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Preparation for Great Athletic Performance is Not Like Grocery Shopping

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There are numerous theories and philosophies of what it takes to win and excel in sports. All of these probably have some nugget of truth to them, some obviously more than others. The one truism that will always stand, however, is that great athletic performance demands hard work, commitment, excellent teaching and a tremendous amount of desire and determination. Athletes must realize that to be great, certain choices are non-negotiable. Greatness is not like grocery shopping where you can choose from different types of food, some that are good for you and others that are not. For example, there are many cereals, some with incredible taste and sugar, such as Fruity Pebbles and Frosted Flakes and then healthier cereals, such as Shredded Wheat or Special K. If you want to eat better, the choice of cereal is clear, and in the same way, if you want great achievement in sport, the choice is clear.

Focused Time and Practice

This is a non-negotiable. If you want to be great in your sport, time and practice are a must. You have to put time into your sport and sacrifice other things. This does not mean sacrificing your health or relationships, but it does mean giving up certain activities that require time away from practice. Only you can make this choice, but a choice it is. You make the choice as to whether and how much to train beyond regular practice, whether to spend time on mental training, eating better, and/or strategy preparation time. These are all choices. You can choose not to practice beyond the minimum required, just as you can decide to eat Fruity Pebbles everyday, or you choose to commit the time necessary to be successful. Only you make this choice.

Lifestyle

All athletes make choices as to how they live off the playing field. Balance, fun and time away from sport are important, but lifestyle is a choice. I have worked with numerous professional athletes, some of whom have chosen healthier lifestyles, such as sleep, eating and social habits, and have been successful. I have also run into athletes that have engaged in more unhealthy lifestyles. Again, every choice has to be owned and has its consequences. It is as simple as physics. A choice begets consequences. If you want to achieve athletic greatness, however, the *right* choice is non-negotiable.

Desire

All athletes have different levels of desire and one level is no better than any other unless their goals are the same. Judging the desire of any one athlete to pursue greatness is not important, but challenging them on the consistency between their desire and goals is a must. Some athletes want to be great high school players and not pursue the collegiate ranks and there is nothing more to be said. There is no issue. If, however, they want to achieve greatness, yet are not willing to do what it takes, then desire is in question. Achieving greatness in anything takes desire and determination. Greatness is not for the feint of heart. Again, be honest with your true desire and respond accordingly.

Play Smart, Play Hard, Play Well!!