
ZEST

“It’s not the size of the dog in the fight, it’s the size of the fight in the dog.”

~ **Mark Twain**

“The more difficult the victory, the greater the happiness in winning.”

~ **Pele**

“A lot of what is most beautiful about the world arises from struggle.”

~ **Malcolm Gladwell**

“Nothing can dim the light that shines from within.”

~ **Maya Angelou**

“There is no passion to be found in playing small – in settling for a life that is less than what you are capable of living.”

~ **Nelson Mandela**

Sometimes we are going to be on top of the world. Sometimes we are going to be an underdog. Regardless of where we find ourselves, if we don’t have enthusiasm we will struggle to accomplish anything of significance. However, whether we are the favorite or the underdog, our approach should be the same. We all need to approach life as underdogs. We need to have the will power to be our best regardless of our situation.

This doesn’t happen unless we have energy and enthusiasm. We must have zest if we are going to face down any situation that we will encounter.

We must be unflappable. Win or lose, easy or tough, favorite or underdog, we should always approach our work with a zest for life. Whatever we are doing, make it fun. Cherish the opportunities that we have.

Kevin Durant, one of the best players in the NBA, once was described by his head coach as practicing every day like he was trying to make the team. Durant is somebody that has a chip on his shoulder – not necessarily from a victim or negative standpoint but from the perspective that he loves what he is doing so much that he refuses to let anyone, or anything take it away from him.

Cliff Young was born in 1922 to a poor family living in an old bark hut. They struggled during the depression. His father worked whenever he could so Young had to take to caring for the sheep. The farm was over 2000 acres and there were around 2000 sheep. His family could not afford equipment, so he was forced to continuously run to herd all of the sheep. Young was not a stranger to grit.

Most people begin their professional athletic career at a young age. Not Young. He began his professional running career when he was 56. Not surprisingly, he was usually doubted by spectators and even TV commentators. The race from Sydney to Melbourne was a famous race considered to be one of the most difficult in the world. It was more than 500 miles long (875 kilometers, to be exact). The participants were typically world-class athletes and usually backed by a large sponsor. Most of the athletes were also under 30. They had youth, experience, and money for the best equipment, but

none of them were Cliff Young.

The 61-year old farmer showed up on race day wearing overalls and work boots – his typical sheep herding outfit. People could not believe it when he put on a race number. Someone told Young “You’re crazy, there’s no way you can finish this race.” To which Young replied, “Yes, I can. See, I grew up on a farm where we couldn’t afford horses or tractors, and the whole time I was growing up, whenever the storms would roll in, I’d have to go out and round up the sheep. We had 2,000 sheep on 2,000 acres. Sometimes I would have to run those sheep for two or three days. It took a long time, but I’d always catch them.”

“I believe I can run this race”, continued Young. “I think I can do it. In fact, I am sure I can do it. Only death will stop me. If I get run over by a semi-trailer that is the only thing that will stop me. Of course, I hope I don’t because I have a lot of living to do after this.” ¹

After the race started most of the competitors left Young in the dust; he was mocked by the media. The tone of the race changed when all of the other competitors went to sleep. Young kept running. He had the will power and endurance to not only push through the fatigue of running but the exhaustion of the human sleep cycle. Each night while others slept Young kept running. By the end of the race Young led the pack. ²

Young crossed the finish line in first place. The run took him 5 days, 15 hours, and four minutes. This beat the world record by two days. He finished before any other competitor by 10 hours. He told the

media that he imagined he was running after sheep and trying to outrun a storm.

First prize was \$10,000. Young didn't know he would be receiving any prize money. He didn't run the race for a prize. He ran the race for himself. He loved running. He loved competing. He loved life. Young actually gave all of his prize money away to the other runners to honor their efforts. ³

The will power of a 61-year old potato farmer and sheep herder surpassed human logic that day. No one would have ever expected the result, but Young knew what he was made of and he showed the world what one of the most underestimated athletes could do. There is no way that he could accomplish something so amazing without having a passion and zest for what he was doing. He enjoyed running. He enjoyed proving people wrong. He embraced the underdog role. He embraced the opportunity that he had and treasured the chance to live life to its fullest.