

Chapter 11



WHO IS THE BEST?



“You can be an ordinary athlete by getting away with less than your best. But if you want to be great, you have to give it all you’ve got—your everything.”

—Duke K. Kahanamoku

Because I was so involved in athletics, this chapter is very close to my heart, and as a holder of the Black Belt in Karate I feel I can talk with authority. There is a best in everything. If you do not believe that, then why is there Consumers Reports magazine? Why is there a Nobel Prize? Why is there a Guinness Worlds Record Book? Why are there motion picture Academy awards? Why is there a World Series, or a Super Bowl, a NBA Championship, or a Stanley Cup or the Tour de France? We also have the Kentucky Derby, the Preakness and the Belmont. The PGA has its prestigious tournaments along with the LPGA and College sports. I could go on and on into the Olympics and other sports like tennis or business awards. We could talk about citizen awards, and the war medals. There is also the award for the best motor vehicle produced each year, and in the April 2002, issue of Readers Digest the front cover used the headline, “The Best Used Cars Ever.” Whenever Evel Knievel was introduced, the announcer would shout, “The greatest daredevil in the world.”

“Wish not to be seen, but to be, the best.”

—Aeschylus

Who is the best entertainer in the world? I am not an expert in that arena, but many entertainers have been considered for that honor. I personally think that is up to the fans and the receipts. And each school, be it high school or college has its array of prestigious awards.

Here is the bottom line: people work hard at winning these awards. Why do they? It is simple: people want to be the best. It gives them a great feeling of accomplishment and they revel in the accolades, however humble, or otherwise they might react to the award. The two quotes that come to mind repeatedly in this book are, “The deepest urge in human nature is the desire to be important.” -Dr. John Dewey- “The deepest principle in human nature is the craving to be appreciated.” —Professor William James

Have you ever been the best in anything? If not, I suggest you ask someone who has been the best, to find out their feelings and why they sought that title.

In Junior High School I was voted the best athlete, along with two others, and I can tell you unequivocally the great feeling of euphoria I felt as I was presented the award. I couldn't stop smiling for at least six weeks. My cheeks developed a permanent wrinkle. That day and the next day were filled with phone calls and slaps on the back. I was on cloud nine for weeks. To this day I will never forget walking up to the stage to accept my award. It was a simple certificate that I have since misplaced, but back then I would not let it out of my sight.

One of my best friends is an artist, and one-year she won best of show for one of her paintings. She was not at the show to accept the award, because she was working, but her best friend stopped by to tell her she had won. Her first reaction was, well she actually screamed so loud she is convinced the scream could be heard for two blocks. She jumped up and down and ran around the room yelling, “You're not lying to me are you? Tell me you are not lying to me,” all the time laughing. She remembers that day too. She had worked eight years to win that prestigious award, and she knew she had a “killer” painting. She had worked hard on that painting, and every year when she entered other paintings she failed. But this time she put “me” (herself) in that painting. Her attitude was, “this will either make or break me.” That is a key. You have to put yourself into it. You have to bury yourself in the task at hand. You have to be able to risk it all if you want to be the best, as I wrote in a previous chapter.

Sometimes judges make the decision as to who is the best in the Olympic figure skating, or gymnastics, and many other sports. In boxing if there is not a knockout, or if either of the fighters does not give up, the judges make the decision. Sometimes judges or referees, or umpires make bad calls, and we have to live with those calls. That is life, and the real winner does not quit because of a bad call, or like my artist friend does not give up painting. You ignore the decision and just work harder for the next time. "Whoever undertakes to set himself up as a judge of truth and knowledge is shipwrecked by the laughter of the gods." —Albert Einstein

Many of you reading this book have won awards, and you too had that euphoric feeling, however brief it might have been. You have set records. You have proven you are the best or one of the best. You have practiced or studied for hours and hours. You have sweat tears and have perspired. You have stayed up late and risen early to spend hours to study and practice. You have sacrificed going out on a date or watching a movie. You have dieted or gained weight to meet your weight division. You have overcome pain and fatigue. Remember the statement the great coach of the world champion green Bay Packers, Vince Lombardi, wrote on the locker room wall to his players on their way to another Super Bowl, "Fatigue makes cowards of us all."

