

**“Maximize your performance on and off the field.”
—Rod Handley, Character That Counts**



THE HUDDLE

Becoming a Champion for Life

SHAWN BROWER

For many of us, one of our greatest privileges is to represent a team in a united cause. In reading *The Huddle*, you will find that its lessons don't just apply to the pursuit of winning trophies, but more importantly assist us through the journey of life.

—**Gary Kirsten**, 2011 Cricket World Cup Winner as Coach of India; Former Professional Cricket Player and National Cricket Team Coach for South Africa

Coaches possess a tremendous amount of influence. Billy Graham even said that a coach can have a greater influence on the life of a young person, in just one season, than many can in a lifetime. Shawn Brower has had that kind of influence on the lives of the young men he has coached for almost two decades. A hugely successful coach, Brower has earned National Coach of the Year honors twice, as well as Coach of the Year honors in two states over multiple years. Yet with all his success on the field, it is his godly influence and impact on the lives of his student athletes that has resulted in a multitude of champions in the game of life! Now Brower combines those lessons, biblical applications, and illustrations from some of today's great coaches and athletes in his new book *The Huddle*. Coaches, athletes, and teams at every level need this practical guide to use as a playbook in helping them grow and develop relationship bonds, championship attitudes and actions based on biblical principles, and a rock-solid spiritual foundation that will help them win in life. This is a book I will use with my teams, athletes, and assistant coaches!

—**Roy Heintz**, Women's Basketball Coach, University of Alabama in Huntsville; Former Chaplain of Orlando Magic

For many years I have challenged teams to pursue character above the "almighty win." Coaches and athletes aren't defined by the scoreboard; they are known by what occurs deep in

their souls. Shawn's book provides an excellent combination of biblical truth and practical insights on how to maximize your performance on and off the field, developing the deep character issues that will benefit you all the days of your life.

—**Rod Handley**, Founder and President, Character That Counts

Building championship-caliber teams is no easy task. Dr. Brower has not only accomplished this as a coach, he has now articulated the key principles and practices in this book. Every coach and athlete at every level would benefit from this thorough, thoughtful, and practical reflection of what it really means to be a champion. Dr. Brower conveys the transcendent cause for athletics and elevates the eternal trophies above the applause gained from personal and team success.

—**Larry Taylor**, President, Prestonwood Christian Academy, Plano, Texas; Founder, Student Leadership Institute

I believe there is no higher compliment than saying that someone reflects Christ to those around them. This is what Coach does as a leader, principal, coach, father (to his kids and to me), friend, and follower of Christ. The way in which he lives with integrity, humility, and passion is infectious and points to Someone larger than himself. Coach shows me Jesus and has instilled a desire in me to follow Christ more fully. Praise the Lord for people such as Coach Brower. I would encourage *everyone* to read this book and live it out—it will lead people to the cross through its pages.

—**Roy Anderson**, Former Captain, 2011 State Championship Team, Chattanooga Christian School, Chattanooga, Tennessee

THE HUDDLE

Becoming a Champion for Life

SHAWN BROWER


P U B L I S H I N G
P.O. BOX 817 • PHILLIPSBURG • NEW JERSEY 08865-0817

© 2013 by Shawn Brower

All rights reserved. No part of this book may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted in any form or by any means—electronic, mechanical, photocopy, recording, or otherwise—except for brief quotations for the purpose of review or comment, without the prior permission of the publisher, P&R Publishing Company, P.O. Box 817, Phillipsburg, New Jersey 08865-0817.

Unless otherwise indicated, all Scripture quotations are from the HOLY BIBLE, NEW INTERNATIONAL VERSION®. NIV®. Copyright © 1973, 1978, 1984 by International Bible Society. Used by permission of Zondervan Publishing House. All rights reserved.

Scripture quotations marked (ESV) are from *ESV Bible*® (*The Holy Bible, English Standard Version*®). Copyright © 2001 by Crossway Bibles, a publishing ministry of Good News Publishers. Used by permission. All rights reserved.

