

Thoughts From The Dugout



Measure of a Man

- The ultimate measure of a man is not where he stands in moments of comfort and convenience, but where he stands at times of challenge and controversy.

Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.

I love to use this quotation during difficult times on the field of competition. The game of baseball as well as the game of life is full of opportunities to show what we are really made of. It is easy to be filled with confidence and composure when we are in the middle of success and things are going well. Often athletes speak of being “In a Zone” when things are going good. Feeling as if they are playing outside themselves and just letting things happen. Not knowing how or why things are going the way they are, but just happy they are going that way. Or a team might be in the middle of a winning streak. Someway, somehow, they seem to be getting all the breaks whether it is their own actions, or the

untimely failure of their opponent.

But the true test is how we handle those moments, or periods, where success seems to be running away from us. No matter what the team does, or players individually, they seem to be on the short end of opportunity after opportunity. Collectively, the team or player just seems to not be able to overcome small obstacles along the way to be victorious. Baseball is a game of failure. A hitter will fail 6-7 times out of ten at bats and be considered successful. Teams rarely go an entire season without a loss. The test is mentally, how do we handle those failures? How do we handle those times of challenge? The dreaded “slump”. Every athlete, regardless of their sport, will endure periods where success seems to be hiding from them. It seems like no matter what a person does, they can not get that “break” that will get them over this hump. Often times, you will see an athlete try and push harder, try and fight themselves out of this period. Sometimes the consequences are harsh; digging themselves deeper and deeper into this quagmire of unsuccessful times. It is our ego and basic human instincts that will drive us to want to fight our way out of this.

The test is not to give up and maintain our composure at all costs. The measure is how we respond. We can control how we respond to these situations. Easy words to say, but never easy actions to find within ourselves. You have to find that “special something” deep inside you which continues to drive you during these times. During these times the answer may be to just “let go” as you do during the periods of success. The letting go though, is letting go of the negative thoughts, the self doubt, and the blame towards other forces or people. You need to have faith in your abilities. You need to find faith in those around you that they will support you and that you do not need to do everything yourself. Focus on your actions and what you are doing to stay strong and continue to battle. Ensure that you respond with positive actions and continue to battle. Someone on the team needs to step up and be that strength for others if needed. One person, maintaining this strength, can be the driving force that will bring everyone else along and help the team endure. This faith, or confidence, must be your driving force. During this time, you need to let go of the easy road. The easy road of giving up, or placing blame on other people or things.

During these times you have to find a way to eliminate all the negatives. No matter what the issue or what the obstacle, there can be no negatives. You must find a way to look at everything as a special opportunity to improve, reflect on and continue to move forward in a positive way. Remove the focus on results. Do not judge each individual step along the way, each hit or out. But rather, judge the process by which you are taking. Was it a good At Bat? Did I swing at good pitches? As a Pitcher, did I throw the pitch well? Did I commit to the pitch? By doing this you will be in a much stronger position to overcome anything.

In the end, you will be “measured” by how you responded and handled these periods. You will be remembered for your courage, strength and endurance of challenge. Those that judge us whether they are coaches at the next level, scouts, family or friends, love to see us fail. For it is not in the enjoyment of seeing the failure, but rather the joy in seeing what lies deep inside us to help us overcome the failure or difficulty. It is our response to these “so called” failures. Quite possibly, the only person who will remember this is you. We ALL fail or endure challenge throughout our life. But it will be the source of strength the next time you need to endure difficult times and what gives you the confidence to endure. So how do you want to be measured? Even if the only one measuring is you!