

## **The Top Tips that help RAISE YOUR GAME**

What do Richard Dunwoody, Mickey Harte, Janet Gray, Stephen Ferris, Adi Birrell and Sir Matthew Pinsent all have in common? Quite a lot actually!

Firstly, they have all won the most prestigious awards in their chosen sport; secondly they have all spoken at our Raise Your Game Conferences and thirdly they are taking all of the lessons learned through sport in to their business ventures.

That's why we have created the Raise Your Game concept with the subtitle – Management and Leadership lessons from the world of sport. The characteristics of winners in sport and business are very similar. As a nation we are passionate about sport and have produced some of the world's finest sporting talent, so it seemed only natural that we bring sport and business together.

Of course there are messages from sport that are necessary, but not ones we are perhaps uncomfortable with. There is a certain irony that I am writing this on the day of Alex Higgins funeral. An unfortunate reminder that emphasises the fact that it is not just what happens on the pitch or round the snooker (or board) table that matters.

When I was with Bombardier, Chairman Laurent Beaudoin was always keen to emphasise that "a successful company recruits successful people" and that it was the 'whole person' we were bringing in to the business. That message was demonstrated 'in spades' as each of these champions spoke about their values which transcended all areas of their lives - their passion, their vision, their determination and their desire for excellence

The other notable characteristic was humility! These were people who openly admitted their failures, their fears, and their personal challenges. They simply let their achievements speak for themselves and I can confirm their achievements spoke volumes. I can also assure you that when you get an opportunity to have 4 Olympic Gold Medals in your hand you want to hear how they were won.

What we heard loud and clear from Sir Matthew Pinsent CBE was –

- know what the end game is (In his case it was the Olympic Finals 4 years away and a six minute opportunity to come home a winner!)
- know your strengths
- know the opposition's game
- focus on the task
- train, train, train!

Here are some of the top tips for success from our local speakers:

### **RICHARD DUNWOODY – Champion Jockey**

A native of Belfast, three-time champion jockey Richard Dunwoody is one of Britain's most successful jockeys, winning the Big Three races – the Grand National, the Champion Hurdle and the Cheltenham Gold. Richard spoke about the determination and focus which kept him at the forefront of National Hunt racing for 15 years and helped him complete one of his greatest ever achievements – reaching the South Pole.

Richard's top tips for success:

- Prepare as well as you possibly can for absolutely everything
- Identify your mistakes and continue to learn from them
- Fear failure, but don't let it stop you from taking risks

### **ADI BIRRELL – Ireland Cricket Coach, World Cup 2007**

Originally from South Africa, Adi Birrell arrived in Ireland in April 2002 as National Cricket Coach. Under his leadership, Ireland's cricket fortunes started to change, beating Zimbabwe, Kenya and the West Indies to qualify for the 2007 World Cup. Ireland later went on to beat Bangladesh to gain a top 10 World ranking for one day cricket. On that basis I guess we can adopt him as a 'local'

Adi's top tips for success:

- Strategic coalitions are a powerful tool to achieve success – you aren't going to do it alone
- We are judged on our delivery – not on how hard we work, but on the outcome – so it is all about success
- If you don't measure your progress you won't know if you are improving or not – so measure everything!
- A lot of good leadership is in 'bullshitting' your players to inspire belief.

### **JANET GRAY – World Champion Water Skier**

At the age of 21, Janet lost her sight. She had to adjust to the terrifying existence of a world of complete blackness and, for the longest time, it was a battle of strength and will. Until, that is, she discovered the world of

water skiing and her life was dramatically transformed. Through hard work, sheer determination and love of the sport, she became World Champion and World Record holder.

Then, in 2006, she almost lost her life in a 40mph training accident in Florida. To the astonishment of fans, family and experts, she took victory at the 2007 World Disabled Water Ski Championships. Janet shared her inspirational story and her views on winning against all odds.

Janet's top tips for success:

- We all face challenges but the size of the challenge is unimportant – it is how you deal with it that matters
- Set your ultimate goal. Remained focused, dedicated and determined and you will achieve it
- Don't live in the past, it can't be changed. Look forward

#### **MICKEY HARTE – Tyrone GAA Coach, All-Ireland Winner**

The rise of the Tyrone Gaelic Football team to the top of the GAA pile over the last decade has been astounding and has been inspired by their manager, Mickey Harte. Having guided the Tyrone minors to all-Ireland success, he went on to become the most successful manager in Tyrone history by winning the all-Ireland senior title in 2003, 2005 and 2008.

Mickey shared his thoughts on what makes a great team, on and off the pitch.

Mickey's top tips for success:

- Always acknowledge and praise your staff for the good that they do. Research shows that people are prefer praise much more than any other reward and praise is free!
- Be a 'glass half full' person – be optimistic
- Avoid having to be right all the time

On reflection there is one other characteristic they all had in common and that is a great sense of humour, especially when it came to having a laugh at their own expense or in the midst of difficult challenges.

Success is a serious business; it is clearly a lot of hard work, dedication and at times can be 'painful'. But as these champions confirm, the rewards can be truly fulfilling and it is important to find the fun along the way.

Bill has spent the majority of his career involved in management and leadership development with individuals and teams at every phase of their development both locally and internationally Bill can be contacted through Podiem [bill.manson@podiem.com](mailto:bill.manson@podiem.com) The content of this article is provided for information purposes only and does not constitute professional or other advice.