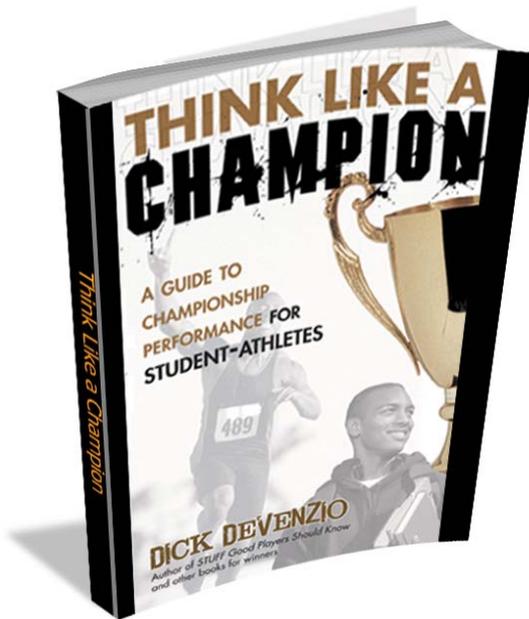


Think Like A Champion

A Guide to
Championship Performance
for Student-Athletes



Dick DeVenizio

Second Edition

Brought To You By:

www.pointguardcollege.com

101.

Unfairness

Champions don't want to be treated like everyone else.

Welcoming unfairness is one of the most useful principles in the life of any athlete. Yet I am always struck by how many athletes seem to dwell on fairness when they talk about their sports excellence.

“The coach wasn’t fair. The coach did something for him but not for me.”

The next time a coach treats you unfairly, thank him and then make the best of the situation.

For many years when I ran a general basketball camp my brother observed a tradition he called “Time to Pee.” It was very simple.

I used to begin each camp session explaining the unfairness principle. I told the campers that I planned to treat every athlete unfairly. I would run the camp the way God seems to run the world—arbitrarily. Some people are born rich, some poor. Some tall, some short. Some beautiful, some ugly. Some gifted, others handicapped. Therefore, I told them, at my camp some athletes would be allowed to get drinks when they were thirsty, some would not. Some athletes who asked a question during an activity would be granted their wish but others might be forced to run or do pushups for interrupting. With that, I proceeded to reward some athletes immediately with a candy bar or free T-shirt and punish others by making them run, touch a wall and come back.

With the point made clearly, at the very beginning, we saved a lot of time and misdirected focus the rest of the week. Athletes didn't constantly compare who was getting the most playing time during games, or worry about who was getting special treatment or favoritism in some other way.

During that first year of running the camp my brother and I stayed up very late on the last night, discussing how things had gone. He feared that some kids would go home and tell their parents they had been treated unfairly. He suggested that this might not be good for public relations and the success of future camps. Then he said something like, "Oh well, I guess we'll just see what happens. I have to go and pee."

I agreed. "Wait a minute. I think you're right. We ought to treat everyone fairly, at least on the last night. If I let you go and pee, I ought to let everyone go and pee."

It was three in the morning, but my brother and our college athlete/counselors liked my next instruction.

"Go and wake everyone up and, even if you have to carry them to the urinals, make sure they all pee. I don't want to be accused of unfairness."

That night and every last night of every camp I ran for a decade after, we had the closing "Time to Pee" event. At 3:00 A.M. the counselors would wake everyone (we had all boys back then) one by one and make sure, even if they had to carry someone, that everyone peed in the name of fairness.

It was crazy, it was fun, and it bothered particularly tired athletes who sometimes claimed that they didn't have to pee. But they were always contradicted in very forceful terms by the college athletes standing at their bedsides and ready if necessary to tote them off to the urinals and hold them up while they peed. "One guy peed. Now everyone has to pee. Coach said we have to be fair."

I always hoped that the lesson would get through loud and clear and remain with the athletes forever. Perceived unfairness is so urgently and accusingly pointed out by so many people in so many situations that it's not surprising that athletes, too, can fall into the same trap. Don't let it happen to you.

Desiring fair treatment is the province of the mediocre.

Champions don't want to be treated like everyone else. Champions don't want to be put on an equal plane with others, they welcome the opportunity to show what they are made of under all sorts of conditions. They don't worry what has happened to anyone else. They are eager to demonstrate what they can do.

Hopefully you will not go through life constantly looking to see if you are being treated like others. Instead, focus on making sure you respond famously to whatever treatment you are getting. (Could it be a special test aimed at bringing out something special from you?) Remember, you don't know why the gods seem to favor some over others. In all cases, your best course of action is just to take what comes and make the best of it. I'd like to go on with the explanation, but I can't. I gotta go pee. You have to go, too.