Have you ever wondered what the definition of a winner is? Doctor Denis Waitley, a national authority on high-performance motivation, who has counseled top sales and management executives and leaders in every field – from Super Bowl and Olympic athletes to Apollo Moon Program astronauts, stated, "Winners in my opinion, are those individuals who in a very natural, free-flowing way seem to consistently get what they want from life by providing valuable services to others. They set and achieve goals that benefit others as well as themselves. You don't have to be lucky to win at life, nor do you have to knock other people down or gain at the expense of others. Happiness is the natural experience of winning your own self-respect, as well as the respect of others. Winning is taking the talent or potential you were born with, and have since developed, and using it fully toward a purpose that makes you feel worthwhile according to your own internal standards."

The great, Vince Lombardi, made a profound statement years ago that the skeptics and social engineers now take offense to. Vince said, "Winning isn't everything, it is the only thing." The social engineers today have programmed our schools to accept a D- as an acceptable grade in school. At

one time a C- was acceptable but it was considered below average at best. I can remember students being embarrassed getting a C-. But today some educators claim that we can't be too hard on our children. After all, life is stressful enough, they say. "We have to be sensitive to the obstacles they face and their environment, such as atrocity of homelessness and Aids." American students are losing their drive, because competing is a no-no. "No one should win, to play is good enough," the social engineers say. Really? Tell that to the Lance Armstrongs of the world! Tell that to the rest of the nations who are trying to overtake the United States in military, technological and financial might. Tell that to the other nations of the world whom have banks in terms of assets listed in the top ten, with only one American bank listed now. At one time all top ten were American banks. In this writer's opinion, and I am convinced the opinion of all real winners, that, "no one should win", is the philosophy of losers. Try telling "no one should win" to Jaime Escalante, the mathematics teacher who taught advanced calculus to underprivileged Hispanic children in California. The negative thinkers said that it was too much of a burden; too hard for the poor unfortunate Hispanic children and that it was impossible, (there is that word again) for them to learn. The social engineers said that we were expecting too much from the children. But Jaime proved the negative thinkers wrong. Jamie proved that no matter what race or creed you are, you can succeed. Jaime knows the **three-word motto**.

In another case, a mother from Ohio called the principal of her child's school and wanted to know why the standards were being lowered in the school. The principal explained that kids are taught there are no right or wrong answers-even in subjects like math. Would you want your child to learn that two plus two equals whatever he thinks it can be? "Only the supremely wise and abysmally ignorant do not change." Confucius

Lombardi went on to explain that: "This great country was built on a competitive spirit." That is why the word competitor is such a valued word. Our competitors make us strive for higher goals, thus bringing about better products and services.

As I wrote earlier, there was a time not too long ago in the history of this great country where our leaders said that America had come to a point where it had reached its greatness. They said we had to be satisfied now with the "status-quo." There was nothing left for us to do and we were no longer

up to the task, they claimed. (That attitude is reminiscent of Charles Duell, the director of the US patent office in 1898, when he said, "Everything that can be invented has been invented.") Then came along Ronald Reagan and the country turned around its attitude and began striving for greatness again. Why did that happen? Simply because President Reagan had faith in Americans and in their ability to achieve even greater accomplishments. And so we did, because many winners like Tom Hopkins, of Tom Hopkins/Champions Unlimited, took over from the losers. Tom is one of the greatest salespeople to wear shoe leather and started his own successful training company. Tom is a winner and a member of the World Positive Thinkers Club. He gives the following philosophy: "I am not judged by the number of times I fail, but by the number of times I succeed, and the number of times I succeed is in direct proportion to the number of times I can fail and keep on trying." Tom's five attitudes toward rejection and failure are:

1. "I never see failure as failure, but only as a learning experience."
2. "I never see failure as failure, but as the negative feedback I need to change course in my direction."
3. "I never see failure as failure, but as the opportunity to develop my sense of humor."
4. "I never see failure as failure, but only as an opportunity to practice my techniques and perfect my performance."
5. "I never see failure as failure, but only as the game I must play to win."

If you think about it, only a few shots on the professional golf tour separate the top money winners from the rest of the tour, and there have been many sudden death playoffs. The baseball-batting champions only get on base 20 or 30 times more than the players who do not make the top ten. In track and field, in the 100 meter dash, for example, the winner is only two-tenths of a second faster than the fourth place finisher. So the best is only a few strokes, a couple of swings, or a few tenths of a second better. In the business field the winners are more persistent, more effective, or have a better positive awareness. The best salesmen make more calls; they close more often; they study and know their product better. The best is not because he

or she is more talented, or more educated. Talent is cheap; you can buy it and recruit it, and it abounds. The world has many talented alcoholics, and many educated derelicts that can't relate to others. The best comes in attitudes. And guess what? You can pay for talent and degrees, but you do not have to be concerned about paying for attitude. It is free.

