



SELECT ONE MORE LIKE YOUR BEST®....

“No matter how you total success in the coaching profession, it all comes down to a single factor—talent. There may be a hundred great coaches of whom you have never heard in basketball, football, or any sport who will probably never receive the acclaim they deserve simply because they have not been blessed with the talent. Although not every coach can win consistently with talent, no coach can win without it.” -John Wooden

In the world of sports, like the world of business, education, medicine, leadership, management, sales, service, and beyond, top performers are consistently identified as individuals uniquely “hard wired.” This is described in a variety of ways, ranging from passionate, self-motivated, stronger work ethic, stronger relationships that make others better, coachable and teachable as they understand the positive impact of learning from others, greater influence over challenges and obstacles, mentally stronger and hungrier to learn and be a “master of their game and role, with a mindset and thought process that sees the world in a different way—what most call the ‘intangibles.’”

Without the right “intangibles,” the physical talent of an athlete (e.g., speed, strength, height, quickness, coordination, etc.) is limited in achieving its potential. Many who knew John Wooden would say that what he meant from his comment about talent, went beyond the physical talent to mean the “intangible” (non-physical) talent as well.

As many have struggled for decades to see how they could predict or measure the “intangibles,” they realized that a stopwatch, weights, tape measures, or other traditional ways of measuring the physical talent of athletes wouldn’t work.

Top Leaders, Coaches, and Managers in the world struggle with the age-old outcomes of “hiring/recruiting with hope,” as reflected in consistently missing the mark on those recruited, which in turn reflects on the team or organization’s overall performance (win-loss record, retention, graduation rates, team chemistry/culture, reputation, ability to recruit, etc.). Comments from the collegiate ranks include:

“I get a few right, but consistently get a few wrong, and some really wrong, which hurts our performance every year in a multitude of ways.”

“I try and get a “better pair of dice” every year, but never seem to get much better picking those that consistently meet or exceed performance.”

“We usually recruit one that exceeds our expectations, a few more that meet our expectations, some that are disappointing, and almost always at least one that is a disaster.”

“It happens a lot, when coaches say, ‘He’s a leader,’ a guy that makes his teammates better both on the court and off it, but when you ask them to describe what “it” is, and they can’t.”

“Year after year we spend (waste) 90% of our time, energy, and money on 10-15% of our student athletes that aren’t right for the program, our school, culture, team, etc., and can’t seem to get better—we all lose. There has to be a better way.”

[Note: Comments from Collegiate Hall of Fame Coaches, National Coach award winners, and Athletic Directors who are among the “legends” of their profession (i.e., these five comments come from a group that represent over 25 National Championships).]

In the popular book *Moneyball*, the point is made that selection in sports is often referred to as being as scientific as rolling the dice, or following someone’s gut feelings. Considering the time, effort, money, staff, and other resources focused on predicting player (and Coach) talent, this illustrates a clear opportunity to create a competitive advantage.

If we would study the National Football League, we would see how the NFL struggles to predict future performance with accuracy or consistency, wasting millions of dollars every year. Consider the famous “Draft pick number 199,” a future “Hall of Famer” (Tom Brady), number 194, a “Hall of Famer” (Shannon

Sharpe), free agents not drafted, that turn into “All Pros” and future “Hall of Famers” (Kurt Warner, Adam Vinatieri, Antonio Gates, etc.)—what was missed?

Contrast this with first round draft picks who “crashed and burned” after entering the Professional level. What did the experts miss? Athletic ability, or the non-athletic talent, that determined their behavior, which directly impacted their performance or if they would ever realize their potential?

Consider the long list of “walk-ons” in well-known programs that far exceed the success of many more physically-gifted athletes. Walk-ons that go on to play and have success in the NFL, while their physically more gifted teammates struggle to start or excel in college (or even graduate), let alone make it to the NFL, or later in life in a chosen profession.

