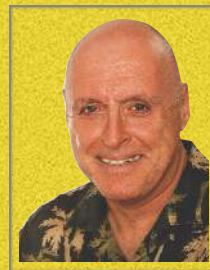


THE EXTRA POINT

BY JERRY ROBERTS



642 Kobe's Practice Was With a Purpose

It would have been Kobe Bryant's 42nd birthday yesterday. Something I watched reminded me of maybe the most important element of his greatness as a basketball player. It's something you and I can channel to make our respective "games" better. I'm Jerry Roberts and that's next on The Extra Point.

After particularly tough losses, including when beaten in the NBA Finals, Kobe Bryant sought out the one thing that seemed to make perfect sense in his world, perfect sense out of the defeat. He would work out early in the morning and then go the court to practice.

Where others might stay in bed, or lie around the house watching TV, or hit up social media, Kobe went to work. He would work on certain shots, or his footwork, or imagine defending an opponent.

He might work on whatever it was his most recent opponent had done to beat him. While it was fresh in his mind, he would solve his problems and get better.

I played competitive sports growing up and I understand the mindset. When I first played baseball I didn't understand the benefits of practicing after school during the week, before playing games on the weekend. It was just fun. We all ran around, got a few swings at the plate, and that was it. It was a routine. We knew it by heart.

Later, I would realize that routines were fine — we all have them — but it was the practicing of specific things, within those routines, that made us better. Practicing with my teammates was a routine. Doing warm up exercises, taking my 10 swings, catching balls in the outfield, all were part of the routine.

What was not routine was the coach coming to me and throwing me nothing but curveballs, low in the strike zone. For a time, those pitches

gave me big trouble. Little by little, after I saw a ton of them in practice, they became less of a problem.

This is not limited to sports. I've seen the same thing with artists and musicians. They painted every day, but it got more meaningful when they practiced the strokes that never seemed to come out the way they wanted. Until the day they did.

I knew people who practiced piano or guitar for hours and it always sounded great to me. Only they knew that certain guitar licks weren't perfect, or they just didn't seem to hit the keys right on specific chords. The daily playing was the routine, but when they got to the part that was a serious challenge, they focused their attention and energy on meeting it. It was "game on" to them.

If you've got time right now because of the lockdown, start thinking of the things you want to improve. This could be sports, a hobby, or work-related.

Think about the way you practice or approach what you're doing. The routines. Then think of what it would take to raise your game, the specifics that you can work on.

Kobe Bryant built his legendary career on those specifics, each designed to deliver a certain result at a certain time. His practice was focused on making him better to accomplish a definite goal. It was intentional. We can do the same.

That's The Extra Point. Be responsible and make something good happen today. For 93.3 and the Ray Gibson Show, I'm Jerry Roberts.

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