



Success Does Not Breed Success

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Success does not breed success. It breeds failure. It is failure, which breeds success. If that advice seems patently absurd, think about the careers of many famous winners:

- ▶ Babe Ruth struck out 1,333 times. In between his strikeouts he hit 714 homeruns.
- ▶ Brandi Chastain was cut from the National Team, before trying out again and becoming a World Cup champion.
- ▶ Martina Navratilova lost twenty-one of her first twenty-four matches against archrival Chris Evert. She resolved to hit more freely on the big points and beat Evert thirty-nine out of their next fifty-seven matches.

No woman tennis pro has ever won as many matches or as many tournaments, including a record nine Wimbledon singles titles as Navratilova. Although the Williams sisters are closing in on these marks!

- ▶ R. H. Macy failed in retailing seven times before his store in New York became a success.

- ▶ Abraham Lincoln failed twice in business and was defeated in six state and national elections before being elected president of the United States.

- ▶ Michael Jordan was cut from his junior high school basketball team, before becoming a sports icon.

- ▶ Theodor S. Geisel wrote a children's book that was rejected by twenty-three publishers. The twenty-fourth publisher sold six million copies of it the first "Dr. Seuss" book---and that book and its successors are still staples of every child's library.

- ▶ Fred Astaire's first screen test assessment: "Losing hair. Can't sing, Can dance a little." RKO's head of production, David O. Selznick, also admitted to doubts about Astaire's "enormous ears and bad chin."

- ▶ *Jeff Agoos was cut from the National Team two days before final roster announcements for the 1994 World Cup. This was after having spent two years in residency camp in California with the National Teams Program. He was so upset he went home and burned his boots in the fireplace.*

He bounced back, made the Team, and played in the 1998 and 2002 World Cups.

Consider the times when you tried to learn a new game or sport. Did you get it perfect the first day? Not likely. A high school friend of mine (one of the two goalkeepers on my high school soccer team) once told me when we were in our late twenties that he did get one sport right the first time he tried it. I asked what he meant and he said,

"It was the first day of skiing classes. I skied all day long and I didn't fall down once. I was so elated; I felt so good. So I skied up to the ski instructor, and I told him of my great day. You know what the ski instructor said?

He told me, 'Personally Mike, I think you had a lousy day.' I was stunned. 'What do you mean lousy day? I thought the objective was to stand up on these boards, not fall down.' The ski instructor looked me straight in the eye and replied, 'Mike, if you're not falling down, you're not learning.'"

Mike's ski instructor understood that if you can stand up on your skis all day long the first time out, you're doing only what you already know how to do, not pushing yourself to try any thing new or difficult. If you always play it safe you aren't going to improve yourself, because when you try to do something you don't know how to do, you'll fall down. That's guaranteed! Nothing is ever done perfectly the first time someone tries it---not in games, not in school and most certainly not in soccer.

The point isn't to promote failure for failure's sake, of course. I don't advocate for a moment that failure ought to be the *objective* of any endeavor. Instead, I advocate learning. Be a leader and don't look for someone to blame when mistakes are made while expanding your soccer horizons. Instead ask, "What can be learned from the experience?" I encourage you to try to learn new ball skills. Work on them in training and when you feel ready try them in a match. Don't worry if it doesn't go right the first time, this is part of the learning experience. I encourage you to push yourself in your training sessions to learn new things and gain new experiences.

Girls go train once in awhile on a boy's team. The increased physical speed of play will force you to also increase your mental and technical speed of play. Boys go practice with an older team for the same experiences once in awhile.

I encourage you to improve your physical fitness. This is the hard "blood, sweat and tears" part of competitive soccer. It is essential though if you truly have the drive to make it to the top of your game.