Now for a little controversy! Who was the greatest? Was Mohammed Ali the greatest? Some say Joe Louis was, and still others say Rocky Marciano. There was a computer-generated fight between Rocky Marciano and Mohammed Ali, and Rocky won. Yet some of the experts still think Ali was the best. And one of Ali's greatest attributes was that many times he called the round correctly in which he would win. Some boxing fans will argue vehemently that John L. Sullivan, the bare-knuckled champion, was the best. Others will proclaim Jack Dempsey the greatest. But was Sugar Ray Leonard, one of only two boxers to hold the world championships in five weight divisions the best? The argument will go on for years.

I wrote about Babe Zaharis in Chapter 12, and Grantland Rice, the top writer of his day, wrote that Mildred "Babe" Didrikson Zaharis was the greatest athlete, man or woman. Grantland wrote, "She is the most flawless section of muscle harmony the world of sport has ever known." The Associated Press named Babe the greatest woman athlete of the first half of the Twentieth Century. In 1932 in the Olympics she tossed the javelin 143'4". No one else came close. She won the 80-meter hurdles, setting a world record, and in the high jump tied for the gold. In a jump off she won, but was disqualified for jumping headfirst. She also won the 100-meter dash. After the Olympics she became a baseball player, playing 200 games a year, as well as being a star basketball player. Babe once threw a baseball 296 feet in 1931. Most major league outfield fences are 320 to home plate, and I have never seen a major league player throw home without a bounce from 296 feet. Babe then took up golf and became the greatest woman golfer of her day, winning 12 major tournaments, including three U.S. Opens. She might have won many more tournaments, but unfortunately she died of cancer at the age of 45. She was also an actress, swimmer, diver, marksman, cyclist, skater and an accomplished harmonica player.

There is a town in Pennsylvania named after the man who was named the greatest football player and greatest male athlete of the first half of the Twentieth Century, by the Associated Press. Many others say this Sac and Fox

Indian from Oklahoma was the best athlete of the first half of the twentieth century. Yet, many insist he was the greatest athlete ever, regardless of the time in history. He won the decathlon and pentathlon in the 1912 Olympics in Stockholm, Sweden. That was never accomplished before him and has not been accomplished since. He played in the professional baseball World Series in 1913, and a stirring movie was made about his life starring Burt Lancaster.

Jim Thorp was an American Indian from a poor family, and attended Carlisle College in Pennsylvania, where he set records and helped Pop Warner, one of the greatest coaches ever forge Carlisle into a college powerhouse. It was written of Jim that he was without equal on a playing field. He also played professional football, gaining entry to the Professional Football Hall of Fame. He did everything on the football gridiron. Jim punted, passed, ran, blocked, placed kicked, tackled and drop kicked better than any other player. This poor American Indian was also inducted into the College Football Hall of Fame and the College Track and Field Hall of Fame. Was he the best athlete or was Babe Zaharis? People of that era could argue for days on who was the best, and people today could argue on which athlete in today's era of specialization is the best.

Bob Matthias is only one of two athletes who have won the Gold Medal in the Olympic Decathlon twice. Is he the greatest athlete? You might have your own choice. Perhaps it is Babe Ruth or Hank Aaron or Mark McGwire. Hank Aaron has hit the most home runs totally (742) and Barry Bonds hit the most home runs (73) in a season. Now they are saying no one will pass those marks. But the experts said no one would pass Babe Ruth with his 60 homers in 1927, then Roger Maris, with his 61 in 1961, and then Mark McGwire with 70 in 1998. Now Barry Bonds has clubbed 73 home runs. Bonds did club 755 home runs, but now that mark is tainted with accusations of steroid use. Was the best baseball player ever Ty Cobb, Babe Ruth, Honus Wagner, Hank Aaron, Willie Mays, Mickey Mantle, Ted Williams or Joe Dimaggio, with his 56 straight games with a hit? Could the best athlete possibly be Tom Brady, Mary Lou Retton, Steffi Graff or another great female athlete?

