

The Price of Greatness

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Two summers ago I had an incredible opportunity to work with some of the elite NFL football players, including Drew Brees, Aaron Rodgers, and LaDainian Tomlinson. What impressed me the most was not their sheer athleticism or the drills they were doing, but their attention to every detail during those drills. Drew Brees really stood out to me in this area, especially during the fieldwork. Even when he was only working with one receiver, I could see him checking other routes that would normally be run and defenders that would normally be there before he threw the ball. I could see him taking into consideration each element of a game with every rep that summer. Not surprisingly, Drew had an incredible season following that summer. He played so well, in fact, that the Saints won the Super Bowl and he was named the Super Bowl MVP. The following season, Aaron Rodgers went out and did the same thing, winning the Super Bowl and collecting MVP honors.

Every time I think about these events, it all comes back to the attention to detail. Without question, these men have been blessed with incredible physical characteristics that have allowed them to be very good at what they do. But what separates the very good from the great? What separates those who play from those who win?

Every year at the NFL Combine you hear stories about men performing record-setting feats and others who completely flop. What these athletes are being tested on year after year does not change, minus a few rule changes here and there. Coaches are well aware of the best techniques for performing the tests and giving their athletes the best possible chance to perform at their highest level. Yes, some guys are just flat-out more physically gifted than the rest of the field and will get drafted reasonably high even with a sub-par showing. For most, though, screwing up at the Combine or on your Pro Day could mean screwing yourself out of millions of dollars.

With that much weight put on those tests, how is anybody able to function well? The answer is that those who succeed have done the drills over and over and over again and have them completely mastered by the time the Combine comes around. There's no thinking; their body just responds. Why? Because they had extreme attention to detail in their training, which allowed them to become great at performing these tests.

Being an economics major, I've learned that there is a cost to every action, namely an opportunity cost. If I am spending my time doing one thing, it means I lose the opportunity to do something else with that time. The opportunity cost of such extreme attention to detail that you are able to achieve greatness at some level is that, instead of screwing around or going through the motions when it is time to work, you cut the crap and put your best foot forward to create great actions. Then you repeat those actions until they become great habits. Then you repeat those habits until it is completely automatic, becoming part of who you are.

Let me ask you this: In what area of your life are you striving to achieve greatness, and what is driving you to achieve greatness? We are all meant to be great at something, but that something is rarely a sport and isn't necessarily an occupation, either. In fact, most of us shouldn't be striving for greatness in those fields right away, anyways. Instead, we should be striving for greatness in our relationships with others because, I tell you what, if there were more great moms and dads in this world raising more great children who turn into great adults, the world would be a far better place. But most people who strive for greatness in other fields fall drastically short of being a great human being. Once you become a great human being and those everyday actions become automatic and part of who you are, you can begin focusing on other endeavors in which to achieve greatness. But it starts with your attention to detail in providing a consistent effort to improve the experiences of others on a daily basis as well as a consistent effort to improve your own well being.

In the game of life, how is your attention to detail? Are you practicing empathy, finding happiness and peace of mind, and bettering the lives of those around you just by being yourself? Are you just playing the game, or are you winning?

Here's to faith, strength, and passion.

Get big or die tryin'.

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