



Winning

For as long as I can remember I wanted to win. I wanted to win every high school and college football game in which I competed. I wanted to win every group or team workout and every training competition in the Marine Corps. Why? Because I wanted to be the *best*. Almost everyone reading this feels the same. You want to win. You want to be the *best*. Are those terms mutually exclusive though? Do you need to *win* every engagement to be the *best*? The answer is no. Our obsession with winning is preventing many of us from reaching our potential and becoming our best. When we only focus on the result, we lose sight of the process and the corresponding opportunities to get better.

In every sport (and business) with whom we work, we see the same situation arise. A talented player, sometimes even the star player, will break a team standard. Leaders know that a failure to meet a standard should carry a consequence. However, they choose not to enforce one. The star player (or salesperson) still gets just as much playing time as others who did meet the standard.



Why do coaches do this? Because they want to win, and they believe that they need their talented player or salesperson to do so. They may be right. They may win that game or “close” a big sale because they did not enforce a consequence. However, that team will never consistently compete for a championship. Inconsistent accountability breeds distrust and disunity. That coach or business leader sacrificed their culture and long-term success to win a game. The obsession with winning denied them the chance to get better and reach their true potential.

We see the obsession with winning all the time in our political climate, as well. We do not have discussions. We have debates (and based on the last one, barely even that). Debates are a competition and are meant to be won. Rather than interacting with people with the intent of changing their minds, interact with the hope of gaining a better understanding. ***Listen to understand*** instead of ***to respond***. Sometimes, at the conclusion of the interaction, our viewpoint might change. Other times our own beliefs are strengthened. Regardless of the outcome though, we will have gotten better.

During my junior year of high school, we played in an important football game against a league opponent. The father of one of my teammates, Ryan, was battling terminal cancer and the doctors did not give him much time to live. One of his dreams was to see his son play football. The problem was that Ryan was an underclassman quarterback and buried on the depth chart. Coach Terry Hennigan made the decision to start Ryan. Keep in mind, we were not playing an inferior opponent. It was a matchup between two highly ranked teams with playoff and league title implications. With the ambulance parked behind the end zone and the rear doors open, Ryan’s dad watched his son start the game and lead the offense down the field for a score. Did we win that game? It was 25 years ago, and I honestly cannot remember. I do know that I got better that night.

We all did.

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