

A privileged look inside the minds of sporting heroes

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The hpc academies offer a variety sporting codes to aspiring athletes. Each sport is characterized by their own rules, which makes the sport different from others and unique in nature. Each sport draws different types of people with unique personalities, and challenge different physical and technical capabilities. Due to these reasons each sport also has its own unique sporting heroes. But sporting heroes have one thing in common..... all of them made it to the top and that is why aspiring athletes can learn so much from them because they have really been there. This article offers a privileged look inside the minds of sporting heroes so that young aspiring athletes can learn from them and also apply their advice about aspects such as confidence, self doubt, motivation, etc to their own sporting careers.



SWIMMING:

Suzie O'Neill

Swimmer - Olympic medalist
From the book: Choose to Win (1999).

On confidence

"For an Olympic rookie I was pretty intimidated and in my nervous state I was fooled into believing a confident appearance out of the pool guaranteed success in the pool."

On self doubt

"It is difficult to deal with a private self-doubt but it can explode out of control once it becomes talked about in the media. Once so many people know about a performance fault or a technique weakness, you are regularly asked about them and they become the focus of attention rather than your positives points. The self-doubt can then grow in power until eventually you become convinced they are real, and when you enter races they are as much a part of you as your togs and goggles."

On the impact of the media

"It comes with the territory that the media will focus on the highs and lows of an athlete's career... My problem was that with little confidence and no self-belief the doubts about my race finish and bad first days of competition snowballed. I was very vulnerable and instead of ignoring the media stories, I started to believe what was being written and broadcast. By the end of 1994 I believed without question I 'died' in the last lap of races and I always had bad days on the first day of competition. It came to such a low point that I even publicly acknowledged my weakness in interviews."



ATHLETICS:

Michael Johnson

Sprinter - Olympic medalist
From the book: Slaying the Dragon (1996).

On self discipline

"It is the decision you must make that you aren't going to expect the least from yourself anymore, that you are going to commit to working harder, to practicing your skills."

I can proudly say that I have never missed a scheduled day of training in ten years. My coach, Clyde Hart, tells of the day he found me out on the track, training in a driving rain storm, when everyone else had taken the day off. 'you never know,' I told him, 'when you might have to run in the rain'".



ATHLETICS:

Marion Jones

Professional athlete
From the book: Marion Jones: Life in the fast lane (2004).

On self belief

Some people believe I go around thinking I know I'm going to win, but that's not how it is at all. I'm thinking the opposite, in a way, how this day above all others, these athletes want it to be their turn; they are going to do everything in their power to beat me.

Marion Jones (standing at the starting blocks at the 2000 Sydney Olympic Games 100m final)

**ROWING:****Matthew Pinsent**

Rower – Olympic medalist
From the book: A Lifetime in a Race (2004).

On training

"Training is the most dependable and consistent part of life in our sport. Through thick and thin, home and abroad, good weather and bad, training is a constant."

On winning

"Nick Faldo was once asked what it felt like to win the open and he replied, 'I can't tell you, you haven't done it.' Although I wouldn't say that to a reporter, it's very true. Try as I might, I can't put into words what winning feels like. Whenever I am asked, I say that if I could accurately describe it, winning wouldn't be worth it. It has to be so awesome, so incredible, that it is worth four years of effort to achieve it."

**CYCLING:****Lance Armstrong**

Cyclist – Tour de France winner
From the book: Every Second Counts (2003).

On self-doubt and losing

"How do you learn to cope with doubt, and, more important, self-doubt? And how do you learn to lose? Trouble is, you're going to lose more than you are going to win, no matter who you are. Most of us overreact when we lose, and over-celebrate when we win, and I'm no exception."

On winning and losing

"When you win, you don't examine it very much, except to congratulate yourself. You can easily and wrongly, assume it has something to do with your rare qualities as a person. But winning only measures how hard you have worked and how physically talented you are; it doesn't particularly define you beyond those characteristics. Losing, on the other hand, really does say something about who you are. Among the things it measures are: do you blame others, or do you own the loss? Do you analyze your failure, or just complain about bad luck? If you are willing to examine failure, and to look not just at your outward physical performance, but your internal workings too, losing can be valuable. How you behave in those moments can perhaps be more self-defining than winning could ever be. Sometimes losing shows you who you really are."

**CRICKET:****Gary Kirsten**

Cricketer
From the book: In the zone with South Africa's sports heroes (2007).

On the impact of the media

"The media are relentless, especially when you are not doing well, and you are not protected from it. You pick up everything, and it is very difficult to block out that particular 'noise'"

**TENNIS:****Serena Williams**

Professional tennis player
From the book: Queen of the court (2009).

On motivation

"Serena, this game is mental. Good thoughts are powerful. Negative thoughts are weak. Decide what you want to be, have, do and think the thoughts of it. Your vision will become your life. Hold on to the thought of what U want. Make it absolutely clear in your mind. U become what U think about most. U attract what you think about most. Think. Do. Be."

On self confidence

"Be positive. Have only positivity going through your body. Be the best. Being the best starts by acting like U R the best. Believing U R the best. Becoming the best. Believe. Become. Serena Williams. 8× Grand Slam winner. Only U! Stay confident. U R a winner. Watch balls. Relax. Have fun. God blesses those who work hard. God blesses U, so work hard. Work, work, work."

On determination

"Tell me "No" and I'll show U I can! Tell me "No" because I can! Tell me "No". Go ahead, tell me. Just tell me I can't win. Just tell me it's out of reach. Come on, I'll prove U wrong! Just tell me "No" and watch what happens"

**RUGBY:****John Smit**

Rugby player – Captain of the Springboks
From the book: Captain in the Cauldron: The John Smit Story (2009).

On Failure

"...defeat follows you around like a rotten smell until the next time you win."

**RUGBY:****Naas Botha**

Rugby player and commentator
From the book: In the zone with South Africa's sports heroes (2007).

On self-belief

"I actually walked up to them (his team) and said this, " listen guys, you're struggling to play, so all you must do for 40minutes is win the ball and give it to me. I will play, by myself, and I will beat these guys!" 🏉