

Going for Gold!

It is pretty exciting to live in a city that will, is or has hosted the Olympic Games. Due to deadlines I am writing an article that will be read after the 2010 Winter Olympic Games in Vancouver will be over. I am writing this about 20 days before the games officially begin. It is getting exciting! The banners are flying, the rings are lit up, the traffic patterns are being tried out and the non athletic performers are rehearsing. The flame has made it across the Country and is making its way through British Columbia to Vancouver. Our friend John Furlong has almost made it through nine years of preparation to bring the games to life.

Although the Olympic Committee has been preparing for years, some of the athletes have literally been preparing for a lifetime. What drives the thousands of athletes who have trained and tried to qualify to represent their country on the world stage? As they arrive from all over the world they arrive in Vancouver with dreams of going for the Gold.

They arrive for competition and to display world class competence in a sport they have a passion for. They arrive to represent their Country. They arrive to build relationships. They arrive to create memories. They arrive to live out their destiny. They arrive because they have earned the right.

Can you imagine the feeling of stepping up to the highest level of the podium, having the ribbon holding a gold medal placed around your neck and hearing the sound of your National Anthem being played as the flag of your Country is raised?

If the athlete who is experiencing this ever questioned why he or she trained and practiced for hours a day for a significant part of their life, if they questioned the pain and the sacrifices they made, they are not questioning those things now. In that moment we are all better whether we have competed or are just spectators. The gold medal has an ability to inspire each of us in some way. It is probably true that most of the people reading this will not win a gold medal in a future version of the Olympic Games but it is possible for each of us and the people we lead and influence to go for the Gold!

What is your Gold Medal?

Each athlete gets to decide what sport they are going to play. They don't get to decide how it is all going to turn out, but they do get to decide what they are going to play and what kind of effort and dedication they will put toward it. When they decide to approach something in a world class way they tend to approach many things in a world class way. I have had the opportunity to coach someone who trained, tried out and qualified to compete in the 1980 Summer Olympics. He did what was in his control. What was not in his control was the fact that his country boycotted the games in Moscow. He didn't win a gold medal in weightlifting or even get to compete. He took the discipline and drive that it took to be an Olympic caliber athlete and translated it into business. He built a business and created a life that few would argue has not been a gold medal performance.

What endeavor will your gold medal be in? Will it be in parenting, club management, charity work, golf, leadership, coaching, learning or living? It is your choice! The biggest decision is to decide if you are playing to just be part of the game or if you are going for the Gold. It means defining what gold looks like in your chosen endeavor and using the same drive and dedication of an Olympic Athlete. If you are a leader it means helping others decide on the sport and define what gold medal performance looks like for them.

The Battle against Mediocrity!

One of the most surprising things to me about living in a city hosting the Olympics is the awareness of how many people are ambivalent or against the games. It is hard to imagine how people would be against something that improves the infrastructure of a city, gives us new sports venues, lets the world have a glimpse of the place where we live, and gives us a chance to host the world and to make history. It is hard to understand how people could be against something that celebrates excellence and builds up the human spirit. It is an event that flies in the face of mediocrity.

If the Olympic Games can serve as a tool to fight against mediocrity in a city, think about the event that will help you to fight against it in your life or in your club.

The Metaphor of the Games!

The thing about games is that you play them. One of the most compelling reasons to go for the goal in your life is the chance to shift the mind set you employ from work to play. There is joy in playing. If you want to get a gold medal in parenting then play! If you want to earn a gold medal in your profession then start playing with the passion and joy of a professional.

In Summation!

Decide on the game you're playing!

Define what winning the gold looks like!

Define what it is going to take!

Go for the Gold!

Battle mediocrity! Don't play small!

Play!

Play professionally with joy and passion!

Celebrate winning the gold and the small victories on the way!