

Sporting ambition can get you far

FAITH IN SPORT

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Ambition is when you have the desire and determination to achieve great things. Ambitious people use hard work and focus to find success in their work and personal lives. They have an inner drive that helps them stay motivated when working toward their goals, whatever these may be. Remember that Jesus Christ had a magnificently massive ambition. He wanted to give birth to the Kingdom of God – and change the face of the earth.

Marcus Aurelius, Roman emperor 161 to 180 CE and a Stoic philosopher, emphasised the importance of “purpose”.

“Find a purpose to serve, not a lifestyle to live. A man’s worth is no greater than the worth of his ambitions,” he said.

“As a youngster, I enjoyed sport and my ambition was to be a great sportsman,” admitted Lynn Davies, CBE, Welsh former track and field athlete. He achieved his ambition by winning a gold medal in the long jump at the 1964 Olympic Games.

Now that I am 83, when I look back over my life, I can make a short list of my own ambitions.

Arriving in London as a six-year-old BF (‘Bloody Foreigner’), my ambition was to belong, to be accepted. So I took up serious sport training. Given my body, there was never any risk of becoming an elite athlete. However, my commitment enabled me to become not only the Under 15 Wandsworth Javelin Champion, but also to be chosen to play football for Clapham College in the first eleven for four years.

I was – and still am – ambitious to die young across my PIES (the Physical, Intellectual, Emotional and Spiritual dimensions of my life) – but at an old age.

Why? The longer I can live with most of my marbles and body in working shape, the longer I can help Jesus Christ, my best friend, to realise the Kingdom of God. That is my intention, my ambition. What about my motivation?

As during World War 2, Churchill teamed up with his enemy Stalin, in order to fight their common enemy Hitler, I use my vices to fight each other. What is the outcome? Virtues. Vanity controls my gluttony and pride the other six serious sins.

Winston Churchill was very ambitious. He was determined to beat Hitler and destroy the Nazi regime. This he did rather well. His vast efforts – and his taste for fine spirits and cigars – did not seem to shorten his life. He died aged ninety.

How am I working on this? On ‘P’ (Physical), I have my early morning exercise routine which on Monday, Wednesday and Friday includes 84 press ups and on Tuesday, Thursday and Saturday, the same number of full squats. I always walk up and



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down underground escalators and, rather than hop on a bus for a short ride, walk.

On ‘I’ (Intellectual), I keep writing and preaching as well as reading theology, philosophy and history. Curiosity does not kill – but it does slow down the ageing of the brain.

On the ‘E’ (Emotional) I stay in touch with my friends (and these include my family), allies-in-life and colleagues. To have friends, I know I have to be a friend to as many as time and energy permits.

Finally, on ‘S’ (Spiritual) I remember that the reason I celebrate Mass is TAPS: To Thank God for all I have been given, Ask for what I and the world needs, Praise God for the beauty of creation and say Sorry for my mistakes, my sins. During the day, I carry on a phatic conversation with all three members of the Blessed Trinity.

Most of us in the entrepreneurial community – I have been called a social entrepreneur – are blessed with higher-than-average ambition. Ambitious people crave accomplishments, which need not be becoming famous and powerful or making more money.

The very humble genius, Albert Einstein, said: “Try not to become a man of success, but rather try to become a man of value.” Pearl Bailey, American actress (1918-1990), shared her forthright conviction. “A man without ambition is dead,” she said. “A man with ambition but no love is dead. A man with ambition and love for his blessings here on earth is ever so alive.”

Jim Afremow, in his book *Champion’s Mind: How Great*

Athletes Think, Train, and Thrive, wrote: “If you aspire to be a champion, don’t be awed by the glitter of their excellence; instead, know that they also put in many thousands of hours in the pool, on the court, and at the track to build up their bodies and shape their minds.”

Sir Alex Ferguson’s leadership style at Manchester United is said to have been tough, aggressive and loyal with high ethical standards and commitment toward and from the

players. Many of his players highly regarded him and considered him as a disciplinarian with a hard character and a stubborn man. Ferguson spoke passionately about wanting to instil values in his players. More than giving them technical skills, he wanted to inspire them to strive to do better and to never give up. In other words, to make them ambitious winners. His intense desire to win stemmed in part from his own experiences as a player.

In 2019, Jurgen Klopp said that his biggest ambition as Liverpool manager was to win the Premier League title. He managed to achieve this ambition that very season, as well as the FIFA World Cup and the UEFA Super Cup. In 2021-22, Liverpool went on to win the FA Cup and the Carabao Cup.

Ambition plus application plus ability can get you a long way towards your highest goal which you have to select, focus on, commit yourself to and, with self-discipline, persevere until you get there – wherever that may be.

Left, the great – but humble – Einstein