Let’s look into how the National Basketball League stacks up. In looking at draft picks highlighted in a popular sports book *Stumbling on Wins*, an in-depth statistical study reveals that only 5.5% of the variation in a player’s career wins produced, is explained by where they were taken in the NBA draft.

Let’s try another sport—Major League Baseball. In a study of the last quarter century, from all the players drafted in MLB’s “Top Ten” draft picks out of high school, 46% never made the major leagues or didn’t play long enough to have a baseball card, and only 10% made Superstar status. So over four times as many didn’t reach their potential as the ones who excelled at a Superstar (top ten draft expectation) level.

In another broad study it was found that only 33% of all players drafted by MLB teams made it to the “big leagues,” and only 8% of drafted players ever became “regular contributors” to a team.¹

In *Prophet of the Sandlots*, one of the most popular books ever written in the field of scouting athletic talent, the story of Tony Lucadello, a phenomenally successful baseball scout (he signed 49 major leaguers—far beyond any other major league scout), highlighted a special ability to understand and see the “non-physical” talent that others in his field didn’t understand or value.

Highlighting an interesting phenomenon, *Prophet of the Sandlots* is reported to be the most popular book read and studied by pro hockey scouts.²

How the world is handicapped in understanding the greatest opportunity for a higher level success with consistent top performance--- and “setting people up to win”?

Could it be that the world isn’t “literate” about the concept of natural talent (i.e., a consistent pattern of thought, feeling, and behavior demonstrated through innate natural ability, aptitude, and attitudes, and seen in spontaneous and recurring patterns, or in other words—who a person is, their “hardwiring,” DNA, etc.), and confuses physical “athletic” talent with non-physical talent, or skill and knowledge (what can be taught)? If this is the case, should we be surprised when there has been no classroom or teacher that helps us to understand the difference between physical and non-physical talent, skill, and knowledge?

We believe that natural athletes, musicians, artists, etc., are “gifted” differently, but do we understand that there are individuals born “gifted” to have a significant and positive impact on their natural physical talents—in the world of collegiate sports we might call them “whole athletes” or “model student athletes?”

Imagine if we could advance our “literacy” and “mastery” of understanding “whole athlete” talent.

DRIVES & VALUES—Think about measuring the level of “passion” for playing and performing in a student athlete? This is clearly a talent when we compare it to the earlier definition. How much does the passion of a person drive their actions and make the necessary sacrifices to realize their potential? You might call it their “love of the role and game.” How about measuring their ability to guide their actions against deep beliefs and principles? There are others that are important to consider and measure in this category, but with just these two imagine what a difference we would make on a team,

WORKSTYLE—How many times have you heard about a Michael Jordan, Mia Hamm, Abby Wambach, Nolan Ryan, Dan Gable, Peyton Manning, or others be referred to for their work ethic that they put into their game? Again, by definition this is talent, as it’s not what they read in a book, or learned in a class, or get with years of experience— it’s who they are, consistently and spontaneously, on a daily basis and it has a dramatic impact on their performance and realization of their potential.

RELATIONSHIPS— Would you want a player on your team if they weren’t interested in being “coached or taught”—open to having relationships with others that they could learn from, be accountable to, and get along with for the greater good of a team, and realizing their individual and collective potential? How about having the luxury to choose from those that are team oriented and positive—or not? Again, talents that can be measured and considered for their consistent impact in building a championship team.

Utilizing research to build a competitive advantage—In highlighting both the opportunity to create a common language for “whole athlete” talent, as well as the means to measure the intensity and consistency of this talent, we’ve attempted to highlight the need, opportunity, and means to create a competitive advantage that can impact: 1) win-loss records, 2) graduation outcomes, 3) campus and community impact, 4) reputations, 5) recruiting success, 6) financial health, and 7) student athletes realizing their potential at school and in life.

Are you ready to be set apart and be a leader creating a competitive advantage for your organization, sport, and profession?

¹ Stumbling on Wins

² Future Greats and Heartbreaks