

# Just Being Better than the Rest Doesn't Make You a Success

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**J**oshua Wooden taught his son John:

Never try to be better than someone else; but always be learning from others. Never cease trying to be the best you can be. One is under your control; the other isn't.

This lesson from his father led Coach Wooden to having a somewhat unique approach to the importance of the scoreboard; he described it this way:

If you truly do your best, and only you will really know, then you are successful and the actual score is immaterial whether it was favorable or unfavorable. However, when you fail to do your best, you have failed even though the score might've been to your liking.

Coach created a much loftier goal than just being better than the rest for himself and his teams. He described it in his book *Wooden*, with Steve Jamison:

Perfection is what you are striving for, but perfection is an impossibility. However, striving for perfection is not an impossibility. Do the best you can under the conditions that exist. That is what counts.

Our teams at UCLA had four perfect seasons, but we never played a perfect game, never played as well as we could. That would be perfection. We didn't reach perfection, but we constantly strove toward it.

I believe there is nothing wrong with the other fellow being better than you are if you've prepared and are functioning in the way you've tried to prepare. That's all you can do.

But there is something wrong if you've failed to measure up to your ability because you haven't prepared.

This approach resulted in an environment of constant improvement and eliminated the tension people sometimes feel when success in their mind is simply based on an outcome. Coach put it this way:

I removed stress — the kind that comes from a fear of losing or an overeager appetite to win — by focusing exclusively on improvement and teaching the team that ongoing and maximum progress was the standard, our daily goal.

When those on your team accept this idea — not just accept it but really believe it — they are in complete control of their success because the quality of their effort is up to them.

Whether it's coaching a basketball team, running a sales organization or preparing for a test in school, this approach has been proven to work.

What's your approach to a competitive situation?

Yours in Coaching,  
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