** I want one of you to change one of your losses. Go ahead, let's see someone try it. No matter how hard you try, you have no control over your past. You have three choices. You can either run from it, be stuck in it, or learn from it. The Bible says, **“No, dear brothers and sisters, I am still not all I should be, but I am focusing all my energies on this one thing: Forgetting the past and looking forward to what lies ahead.”** Don't let what happens in the previous week, or the previous play, affect what is happening in the present. Forget what is behind and press on to what is ahead.

The second reason to focus on the present is that **the present determines your future.** The other trap we can fall into is to live in the future. “when I get my chance to go in..., when we get the ball back...next week we'll.” If we keep thinking about tomorrow, we'll miss the opportunities we have today. If we take care of the present, we can influence our future. Jesus said, **“So don't worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will bring its own worries. Today's trouble is enough for today.”** Focus on winning each play, because if you do that, the scoreboard will take care of itself.

Stay focused on the present, because you can't control the past, and your present determines your future. What time is it? NOW.

How to Pull Off an Upset



On October 19, 1985 The Pac-10 leading Washington Huskies were set to play the Oregon State Beavers. Oregon State had only won 2 games per year for the past 14 seasons. The Huskies were 38 point favorites to beat Oregon State. If that isn't enough against them, Oregon State was playing with out their starting quarterback. In the final minutes, Oregon State blocked a punt and took it for a touchdown. The extra point made it 21 to 20 Oregon State. The Bible says, **"I have observed something else in this world of ours. The fastest runner doesn't always win the race, and the strongest warrior doesn't always win the battle. The wise are often poor, and the skillful are not necessarily wealthy. And those who are educated don't always lead successful lives. It is all decided by chance, by being at the right place at the right time."** The most talented teams don't always win. Upsets happen. In fact, they happen all the time. Today I want to give you four keys to pulling of an upset.



First of all, you have to **play loose**. The great thing about being an underdog is that you have nothing to lose. The pressure is all on them. When this game is close, who do you think will be more nervous? Just go out there and have fun, because you have nothing to lose.

Next, you have to **play long**. In 1984, Miami had dominated Maryland in the first half and ended up with a 31-0 lead at halftime. What do you think that locker room sounded like at halftime? However, in the second half Maryland went on a 42-3 tear and ended up winning the game 42-40. If you want to pull off an upset, you have to play 4 quarters of hard football. Maryland could have folded at halftime after being down by 31 points, but they kept playing and ended up winning the game.

The next key to pulling of an upset is **proper execution**. The only way your plays are going to work is if you execute them properly. On defense, everyone has to know and execute their assignment. You have to play with good technique. You are not going to outmuscle or out quick a superior team, but you can out execute them.

Finally, the last key to pulling off an upset is to **punish them for their mistakes**. In football, when a team throws an interception, fumbles the ball, or jumps offsides, you need to capitalize on their mistakes. If they get called for holding, you can't let them get a first down. If they turn the ball over, you need to score. Their mistakes are your opportunities.

Upsets happen all the time and if you play loose, play long, have proper execution, and punish them for their mistakes, you have the opportunity to pull off an upset.

Hungry?

I want you to imagine with me that there are two tigers sitting in the jungle. One had just eaten a few hours ago and the other hasn't eaten in a week. All of a sudden a gazelle goes running by the two tigers. Which of the two tigers is going to catch the gazelle? It's most likely the one who hasn't eaten in a week. Why? Because hungry tigers run faster. Hungry tigers run faster because they really want to eat, so they chase down anything that could possibly be dinner. In the jungle, hungry tigers run faster, but on the football field, hungry players play better. Players that really want to perform their best, who really want to outscore their opponent, play better. When we are not hungry, we tend to become lazy. How do you feel on Thanksgiving Day after you've eaten? I know I feel full, and sleepy. I just want to lounge around all day after that. When we aren't hungry, we become lazy and unmotivated. The Bible says, "If you are too lazy to plow, don't expect a harvest." If we aren't hungry, don't expect good things to happen. Are you hungry? I'd like to ask you three questions to help you determine if you are hungry or not.