Cy Young has won the most games as a pitcher, winning 511 games, but some experts will argue that others were better pitchers. Some say it was the great Bob Gibson, who pitched for the St. Louis Cardinals. Others say

it was Sandy Koufax, whose career was cut short by injury. Still others say Warren Spahn. Was it Nolan Ryan with the record 5,714 strikeouts or the great Walter Johnson who won 417 games with 110 shutouts? Perhaps it was a pitcher not many have heard of named Ed Walsh, with a 1.82 ERA, or maybe even the great Satchel Paige of the old Negro League. Some experts think it was the great Bob Feller, with his fastball clocked at 98.6 mph. (Although many considered him the fastest, it turns out that Mark Koenig, second baseman for the New York Yankees was clocked at 127 mph pitching from the pitchers mound). Ten years from now other athletes will go down as the best. Some say the 1927 Yankees were the best team ever in baseball and yet some argue it was Connie Mack's Philadelphia Athletics in 1929. Perhaps it was Joe Torres' Yankees of 1998, 1999, and 2000, winning the World Series those three straight years.

Was the greatest racehorse Man O' War, the great "Big Red," winning 20 of his 21 starts from 1919 to 1920, setting five American records and running away from the field by 100 lengths once? Man O' War lost his only race in the Sanford Memorial in 1920 due to a poor start and was upset by a horse running in that race with 100-1 odds against him, ironically with the name 'Upset'. Was the greatest Secretariat, also known as "Big Red," winning the Triple Crown in 1973, setting records in the Kentucky Derby and the Belmont Stakes, and also winning that race by an incredible 31 lengths?

Who is considered the best female tennis player? Is it Chris Everett (who was voted the Women's Sports Foundation's greatest athlete of the past 25 years in 1985), or Martina Navrtilalova, or Billy Jean King or Margaret Court. Both Martina and Billy Jean won a record 20 Wimbledon titles, and by the way, Martina did it by the age of forty-six and a half in 2003. While we are on tennis: the youngest person to ever enter the prestigious Wimbledon tennis championship was 13-year old Mita Klima of Austria in 1907.

Rodney George "Rod" Laver is a former tennis player from Australia who arguably was the World No. 1 player for seven consecutive years. He is the only tennis player to have twice won all four of tennis' Grand Slam singles titles in the same year — first as an amateur in 1962 and second as a professional in 1969. He is the only male player during the open era to have won a calendar year Grand Slam.

Laver has been rated as the greatest male player of all time by several experts and polls. He was "technically faultless, from his richly varied serve to his

feather-light touch on drop volleys plus a backhand drive carrying destructive topspin when needed or controlling slice when the situation demanded it.” His left-handed serve was well disguised and wide swinging. His wrist ground strokes on both flanks were hit with topspin, an innovation in the 1960s, as was the attacking topspin lob, which Laver developed into a weapon.

Who do the experts call the best female ice-skater who ever tied on ice skates? Is it Katarina Witt, Peggy Fleming, Michelle Kwan, Tara Lipinski, Kristy Yamaguchi or Sonja Henie. Sonja won gold medals in three different Olympics; was the World Figure Skating Champion 10 straight times, and became a movie star.

Was Annie Oakley the best trick shot artist? Facts speak for themselves sometimes, and all Annie did was shoot 100 percent in trap shooting for thirty-five years. At thirty paces she could split a playing card end on, hit a dime in mid-air or shoot a cigarette from her husbands (Frank Butler) lips.

Who was the best woman track star? Opinion will differ for centuries, but Chi Cheng of China was the first woman to run 100 yards in ten seconds. She also won all 63 races she entered and set five world records.

Could the best athlete now be Lance Armstrong, after winning his seventh straight Tour de France?

Was Picasso the best artist? After all, all he did was sell over 298 paintings worth over \$1 million each, or was Michelangelo the greatest artist?

One of my favorite sports to watch is golf, and I have watched the greats play what is considered the hardest sport to play. Jack Nicholas came along and won more major matches than anyone else, and I watched him make what were considered impossible putts. Then along came a charismatic man named of all things, “Tiger.”

Once while playing with an eight handicap I holed a 30 foot putt, and I consider that luck. Just this year in 2008 I watched Tiger make an impossible sixty foot putt. Tiger Woods at his best would’ve beaten Jack Nicklaus at his best, and I no longer believe Tiger needs to break Jack’s record of 18 major championships to prove the point.

If the 32-year-old Woods stays healthy, he’s a lock to get to 19 and beyond, with the smart money on beyond. Tiger posted Jack’s records on his childhood walls for a reason. He’s planning to do to Nicklaus’ No. 18 what Sammy Sosa and Mark McGwire did to Roger Maris’ 61 home runs.

Nicklaus never won more in a single season than the seven events he

took in 1972 and '73. Woods won nine times in 2000, eight in 2006 and 1999, and seven in 2007.

