

"A measure of intelligence is the ability to change."

» *Albert Einstein*



Courting Success

A story shared by a commentator during US Open Tennis Championship coverage reminded me of advice I've given to folks taking on new jobs, or simply looking to improve in the ones they have now.

The commentator, Darren Cahill, was a former player who became a successful coach.

The story he told involved coaching Simona Halep.

Halep was a highly ranked player with tons of potential who could not quite close the deal in major tournaments.

Before becoming her coach, Cahill witnessed Halep lose a heartbreaking grand slam final that he believed damaged her confidence.

He decided that she would benefit from studying the most dominant tennis player in the world at that time – Rafael Nadal.

What made me smile was when he shared that he didn't have her watch Nadal's matches.

Instead, he began bringing Halep to watch Nadal's practice sessions.

They would sit for hours watching him go through grueling workouts.

Cahill said that it was important to show that the victories the rest of the world saw Nadal achieve on the court weren't simply the result of natural talent.



Drafting Another Plan

One of my favorite sport related events of the year is not televised and half of the participants likely couldn't run a 100-yard dash in under one afternoon.

I am referring to the annual fantasy football league draft I've participated in with the same guys for 15 years.

Hope springs eternal at our draft. Everyone has a chance to win! (Well, not really...but we let some of them think that for a day.)

A couple of our guys use draft apps that select their teams for them.

Their success rate tends to be about the same as the person who drafts using a magazine from last season. (We all know that guy.)

Three of us have won our 10-team league about 80% of the time with a similar philosophy.

Pick your team, but then be ready and willing to drop and add players immediately... and all season long.

Your draft plans may not turn out. That doesn't mean your season is doomed.

In a long season, players get hurt. Previous top-performers under perform. Relative unknowns suddenly become stars.

The competitive landscape is not static.

Every player out there is very talented.

Nadal combines tremendous talent with an almost unmatched practice and fitness regime.

Cahill used those practice-watching sessions to get Halep to buy in to putting in a higher level of effort on the practice courts.

They even began copying many of Nadal's personalized exercises and drills.

Within two years, Halep reached the world #1 ranking and won her first grand slam tournament.

The "breakthrough" success the world saw on center courts was earned on practice courts far from the spotlight.

She became the #1 player in the world by studying and adopting the work ethic of a #1 player.

While I wouldn't suggest Halep was officially "mentored" by Nadal, being able to observe and learn the strategies and work habits of a very successful peer benefited her tremendously.

Regardless of what field you compete in, the "secrets of success" are often not particularly secret.

Observe and, if possible, ask questions of the most successful people in your field.

(You may be surprised how willing most are to share with you.)

Learning what it takes to be one of the best in your field is a great start.

Actually doing what it takes is what gets you there.

The ball is in your court.

A quote from a mathematician named James Yorke comes to mind. He said, "The most successful people are those who are good at Plan B."

I've always believed that observation is spot on.

Many folks have reasonable Plan A's. We have strategies to deal with the expected situations and challenges ahead.

Then... life happens.

The people who tend to be more successful in sports, business, and, well... life in general... realize that when situations change, plans may need to change as well.

Sometimes, plans are tweaked. Sometimes, they are scrapped.

Consider that the best coaches tend to have teams who perform better in the second half of games. It's not that they have bad plans going in.

It's that they are willing and able to adjust to the actual challenges they find after taking the field.

Business environments change. Situations evolve.

New competition arises. Strong competitors get stronger. Team members come and go.

Successful folks tend not to waste much time and energy complaining that their old plans would have worked... if only nothing would have changed.

They adapt and move forward.

In a quickly evolving industry, change isn't our enemy. Sticking with once relevant, but now outmoded strategies is our enemy.

Is it time to draft new plans for you and your team?

"Plans are of little importance, but planning is essential."

» Winston Churchill

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