Scripture quotations marked (NKJV) are from The Holy Bible, New King James Version. Copyright © 1979, 1980, 1982, Thomas Nelson, Inc.

Scripture quotations marked (TNIV) are taken from the *Holy Bible, Today's New International Version*®. TNIV®. Copyright © 2002, 2004 by International Bible Society. Used by permission of Zondervan. All rights reserved.

Italics within Scripture quotations indicate emphasis added.

ISBN: 978-1-59638-668-6 (pbk)

ISBN: 978-1-59638-669-3 (ePub)

ISBN: 978-1-59638-670-9 (Mobi)

Huddle icon © khalus/istockphoto.com

Printed in the United States of America

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Brower, Shawn, 1970-

The huddle : becoming a champion for life / Shawn Brower.

pages cm

Includes bibliographical references.

ISBN 978-1-59638-668-6 (pbk.)

1. Success. 2. Teamwork (Sports)--Psychological aspects. 3. Sports--Psychological aspects. 4. Athletes--Life skills guides. 5. Athletes--Conduct of life. 6. Leadership. I. Title.

GV706.55.B76 2013

796.01'9--dc23

2013008148

To the CCS 2011 Men's Varsity Soccer
State Championship Team:

not because you won but because you loved well.

Your relationships defined the season and
transcended the game.

CONTENTS

Acknowledgments	7
Introduction	9
1. Perspective Changes Everything!	15
STAGE 1: PRESEASON	
<hr/> <hr/>	
2. Risk Your Best	29
3. Selected	41
4. The Rules of Engagement	51
5. So These Are My Teammates?	63
STAGE 2: REGULAR SEASON	
<hr/> <hr/>	
6. This <i>Is</i> “Next Year”	73
7. Pressing On	91
8. Shoot Straight with Me	101
9. Winning the Head Game	111
10. Defined in Battle	125
STAGE 3: PLAYOFFS	
<hr/> <hr/>	
11. Collective Separation	139
12. Staying on Center	153
13. Victory in Defeat	161
14. The Arms around Us	171
15. Championships	181

CONTENTS

STAGE 4: POST-SEASON

16. For Life	191
--------------	-----

STAGE 5: LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT

17. Captains' Club	203
--------------------	-----

Appendix	209
----------	-----

Notes	213
-------	-----

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I FIRST ACKNOWLEDGE my dear wife, who has been my best teammate for the past twenty years. Any coaching successes I have been blessed to experience are a direct result of her steady, faithful, and supportive love.

Players: A special thanks to every player who has stood with me in our team huddles. The experiences we shared and the resulting memories have been life gifts beyond imagination. I am blessed, beyond measure, because of each participating player from U-8 soccer teams to high school varsity soccer state championships. My life is richer today as a result of our time together.

Coaches: I am eternally grateful for the following men who granted me many, many hours of conversation that was not just about team tactics but offered a bond and a friendship that transcended the sport itself. Dave Murray, my college coach, inspired me to pursue excellence on the field and modeled how to pursue transformational, Christ-centered relationships with players. Doug Fleming, my assistant coach for eleven years, provided me as a young coach the richest counsel from the greatest source, as God's Word was his authority and daily sustenance. In a similar vein, John Smith, father of two former players, served as my "life coach" mentor and friend. He has been like a second father to me! Assistant coaches Gene Nelson, Bryant Black, and Doug Jipping have each offered me their camaraderie, friendship, and invaluable support. It has been a blast just "doing life together."

A special thanks to fellow coach and educational leader, and former college roommate, Jim Arnold for our modern-day

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

“David and Jonathan” relationship. Few relationships today remain as constant, unswerving, and genuine as I have been honored to receive from Jim. Now, twenty-four years after our first college days, I marvel that God continues to allow us to serve him together. Thank you, brother!

Sons: Joshua, Josiah, and Jakob. “Your presence, whether an infant on bus rides, or your highly energetic involvement on the sidelines, the bench, or the locker room, has always brought me great delight. It is with great fatherly pride and admiration that I watch you pursue your various athletic choices. I trust that as you train, relate and compete, you will grow in your pursuit of godly manhood and that you will forge rich and lasting relationships with the brothers in your team huddle.”

