

MAKE THE BEST INVESTMENT, INVEST IN YOURSELF

by Allistair McCaw (*Athletes' Conditioning*)

I believe that there's no short cuts to real success. Top performers in their chosen field, be it sport, politics or business, have taken many years to get there with numerous highs and lows along the way.

When you look at the qualities and credentials that all high performers have, there is one thing that stands out that is seldom noticed: the ability to invest in themselves now, even though the dividends (paybacks) may not be paid back for several years to come. Look at Roger Federer. He didn't just pop up one day and start winning. Roger has gone back to the drawing board several times to improve a stroke or movement, spending countless hours in the gym and on court doing so. Another thing he didn't do was expect instant results. All he asked of himself was steady progress. I have this corny saying:

Question: What tastes better, instant coffee or freshly brewed?

Freshly brewed of course, it takes a little more time and effort to make but tastes better. I compare this to putting more effort into your chosen field (sport, business etc.), working harder and in the end achieving a higher performance, thus truly enjoying the taste of real success.

In today's world we are inundated with quick fix solutions. Drive through restaurants, steroids to get bigger muscles and fat burner pills to lose body fat. It seems that everyone is looking for that easy way out. I love that part in the movie "Something about Mary" when the guy brags about his new idea to make fast money with "The 6minute ab workout". But he is soon halted in his tracks when Ben Stiller responds with the idea of somebody coming up with a better idea: "The 5 minute ab workout!" There are many who haven't figured out that real success takes time, effort, discipline, and patience. It requires investment in yourself.

Real success takes time

So how do you invest in your own performance? There are many ways and I will name a few:

Reading a book related to your sport or chosen field. Taking a course or attending a workshop or clinic. Joining a sport club to improve your fitness or hiring a personal trainer to help you improve your lifestyle.

Rarely does reading a book pay off immediately, but every book you read opens your mind to new information, widens your knowledge on a particular subject and will eventually pay dividends. I encourage my athletes to read books, especially autobiographies. I often surprise myself with saying something really valuable and meaningful to an athlete at a crucial moment in a match or training session and afterwards realising that I had read that in a book several months or years ago!

You may have joined a running group or squash club and won't see immediate results in your performance or body weight. However, the step you have taken lays a foundation for a new set of skills that will eventually elevate your fitness level and social interaction skills with others. When you put time into your workouts, it can make profound improvements in your performance in the years to come. Strength, endurance, functional movement skills, flexibility and speed all take time and consistent training.

When you make healthier choices in your diet or eating habits, you won't wake up the next day and be two sizes smaller. However over time, you will discover that your jeans

are a looser fit, you have more energy and zest to do more things and more importantly your overall health (cholesterol, organs, heart etc...) will function better.

Those who don't find time for health now, will have to find time for illness later

What about the way you talk to yourself, your mindset? Are you a negative or positive self talker? Try this simple exercise: next time you catch yourself saying something negative, immediately replace it with something positive. Over time this will help you to become a more positive and approachable person. It takes time and effort, but you will attract more people towards you. This will create more opportunities. So more business contacts, money and friends becomes easier. Who wants to hang around a negative person anyhow, someone who saps your energy and always misses great opportunities because he was so busy complaining.

Surround yourself with winners, lose the losers!

When you take a few moments to practise the things I have mentioned in this article you will not see immediate improvement in your performance, but consistently done over time, you will not only become better at them, but the dividends will increase. Slowly your confidence will grow, your focus improves, and you start developing a winning mindset.

Think about athletes like Martina Navratilova, Andre Agassi and Michael Schumacher. These are people that have spent countless hours in the gym on the court or on the track, spent lots of money investing in themselves, taking some risks along the way, but now reaping the rewards big time.

In the business world real investors include Bill Gates, Donald Trump and television tycoon John de Mol. For these people it just didn't happen overnight, it took time and making choices along the way.

Just like your financial investments gaining interest, so do the investments you make in yourself.

So next time you see a high performer in any field, just like the top players you will see at the Forex Dutch Open, you are seeing the product of lots of small investments that they have made over many years.

If you want to become a top performer tomorrow, start making some small investments in yourself today.