The first question is, "**Am I willing to sacrifice?**" In his book One Crowded Hour, Tim Bowden describes an incident in Borneo in 1964. Nepalese fighters known as Gurkhas were asked if they would be willing to jump from airplanes into combat against the Indonesians. The Gurkhas didn't clearly understand what was involved, but they bravely said they would do it, asking only that the plane fly slowly over a swampy area and no higher than 100 feet. When they were told that the parachutes would not have time to open at that height, the Gurkhas replied, "Oh, you didn't mention parachutes before!" These guys were willing to do whatever it took to achieve victory. If you are hungry, you will have the same attitude. Hungry teams aren't concerned with how tired they are or what the score is. Hungry teams are willing to do whatever it takes to be successful. Are you willing to sacrifice?

The next question is, "**Am I intense?**" How many of you would like to jump in a cage with a hungry tiger? If you did, I'm sure he wouldn't take his time eating you. Hungry teams are intense. They come after you every play with a frenzy that is unmatched. You won't see them jogging to the football on defense. You won't see them going through the motions. Hungry teams are intense.

The last question is "**Am I focused?**" Don't you just hate it when you get to go to an all you can eat buffet, and you aren't hungry? I know I've done that before. I've snacked all day and by the time I got to the restaurant, I wasn't hungry anymore. In football, there are times that we aren't hungry because we have "snacked" on other things and have allowed them to become a distraction. We can come to practice and we're thinking about what we're going to do over

the weekend or how cool that Playstation game is. Hear me out. I'm not saying that sports should be your whole life, because they shouldn't be. What I am saying is that during the time you are at practice or a game, you need to be focused on the task at hand. Hungry teams are focused.

There's a story about a proud young man who came to Socrates asking for knowledge. He walked up to the muscular philosopher and said, "O great Socrates, I come to you for knowledge." Socrates recognized a pompous numbskull when he saw one. He led the young man through the streets, to the sea, and chest deep into water. Then he asked, "What do you want?" "Knowledge, O wise Socrates," said the young man with a smile.

Socrates put his strong hands on the man's shoulders and pushed him under. Thirty seconds later Socrates let him up. "What do you want?" he asked again. "Wisdom," the young man sputtered, "O great and wise Socrates."

Socrates crunched him under again. Thirty seconds passed, thirty-five. Forty. Socrates let him up. The man was gasping. "What do you want, young man?" Between heavy, heaving breaths the fellow wheezed, "Knowledge, O wise and wonderful..."

Socrates jammed him under again. Forty seconds passed. Fifty. "What do you want?" "Air!" he screeched. "I need air!"

"When you want knowledge as you have just wanted air, then you will have knowledge."

The same is true for success. When you want success that badly, you will have it. Are you willing to sacrifice? Are you intense? Are you focused? If you can answer yes to all three questions, then you are hungry. Remember, hungry tigers run faster.

The Power of Together

Igniter Media "Together"

A Father



Dick Hoyt

A Son



Rick Hoyt

Because of **tragedy** at birth, Rick can't walk or talk
 Because of **tragedy** at birth, Dick can't play catch with his son
 Because of **together**, they are an inspiration to people around the world

Dick and Judy wanted a normal life for their son
Together they put Rick in public school
 Rick learned to write his thoughts using a special computer

When Rick was 15, he communicated to his dad that he wanted to participate in a five-mile benefit run
 Dick was not a runner, but he agreed to push Rick in his wheelchair
 For the first time in his life, Rick didn't feel handicapped



So **Together** they run



Together they compete in marathons

Together they compete in triathlons



Together they trekked 3,770 miles across America

Rick **couldn't** compete without his dad

Dick **wouldn't** compete without his son

Dick is the body



Rick is the heart

Together they Run

Together has power

Don't run alone

The Bible says, "Two people are better off than one, for they can help each other succeed. If one person falls, the other can reach out and help. But someone who falls alone is in real trouble. Likewise, two people lying close together can keep each other warm. But how can one be warm alone? A person standing alone can be attacked and defeated, but two can stand back-to-back and conquer. Three are even better, for a triple-braided cord is not easily broken". Don't run alone. You can play together by trusting your teammates, encouraging them when they are down, and communicating with them on the court or field. Remember together has power.