INTRODUCTION

PART ONE

On Friday, May 27, at 3:30 in the afternoon, exactly one hour before my varsity men's soccer team took the field in pursuit of the Tennessee high school state soccer championship, twenty-three young men stood side by side, arm in arm together. As I looked at this tightly closed huddle, I was flooded with emotion. After this final match, six seniors would bow out, and the huddle would never be quite the same. The players also sensed the finality of this special season and this special group of guys, so I quickly reminded them that they had that last night together. As a band of brothers, they needed to rise up and run to the challenge before them. I urged them not to make this night about a game of soccer or even a state championship. Instead I encouraged them to make it about their relationships in the huddle, to make it personal. After all, this had been their perspective all year; why do anything different at this point?

As they looked around the huddle and into the eyes of their brothers, the players understood what I was saying. Many of them had been together since elementary school, had played soccer together since middle school, had been to the state tournament together three times, and were now about to play for the state championship. These guys had been living life together for a long time. They were more than a group of talented individuals. They were connected and unified in a cause and for a purpose that surpassed gold medals or a championship trophy. As I looked about the huddle, I knew

that regardless of outcome, this was an uncommon group of young men pursuing an uncommon achievement.

When the first whistle blew, the players ran forward with an almost reckless abandonment, refusing to back down from any challenge set before them. When the last whistle sounded, the team stormed the field, this time to hoist the championship trophy overhead and to have gold medals draped about their necks.

While the championship title was certainly a team goal, it was the outworking of the commitment and vows the players had made to each other inside that huddle. More than they played against an opponent, they played with their teammates. In those waning moments of their season, their camaraderie and brotherhood was of greatest value and significance and was the x factor that led our team to victory.

It is said that a great opponent often brings out the best in a team. Yet I would contend that the strongest opponent cannot motivate, challenge, and inspire a team to greatness as can a unified group of teammates. Deeply interwoven into the fabric of each other's lives, they are fully dedicated to each other, just like a band of brothers fighting together in the trenches.

This culture and those relationships do not happen by accident. In fact, it is extremely rare for a group of individuals to be able to unite for a common cause to the degree I have just described. But when it happens, spectators see it, other teams wish they had it, and the team that lives and experiences it will never forget it.

This is why I have written this book. In my twenty years of coaching high school athletics, I have been blessed with many talented players and successful seasons. God has allowed me to guide seven teams to the state championship title match, win four state championships titles, and hold an 80 percent

INTRODUCTION

winning record during my coaching tenure. However, this book is not just about winning, being the best, and raising the championship trophy—although these accomplishments provide memories for a lifetime and are worthy to pursue. This book is much more about viewing your sport(s) as a microcosm of life.

You can learn incredible lessons that will assist you as an athlete and propel your team to achieve uncommon results while simultaneously equipping you for life during and after your athletic pursuits. I hope this book serves you well by preparing you for a successful season marked by deep and lasting relationships with your teammates, growth through victories and inevitable setbacks, and assistance in making the vital connections between athletics and all of life.

PART TWO

Many respect Coach John Wooden as one of the greatest all-time coaches in any sport, as he set a blazing record of coaching the University of California, Los Angeles (UCLA) Bruins to ten National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA) basketball championships. The richness and goodness of the words he offered his players at the start of a new season could not be more fitting for framing the focus and message of this book. In *Wooden on Leadership*, Wooden recalls how he stood before his players and said these words at the beginning of preseason:

We all want to be very successful, but for our success to become a reality you must first accept my concept of what success truly is. True success in basketball shouldn't be based on individual statistics or the percentage of victories, any more than success in life should be based on material possession or a position of power and prestige. Success must be based

INTRODUCTION

on how close you come to reaching your own particular level of competency.

Outscoring an opponent is important, and we must give an honest effort to do that, but you must keep things in proper perspective. Our efforts on the court are only building blocks for achieving success in life, and that should be our main purpose in being here. . . .

