



### **Letters on Leadership #14: Attacking Adversity**

Here is a challenge for you. When you wake up tomorrow, go through your morning routine as you normally would. Shave, get dressed, tie your shoes, brew your coffee, drive to work, etc. Here is the challenge, though: do it all one-handed. It is amazing how difficult and frustrating simple things that we take for granted become when we only have the use of one hand.

As our teammate Cory Ross says, “my heroes are my teammates.” I would like to tell you about one of my heroes and teammates at The Program: Sam Cila. While leading a security patrol in Iraq in 2005, SSG Cila was hit with an Improvised Explosive Device (IED) in an enemy ambush. The blast sheared off most of his left arm and severed his brachial artery an inch from his heart. Despite nearly bleeding out in the street, and with the help of his teammates, Sam was tough enough to survive the encounter. Over the next few years, Sam endured over 53 surgeries and eventually opted to have his left hand amputated.



This would break most people. However, my teammates at The Program are not “most people.” After the amputation Sam became an elite-level endurance athlete. He is a two-time member of the USA Para National Triathlon team and an Ironman World Championship finisher. He is a high-altitude mountaineer. He also completed the world's toughest bicycle race, Race Across America, riding his bike from Oceanside, CA to Annapolis MD in 7 Days, 14 hours, and 28 minutes.

However, these accomplishments are not what impresses me the most about Sam. What impresses me the most is watching him zip up his uniform jacket before an event. Everything he does is twice as difficult: shaving, getting his luggage in the overhead compartment, zipping up his jacket. He faces more adversity on a daily basis than many of us do in a year. Most difficult of all, he has to wake up every morning knowing that he has to do it all over again.

In five years, I have never heard Sam complain. I've never heard him make an excuse. Watching Sam struggle to get his jacket on one morning I asked him, “How do you do it? How do you wake up every morning and face the day knowing the amount of adversity you are going to face?” He responded, “the only way you can deal with adversity. I attack it.”

We all face adversity in our lives. There will be days when it seems like everything is stacked against us and life just isn't fair. That adversity may come on the athletic field, in the classroom, in the boardroom, or any of the other places in which we compete. We can address the symptoms and fix our technique, reevaluate our strategy, or improve our communication, but there is only one way to defeat the adversity and come through on the other side...attack it!

Keep attacking!

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