Power for Life

Going into spring football practice in March of 2000, I was really excited. I had gotten some playing time as a freshman that fall and I was hoping to get better and possibly get on the field more as a sophomore. I was in great shape and in fact, I was faster than I had ever been. However, during the first day of spring practice, I was doing a catching drill, when all of the sudden, my knee buckled, I heard a loud pop, and I was in excruciating pain. After getting an MRI and visiting an orthopedic surgeon, I learned that I had torn my ACL. At that point, I knew God was up to something, but I didn't exactly know what. As I was reading my Bible, I came across two very powerful passages.

Exodus 9:16 (New King James Version), **“But indeed for this purpose I have raised you up, that I may show My power in you, and that My name may be declared in all the earth.”**

Philippians 1:12 (New Living Translation) **“And I want you to know, my dear brothers and sisters, that everything that has happened to me here has helped to spread the Good News.”**

From these passages, I knew that God was going to use this injury to bring Himself glory. To me, it was amazing how it all came to pass. I knew that I could not redshirt that fall because I could not afford to go to school an extra year just to play football. Normally, rehabilitation for this type of injury is six months. I had surgery in May, which would mean that if I followed normal protocol, I wouldn't be back in time for the season. My surgeon told me that the earliest I would be able to play would be ten weeks (roughly 3 months) from surgery and he was optimistic that I could do that. The astounding thing was that the day I was to report to football camp was exactly ten weeks from the day of my surgery. I worked really hard that summer rehabilitating my knee so I could be ready for camp. By the end of the summer, I was cleared by my surgeon to play football and (although a little gimpy) I was able to practice the entire season without missing a day. When I had returned to school, one of my friends that I hadn't talked to all summer came up to me told me that he just felt the need to pray for me this summer, but he didn't know why. He had no idea that I had knee surgery, but just felt that he should pray for me. God is amazing!

For most of my life, I have been either a Christian athlete or a Christian coach. There are many benefits to being an athlete that follows Christ, but I want to specifically focus on two of them that stand out to me because I have experienced them personally.

1. You realize that God is in control

Romans 8:28 says, **“And we know that God causes everything to work together for the good of those who love God and are called according to his**

purpose for them.” For those who are following Christ, everything that happens on the athletic field or in life will work towards their own good. That verse doesn't say that everything that happens to them will be good. Injuries are not good. Disappointments are not good. Tragedies are not good. Although all things are **not good**, everything **works for good** for those who follow Christ. Think of the ingredients of a chocolate cake. Baking chocolate by itself does not taste good. I know this from experience because I tried to make chocolate milk out of baking chocolate (which is not sweetened). Let me tell you, it was nasty! However, when you combine all of the gross ingredients together, it turns into something pretty tasty! The same is true with life. All of the negative experiences work together to do something wonderful for you. God brings you peace when everything around you is falling apart

2. It gives you a new perspective on sports.

When following Christ, you begin to realize that sports aren't something that you do to bring glory to yourself. Sports are something that you use to bring glory to God. He's the one who blessed you with the talents that you have. It is our job to honor him with those gifts. As author Max Lucado says in his book *The Cure for the Common Life*, "Use your uniqueness to make a big deal of God every day of your life." That goal is one that is truly satisfying and truly lasting.

Being an athlete is a wonderful experience. You get the opportunity to be challenged, the opportunity to overcome, and the opportunity to work. However, by itself, athletics can never satisfy you. Winning is never enough, and it only becomes hollow. Only Jesus Christ can satisfy you, and when you follow Him, you **learn that God is in control** and **gain a new perspective on sports**.

If you would like to begin to follow Christ, you can do that today! You must give him total control of your life (let him call the shots), and trust him to come into your life and make you what He wants you to be. If that is what you want to do, I invite you to pray this prayer (or something like it)

Lord Jesus, I need you.
Thank you for dying on the cross for my sins.
I now invite you to take control of my life.
Make me the kind of person you want me to be.

If you have prayed this prayer, I encourage you get involved in a local church to that will help you grow in this commitment.