We must not become too concerned about the things over which we have no control, but we must make every effort to utilize to the best of our ability the things over which we have control.

Everyone is different. There will always be others who are bigger or stronger, or quicker, or better jumpers, or better in some other areas, but there are other qualities in which you can be second to none.

Among these are—your dedication to the development of your own potential, your industriousness, your physical condition, your integrity, self-control, team spirit and cooperation. If you acquire and keep these traits, I can assure you that you will be successful, not just in basketball, but in life, which is of far greater importance.

Although we press to become better in our sport, something bigger and grander exists beyond athletic contests and even their best outcomes. The lessons leaping from these pages are only good if you apply them to your life. In so doing, you will reap great benefits!

If you review the table of contents you will see that this book is divided into four seasons: preseason, regular season, playoffs, and post-season. The goal is to read through each section before you enter that particular portion of your season. To maximize the return on the time you will invest in reading this book, consider reading through and answering the questions together with your teammates. In so doing, you and your team will not only have the opportunity to read, talk,

INTRODUCTION

and discuss the same content but also be able to apply and process areas specific to your team. Not only will your team benefit from common thinking and processing through shared experiences, but you will also have a better understanding of how to resolve areas of concern and how to be best prepared for what lies ahead in the next phase in your season.

2011 STATE SOCCER CHAMPIONS' LIFE VERSES

I lift up my eyes to the hills—
where does my help come from?

My help comes from the Lord,
the Maker of heaven and earth. (Psalm 121:1–2)

—*Nathan Boldt, #18, defensive midfielder*



CHAPTER ONE

PERSPECTIVE CHANGES EVERYTHING!

*“For we are God’s workmanship, created in Christ
Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in
advance for us to do.” —Ephesians 2:10*

HEADLINES

- Athletics cannot be separated from our faith.
- We can follow professional modern athletes of faith.
- Our perspective on faith and athletics changes everything.

LETTER FROM COACH

In January 1993, I was a senior at a Christian liberal arts college in the small town of Beaver Falls, Pennsylvania, known primarily as the hometown of National Football League (NFL) great Joe Namath. I had just finished four years of playing collegiate soccer, and the other team captain and I decided to stay fit and keep training together even though our college soccer days were through.

One Friday evening as we were working out, the athletic director came by to tell us that the gym would be closing in a few minutes because that was the policy during home basketball games. Knowing we were close to the end of our workout, we continued to lift weights. A few minutes later, the athletic director came by again and said, "All right, time to leave." Then he walked away.

Now very close to finishing, we continued to lift weights. When the director came to turn off the lights a few minutes later, we were still working out. "Hey, didn't I ask you guys to leave?" he said. "What's going on?" We stopped and left the gym, thinking very little about the incident.

On Monday morning, I went to the college mailroom to check my box. Inside was one sheet of paper from my coach with these words typed on it: "That you were asked three times to leave the gym by the athletic director is deeply concerning. Have I taught you nothing? Both of you are captains, whether in season or out, and you represented yourself, the team, and our soccer program poorly by willfully choosing to not leave the first time the athletic director spoke to you. If I have somehow taught this to you, then I have failed you greatly. Please come directly to my office!"

I immediately left the mailroom to see Coach Murray. I knew I had messed up and messed up pretty big. I walked in, and before he could say anything, I offered him a sincere, heartfelt apology for my actions and asked for forgiveness.

Twenty years later, I still have this letter. You might think it wasn't that big a deal. However, this incident was huge! It had something to do with soccer and everything to do with life. I have kept this letter as a stern reminder that my faith is always on display. I cannot separate who I am from what I do. Even though my collegiate playing days were over, my coach took the time to inseparably tie together athletics, my faith, and my life. For that lesson, I will be forever grateful.