Entering the season following his 32nd birthday, Nicklaus had claimed nine Grand Slam events, or four fewer than Woods. Entering the season following his 32nd birthday, Nicklaus had won 38 tour events or 23 fewer than Woods.

With his Tiger Slam, Woods held all four Grand Slam trophies at once. Nicklaus never held more than three at the same time — he won the '71 PGA Championship (staged in February that year), the '72 Masters, and the '72 U.S. Open, but was beaten at the '72 British when a dejected Lee Trevino got lucky and holed out what Nicklaus called “a give-up shot,” and Tiger just won the 2008 U.S. Open championship on a bum knee.

So the controversy goes on and on. The point is in my opinion, and many others is it does not matter. They were the best at that time. That is what really matters as to “who was the best.” There will be disagreement forever for one simple reason. If we all thought alike there would be many unnecessary people.

Here is another important point. The winners make it happen, losers allow it to happen, and when the final lap is run we are the only real judges in the World Series of our own life, so we should not take seriously what the cynics think. Just know that the winners know the **three-word motto**, and that once you commit it to memory and embed it in your soul you will win your own Super Bowls daily. “Wish not to be seen, but to be, the best.” —Aeschylus

The winners always find a way to win-to be the best. For example: let's get off the playing field for a while and talk about energy. Every time there is an energy crisis, the 'best' engineers tackle the problem, and presto; a solution is created. For example using the technology of fusion and water, one sixteenth of an inch of San Francisco Bay powers the Western United States. Liquid hydrogen is now the possible fuel of the future to power our transportation vehicles, besides being the fuel that propelled our spacecraft to the moon. We now take energy from deep thermal rocks near the center of the earth, and the sun as well as the garbage we throw out. On a daily basis, scientists are constantly churning out new ways to make life more convenient and comfortable for the world. If only Charles Duell, the director of the U.S Patent office in 1898 were alive now to see the great inventions and advances dreamed of and created by people with vision. Remember that he

said, "Everything that can be invented has been invented."

Earl Nightengale, the great salesman and motivator told about a time when he visited the Great Barrier Reef, which covers 1800 miles from Australia to New Guinea. The coral polyps on the inside of the reef seem lifeless and colorless, but the coral on the outside of the reef, where the tide and waves move constantly, are bright and beautiful colors abound. There is a reason for the difference. The coral on the inside face no challenge for growth and survival, while the coral on the outside face the power of the waves, thereby growing.

By the way, Australia has 16000 miles of coastline and 11,000 beaches—the most in the world.

Marcus Seneca stated it so succinctly when he said, "Gold is tried by fire, brave men by adversity." So there you have it. We grow and blossom with adversity and obstacles, just like the coral reef. If you are a watcher and not a doer you eventually wither. If you look at adversity as a natural growing process, then it is properly used to develop immunity against depression and anxiety, and the results of stress.

The Positive Thinkers never let adversity overcome them. They continue to face adversity and obstacles with their chins up and their backs straight and they never run from a challenge or an obstacle. Sometimes they appear cocky to the cynic, but that is really self-confidence, and they all know the **three-word motto**. The true winners never get caught up in their own self-importance, like the man who was fired by his father-in-law. The son-in-law said, "Who are you going to find to fill the vacancy?" The father-in-law shot back, "Don't flatter yourself. You aren't leaving a vacancy."

*If you can't be a pine on the top of the hill, be a scrub in the valley—but be
The best little scrub on the side of the hill; be a bush if you can't be a tree.
If you can't be a bush, be a bit of the grass, and some highway happier make.
If you can't be a muskie, then just be a bass—but the liveliest bass in the lake!
We all can't be captains; we've got to be crew. There's something for all of us here.
There's big work to do and there's lesser to do, and the task we must do is the near.
If you can't be a highway, then just be a trail, if you can't be the sun, be a star;
It isn't by size that you win or you fail—Be the best of what ever you are!
"It's a funny thing about life; if you refuse to accept anything but the best,
you very often get it."*

— W. Somerset Maugham

MAIN THOUGHTS AND CHALLENGES

1. Again, go back to the beginning of this chapter and review your highlighted sentences.
2. Write the highlighted page numbers on this page.
3. Put down the most important highlight and why it is so important to you.
4. Write down who you think is the best in a particular field of endeavor.
A. Sports B. Business C. Government D. Religion E. Any other field of endeavor you are interested in.
5. Write you opinion as to why that particular person is the best.
6. Do you want to be the best or one of the best in your field? Yes or no, and why.