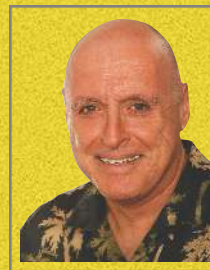


THE EXTRA POINT

BY JERRY ROBERTS



854 Be Ready — Your Competition Probably is

Yesterday, we told the story of Tommy Mapother, also known as Tom Cruise, who took his disappointment over a sport injury and threw his energy into acting. We talked about Tom being ready when his break came, his opportunity knocked. I'm Jerry Roberts and today, being smart about being ready. That's next, on The Extra Point.

When an injury ended his participation in competitive sports, little Tommy Mapother, who later took the stage name Tom Cruise, threw himself into acting and prepared himself well to take on the male lead role in his high school's production of the play, *Guys and Dolls*. He was ready to deliver a winning performance.

He wasn't aware that the mother of his female counterpart had invited a New York theatrical agent to the play, in the hopes he would see how wonderful an actress her daughter was and sign her to a contract. To her dismay, the agent wasn't impressed with the girl, but saw potential in Tom, pushing him to study acting in New York. The rest is Hollywood history.

Today, a different story. Have you ever heard of the famous summertime lumberjack contest? Every year, a lumberyard in Oregon hired workers to come in and cut down trees for the season. The workers came from everywhere. The pay was good, and the food was good.

There was more. Most of these workers were college football players, who could get into really good shape swinging an axe for weeks, before they showed up for their team's practices. There were 20 of them, and they figured chopping trees was the perfect job.

One day, just before they started work, the boss called everybody over, and he said, "We're going to give a bonus of \$250 to whoever chops down the most trees today. We're going to start at eight o'clock. You get

one hour for lunch, and we end when you hear the siren at five o'clock. Then, we'll total up all the trees cut, and announce the winner tomorrow morning.

As you might expect, all these competitive young men were geared up and ready to try to win the bonus money. There was also one other contestant, Ralph, who was 67 years old. He had worked in the lumberyard for many years. All the youngsters called him the "old guy," and nobody figured him as a threat to win the prize.

Eight o'clock arrives, the bell sounded, and everybody started swinging their ax. The energy levels were high. You could almost smell the testosterone in the air. Guys trash-talked each other, telling everybody within the sound of their voice that he was going to win, and they didn't stand a chance.

At nine o'clock, on the top of the hour, Ralph stopped chopping, walked up to the shed, and came back 15 minutes later to start chopping again. The young guys laughed at him. "What's the matter old man, can't take it?. Go home!"

They continued chopping and chopping, and Ralph kept going back to the shed, every hour on the hour. After 15 minutes, he'd come back to chop again.

At five o'clock, everybody ended with a big spurt of energy, many of them proclaiming victory, that the \$250 prize would be theirs.

The next morning at eight o'clock, the boss called everybody around, and he said, "Ralph, here's your \$250 — you won!"

Twenty young men groaned, "Are you kidding me? He's old, and took time off every hour. We chopped the whole time. There's no way he could win." However, the numbers told the story. Ralph had indeed won. (Con't.)

Ralph said, "I might be old, but I'm also experienced. I was doing something that not one of you college-educated boys were doing. You see, every hour, I would walk up to the shed and sharpen my ax. I won, because I was always sharpening my ax."

What have you done this month to sharpen your axe? How have you improved your skill set, or overall knowledge that applies to your job and career? How have you made yourself more valuable to your team, than you were in May?

If you're looking to move up, how many others might have their eyes on the same promotion? Do you think they might have been sharpening their axe this month?

I recall an advertising campaign from a fitness company years ago. It said, You're either moving forward or you're falling behind — there's no such thing as standing still."

Somebody out there wants what you want, and they're sharpening their axe. How about you?

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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