FAITH /S LIFE

Why this opening story? What is the connection between athletics and life? Let me offer a simple statement and then explain. Faith *is* life. If you can understand this truth, my opening story and the rest of this book will make sense. When my coach told me I was a captain in season or out of season, that did it for me! That was it! In the same way, I am a Christian regardless of what I am doing and what I am pursuing. My faith should be evident in all aspects of my life, at all times.

We cannot hold a dualistic view of our faith that separates it from something else—in this case, athletics. We must not see faith as an add-on so that we talk about “athletics” and “faith” as if they are individual ideas that stand alone. Our faith must be tightly linked in every way to every area of life. It must permeate all areas of life so that it cannot be separated from them, just as green dye dropped into a glass of clear water changes the color of all the water.

It is important that we understand this point. It changes everything! Our highest authority, God’s Word, tells us how to pursue athletics as Christians. To begin, we must recognize *who made us and how we are made*. King David says,

For you created my inmost being;
you knit me together in my mother’s womb.
I praise you because I am fearfully and wonderfully made;
your works are wonderful,
I know that full well. (Ps. 139:13–14)

The prophet Isaiah recorded God’s words: “Bring my sons from afar and my daughters from the ends of the earth—everyone who is called by my name, whom I created for my glory, whom I formed and made” (Isa. 43:6–7).

Not only has God fashioned and designed us, but he has *given each of us certain gifts and abilities*. The apostle Paul writes,

There are different kinds of gifts, but the same Spirit. There are different kinds of service, but the same Lord. There are different kinds of working, but the same God works all of them in all men. (1 Cor. 12:4–6)

James adds, “Every good and perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of the heavenly lights, who does not change like shifting shadows” (James 1:17).

So we know God made us and gifted us . . . but for what end? Simply put—to *bring God glory!* We are made by him and *for* him! To be explicitly clear, God says in Isaiah 48:11, “For my own sake, for my own sake. . . . I will not yield my glory to another.” God also says, “I am the LORD; that is my name! I will not give my glory to another or my praise to idols” (Isa. 42:8).

If God made us and gifted us to bring him glory, he must give us the means to pursue this worthy endeavor. Absolutely! Please notice the emphasis. Ecclesiastes 9:10 says, “*Whatever* your hand [or foot] finds to do, do it with all your might.” (As a soccer coach, I added the word *foot* . . . but believe it is actually covered by the word *whatever*.) We see this again in 1 Corinthians 10:31: “So whether you eat or drink or *whatever* you do, do it all for the glory of God.” Colossians 3:23–24 also emphasizes when and how we ought to bring God glory:

Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart, as working for the Lord, not for men, since you know that you will receive an inheritance from the Lord as a reward. It is the Lord Christ you are serving.

PERSPECTIVE CHANGES EVERYTHING!

As you pursue life and athletics in this manner, know that God will give you strength to accomplish the task he has given you to accomplish. Isaiah 40:29–31 says,

He gives strength to the weary
and increases the power of the weak.
Even youths grow tired and weary,
and young men stumble and fall;
but those who hope in the LORD
will renew their strength.
They will soar on wings like eagles;
they will run and not grow weary,
they will walk and not be faint.

There are times when we do not believe we have what it takes, and in our weakness, our hearts fail. However, in 2 Corinthians 12:9, Paul declares, “Therefore I will boast all the more gladly about my weaknesses, so that Christ’s power may rest on me.” Paul also notes where our confidence is derived:

Such confidence as this is ours through Christ before God.
Not that we are competent in ourselves to claim anything for ourselves, but our competence comes from God. (2 Cor. 3:4–5)

Paul also writes, “We are God’s workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God *prepared in advance for us to do*” (Eph. 2:10). How freeing and empowering! Don’t miss this point. This is where it all comes together. God made us, gifted us, and desires that we bring him glory in everything we do. He gives us the strength to do the good works he prepared for us before we were even born. Doesn’t he see those good works through to completion? Absolutely!

So where do we come in? We are challenged to remain faithful using the talents and abilities God has entrusted to us.

Look at the parable of the talents, where the master responds to the servant who made good use of what he entrusted to him. “His master replied, ‘Well done, good and faithful servant! You have been faithful with a few things; I will put you in charge of many things’” (Matt. 25:21).

