



WORLD-CLASS ATHLETIC PERFORMANCE

Mindset, Grit, and Other Factors

TALENT

- “The most dazzling human achievements are, in fact, the aggregate of countless other individual elements, each of which is, in a sense, ordinary.
-The Mundanity of Excellence
- Talent is perhaps the most pervasive lay explanation we have for athletic success, as if talent were some invisible substance behind the surface reality of performance, which finally distinguishes the best among our athletes.
-Dan Chambliss, sociologist

TALENT, CONT'D...

- "Do not talk about giftedness, inborn talents! One can name great men of all kinds who were very little gifted. They acquired greatness, became 'geniuses' (as we put it)...They all possessed that seriousness of the efficient workman which first leans to construct the parts properly before it ventures to fashion a great whole; they allowed themselves time for it, because they took more pleasure in making the little, secondary things well than in the effect of a dazzling whole."

-Nietzsche



TALENT: DEFINED

- The possession of repeatable skills that don't depend on physical size.

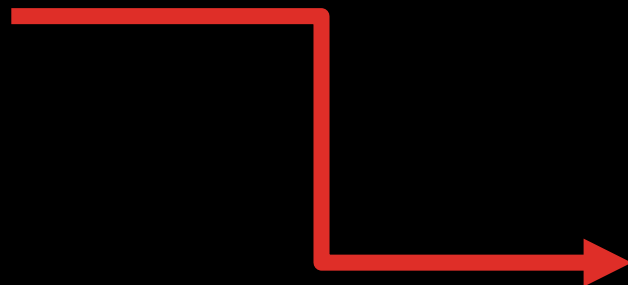
CONT'D...

- “Talent without **grit** is just potential. Talent plus **grit** is unstoppable.

-Ben Bergeron

GRIT

Talent x Effort = Skill



Skill x Effort = Achievement

- Talent ABSOLUTELY matters;
- But **effort** factors into the equation TWICE!

(Angela Duckworth)

CONT'D...

- To do anything really well, you have to overextend yourself; pay twice as much attention.
- Do the precociously talented learn that lesson? Do they discover that the capacity to do something over and over again, to struggle, to have patience, can be mastered – but not overnight?
 - Some might
 - But those who struggle early may learn it better

“SOCIAL MULTIPLIER EFFECT”

- Skill level across most sport domains
 - Has increased over past century
- Exposure to TV...
- More exposure
 - = more kids trying the sport
 - = more kids trying to emulate specific skills
 - = more competition
 - = increased skill level
 - = increased skill averages

DEEP PRACTICE

- Slow, fitful struggle
- Built on a paradox:
 - Struggling and operating at the edges of your ability, where you make mistakes – makes you smarter
 - You're forced to slow down, make errors, and correct them



CONT'D.

- Robert Bjork, *Psychologist, UCLA*
 - We think of effortless performance as desirable, but it's really a terrible way to learn

FINDING THE SWEET SPOT

- Trick is to choose a goal just beyond present capabilities
- Thrashing blindly doesn't help... REACHING does

- Advertising
 - Whiskey commercial



...DEEP PRACTICE...

- Takes events that we normally strive to avoid (“mistakes”)
 - Turns them into skills
- Even in situations where the mistake could KILL you
 - Alex Honnold, *Free Solo*

FUTEBOL DE SALÃO

- “Soccer in the room”, or ‘**futsal**’
- Played in tight spaces, small courts
 - Need to maneuver accurately & quickly
- Smaller, heavier ball
 - Forced precision
- Ball handling skills developed
 - More ball touches than in typical soccer game
 - 6x more!

ENTER MYELIN

- The story of skill and talent is the story of myelin
 - I. Every human movement/thought/feeling = a precisely timed electrical signal travelling through a chain of neurons
 - II. Myelin = the insulation that wraps the nerve fibers & increases signal strength, speed, and accuracy
 - III. The more we fire a particular circuit, the more myelin optimizes it
 - I. = stronger, faster, more fluent movement

CONT'D...

- Myelin
 - Is universal
 - Wraps but doesn't unwrap*
 - Is age sensitive
 - Is assisted by attainment of primal state & urgency



TO SUM IT UP

1. Practice doesn't make perfect
 - Practice makes MYELIN, and myelin makes perfect
2. If you don't LOVE it
 - You'll never work hard enough to be great

TALENT HOTBEDS

- Brazil (soccer)
- South Korea (women's golf)
- Chinese Olympic weightlifting
- Russian (Spartak) tennis
- Bela Karolyi & gymnastics

- The list of examples goes on and on...

THE MATTHEW EFFECT

“For unto everyone that hath shall be given, and he shall have abundance.
But from him that hath not shall be taken away even that which he hath.”

-Matthew 25:29

- In other words:
 - It is those who are successful who are most likely to be given the kinds of special opportunities that lead to further success.

CANADIAN JUNIOR HOCKEY

- Birthdates
 - January, February, March
- Eligibility cut-off for age-class leagues = Jan. 1st
 - 10-year-old born on Jan. 5th playing against someone not 10 until November or December
 - Big difference in physical maturity
 - Coaches select “best” players for travelling all-star squads
- These players get further better
 - Better coaching, better teammates & competition, and MANY MORE games!

CONT'D.

- Similar patterns for international soccer.
 - Czechs
- Notion that best & brightest effortlessly rise to the top = simplistic
- More talented? Perhaps
 - But, got head start that was neither deserved, nor earned.

RESOURCES/BOOKS WORTH READING

- Grit (Angela Duckworth)
- Mindset (Carol Dweck)
- The Talent Code (Daniel Coyle)
- Outliers (Malcolm Gladwell)
- The Sports Gene (David Epstein)

RUNNING ECONOMY

- What is it?
- Factors influencing RE