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# NEXT PLAY

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*“When something goes wrong, smile, cause there’s always a next play.”*

~ **Ray Lewis**

*“You hit a bad shot, you have to get over it right then and there so you can get focused on the next one.”*

~ **Tiger Woods**

*“Every strike brings me closer to the next home run.”*

~ **Babe Ruth**

*“Success is how high you bounce after you hit bottom.”*

~ **General George Patton**

*“Your next shot is a new experience. It might be the best shot you ever hit in your life.”*

~ **Harvey Penick**

Focus is something that needs to be turned on 24/7 as a competitor. We have to focus every step of the way. There are so many factors that need our focus during competition – we need to focus on our technique, tactics, how much time is left, what the score is, and what we need to be doing. When we focus, we become more resilient because we will not give up. We are also capable of rebounding from any setback.

USA Basketball and legendary Duke University head coach, Mike Krzyzewski had this to say about rebounding from setbacks (or even success). He calls

it moving on to the next play. “In basketball and in life, I have always maintained the philosophy of next play”, says Krzyzewski. “Essentially, what it means is that what you have just done is not nearly as important as what you are doing right now. The next play philosophy emphasizes the fact that the most important play of the game or life moment on which you should always focus is the next one.

“It is not about the turnover I committed last time down the court, it’s not even about the three-pointer I hit to tie the game, it is about what’s next. To waste time lamenting a mistake or celebrating success is distracting and can leave you and your team unprepared for what you are about to face. It robs you of the ability to do your best at that moment and to give your full concentration. It’s why I love basketball. Plays happen with rapidity and there may be no stop-action. Basketball is a game that favors the quick thinker and the person who can go on to the next play the fastest.” <sup>1</sup>

Coach K further summed up the next play mentality with a basketball analogy, but it works for all sports. “The average player always focuses on the last play”, he said. “The great player always focuses on the next play. An average player misses a shot, goes down and commits a stupid foul. A great player misses a shot, then goes down and steals the ball and makes a layup.” <sup>2</sup>

The Master's golf tournament is the most famous golf tournament in the world. Jordan Spieth became the second youngest golfer ever (Tiger Woods was the youngest) to win the green jacket when he went wire-to-wire in the 2015 Masters to tie

Woods for the best Masters score of all-time.

The next year it looked like Spieth was primed to repeat his tremendous feat of leading from start to finish as he led by one-stroke with seven holes to go. However, he ended up having one of the worst holes in Masters history when he had a quadruple bogey on the 12<sup>th</sup> hole. Golfers cannot have that kind of hole down the stretch of a major championship and expect to win. Spieth did not win back-to-back Masters, but he did still finish tied for second. More impressively, he had two birdies and one par on holes 13-15 (the next three holes). He bounced back immediately and shook off his historically bad hole. He would not win that day, but he showed what a champion is made of by moving on to the next play.

“It stung, but don’t feel sorry or sad for us”, Spieth’s caddy Michael Greller would later say. “We won’t get stuck in this moment, nor should you. We will work harder, fight harder, and be better for it. We will bounce back as we have done many times.”<sup>3</sup>

Rory McIlroy is one of four golfers (Jack Nicklaus, Tiger Woods, and Jordan Spieth are the others) who have won three majors by the age of 25. He had this to say about Jordan Spieth, the world’s number one player at the time, "Resilience, mentally tough, strong, whatever you want to call it. That's his biggest asset. Being able to forget about a bad shot and move on to the next one, that's his greatest weapon."<sup>4</sup>

Since 1983, the PGA Tour has kept a “Bounce Back” statistic. This stat measures how often a player follows an over-par hole (bogey or worse) with an under-par hole (birdie or better). Tiger

Woods, arguably the greatest golfer in history, had the best year ever in 2000 when he had a bounce back percentage of 36.5. Only a handful of golfers have ever gone over 30%. Between 1998-2006, Woods ranked in the Top-10 five times in the “bounce back” statistic. Certainly, he was great in a lot of categories, but his ability to move on to the next shot, next hole, and the next round allowed him to become the most dominant and intimidating golfer in history.

For golfers like Tiger Woods and Jordan Spieth, their game relies on a strong focus. It is commonly said that golf is “won with the mind” because a golfer cannot tell himself don’t go in the water or stay away from the sand. Surely, he will end up there. It is important to focus on what we can do. Have positive self-talk. We should tell ourselves what we are going to do instead of what we are afraid of doing. Focus on every step.

With focus the confidence will naturally come. If we focus on all the right techniques and the best tactics, we will have confidence in our game. When we know we are ready for any challenge that will come that day, we will feel ready to conquer the competition. We have trust in our abilities and know we are in control of how well we perform.

Spieth and Woods do not let one bad shot, or a few bad shots in a tournament, ruin their chances of winning. They choose to focus on the next shot instead of the disappointment of the bad ones. Their focus on doing better helps them have the ability to rebound in every tournament.

For both of these golfers, it did not matter how

far they were behind or what struggle they were facing. They can come back from anything by focusing in on their good shots, by positive self-talk, and connect the dots to success.

What will we do when we do something great? Will we rest on our laurels? Will we have a letdown, or will we stay focused on doing our best? What can we do when we have a setback? Will we act like the world is caving in on us?

We can all have positive self-talk. We can focus on our techniques and tactics. Do not let distractions get the best of us. Do not allow one bad shot to keep us from continuing to shoot. Do not let a turnover cause us to not turn around and play defense. We want to turn a success into another success. Likewise, we want to take a setback and turn it into a success.

Whether we are down by 1 or 20 or whether we are up by 1 or 20, we can remain focused on our talents, tactics, and training to rebound from any setback or replicate our recent success. We should push ourselves and trust our abilities. Stay positive. Fight for success so we can execute the next play as well as we possibly can.