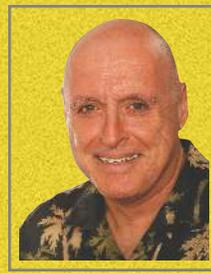


THE EXTRA POINT

BY JERRY ROBERTS



1124 Self-Discipline is a Key Part of Success

I was reading into a book by Brian Tracy, an expert in success, mostly in the area of selling, but his advice is pretty good for anyone. He is a big believer that self-discipline is absolutely a key to success. I was planning on making a connection with this to someone in business, then I heard that Bill Russell died. I'm Jerry Roberts, and I knew I had my example. We'll talk about that next, on The Extra Point.

Bill Russell died at age 88 yesterday. He was many things in life, but most people recognize his name because he is the winningest pro basketball player of all time. However, the game didn't come easy to Russell at first.

He was nearly cut from his Oakland high school team. The next season, he was nearly cut again, but got a handle on things and eventually led his team to two California state championships.

Only one college offered him a scholarship, the University of San Francisco. It was a good move for USF, as Russell propelled the school to two NCAA titles.

He was drafted by the Boston Celtics, a team that had never won a league championship. That changed in Russell's first season. By the time he retired as a player, he had won 11 NBA championships over a period of 13 years, from 1957 to 1969. The last two were in the dual role as player and coach. He later coached the Seattle SuperSonics for several seasons, but couldn't replicate his success.

During his career, Russell was named the NBA's most valuable player five times.

Today's players make a spectacle of blocking another player's shot attempt, often knocking the ball away and celebrating. Sometimes, a teammate gets the ball; sometimes it goes out of bounds; and other times it ends up in the hands of another opposing player who then

scores a basket. That wasn't Russell's style.

He knew that two of those three outcomes didn't favor the Celtics, and this is how that self-discipline comes into play. He knew he could make a bigger difference by not just blocking the ball, but by controlling it.

Russell was the first big man to perfect the art of blocking a shot and tipping the ball upward, then grabbing it and passing to a teammate to get the Celtics quickly out on offense. That small thing probably added 6-10 points per game for the team, and many victories.

Bill Russell was a controversial figure as well, who never signed autographs for fans in Boston, whom he regularly called racists. He always said the Celtics treated him like family in every way, but he had no respect for the fans and would have no trouble leaving Boston when his Celtics days were over.

That's exactly what he did. It would be decades before Russell and the city reconciled, and in 1999 the team held his long-awaited retirement ceremony, where the fans he had no love for gave him a lengthy standing ovation.

Russell was a prominent figure in civil rights, fighting bigotry in sports as well as the rest of society. Along with Muhammad Ali and other leading African-American athletes of the 1960s, he was active in the Black Power movement.

Bill Russell wasn't as flamboyant as other great players. Instead, he studied the game perhaps like no one else before him. He knew the other players and their tendencies, and he was ready to use those to his advantage.

He wasn't the biggest player in a big man's game. Russell was listed as 6-10, but it was often said that when he stood next to 7-1 Wilt Chamberlain, his prime adversary, he appeared to be some four inches shorter. (Con't.)

Russell made self-discipline work for him. He didn't waste his energy with unnecessary movements. His footwork was excellent, and he always put himself in a position to succeed. This allowed him to dominate virtually everyone except for Chamberlain, who was perhaps the greatest player of all time.

I grew up an L.A. Lakers fan. I was quite young and more into baseball than basketball, but I saw Russell and the Celtics beat the Lakers over and over again in the NBA championships. The Lakers could match up with everybody on the Boston team, but never had an answer for Russell.

For those who have never seen him play, you'll find a fair amount of videos on YouTube, which will give you an idea of what it was like to go up against him.

Self-discipline, focus, never giving excuses for being beaten, and always seeking improvement — these were the elements Bill Russell brought to his game.

Those same factors will also generate success for you and me.

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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