There is one important caveat. When something goes well, we cannot take any credit for ourselves. Proverbs 21:31 says, “The horse is made ready for the day of battle, but victory rests with the LORD.” Romans 11:36 adds, “From him and through him and to him are all things. To him be the glory forever!”

Writing to Timothy, Paul gives us a vision of what a life of faith looks like as it draws to a close. “I have fought the good fight,” he tells Timothy, “I have finished the race, I have kept the faith” (2 Tim. 4:7). We are not promised a scoreboard win, which is why we must keep in mind Paul’s reminder to live lives that are worthy of the gospel (Phil. 1:27).

For years people have looked to Eric Liddell as the example of how Christians can pursue athletics in the way I have described. Liddell was an extremely fast runner faced with several major life dilemmas. Because of race schedules, he had to choose to either run on Sunday and likely win but go against his personal convictions, or follow what he believed and forfeit running on the Sabbath. At the same time, his sister was strongly suggesting he go to China to be a missionary. While he knew mission work was worth pursuing, he was trying to reconcile the gift of running and speed God had given him. In *Chariots of Fire*, the movie based on his life, he explains why he runs: “I believe God made me for a purpose . . . but he also made me fast. And when I run I feel his pleasure.”¹

MODERN ATHLETES OF FAITH

But who thinks that way today? Who believes that faith affects all areas of our lives—even athletics? More people

hold this perspective than you might imagine. Let me offer the examples of three men who live out this belief today: former Florida Gator and professional football quarterback Tim Tebow; Major League Baseball (MLB) player Josh Hamilton of the Texas Rangers; and Jeremy Lin from the National Basketball Association (NBA) Houston Rockets.

In his book, *Through My Eyes*, Tim Tebow notes, “I always thought since God gave these gifts to me, my role in that exchange was to play as hard as I could and continue to give Him the honor and glory for it. To me, that would be the very best way for thanking Him for the ability.”² He continues, “To me, our Christian witness matters, and it’s what people see when they are watching us. When we think we can do less than our best, when we think others are not watching, we’re cheating ourselves and the God who created us.”³

Josh Hamilton’s story is about as different from Tebow’s as possible. While Tebow is the “poster man” of a professional Christian athlete, Josh Hamilton has been led down a different path. He has squandered millions of dollars on drugs, gone in and out of drug rehab, been suspended from baseball, and been separated from his family. When he came to one of the lowest places in his life, he showed up at his grandmother’s house at 2 a.m., weighing only 180 pounds and barely recognizable. He later described himself as “a wreck—dirty, twitchy and barely coherent.”⁴ However, he met Jesus and surrendered his life to Christ.

Hamilton did not become automatically perfect and still struggles with relapses. As a result of choices he has made, he is criticized and even taunted when he goes to the ballparks of rival teams. A 2012 *Sports Illustrated* cover story, “The Fragile Brilliance of Josh Hamilton,” talks of how his faith has changed his response to reactions against him. Realizing that Jesus prayed for those who persecuted him, Hamilton began

to look at the situation in a new light. The writer says, “That’s why now if you watch him in the field, you’ll sometimes see Hamilton’s lips moving between pitches. He heard what you said. He’s praying that you’ll get better soon.”⁵

In the book *Playing with Purpose* Hamilton notes that his dark, drug-riddled past has given him “a platform to share what [God has] done in [his] life.” He goes on to say, “My wife was telling me that God was going to allow me to get back into baseball. It was going to be about sharing how He brought me through the storm.”⁶ Now known as one of the greatest players currently in baseball, Hamilton puts it in perspective when he says, “Baseball is third in my life right now, behind my relationship with God and my family. Without the first two, baseball isn’t even in the picture. Believe me, I know.”⁷

In May 2012, ESPN ran a story on Hamilton the day after he did what only sixteen players in all baseball have ever done—hit four homeruns in one game! It is interesting that the article begins this way: “He takes things one day at a time and lets his faith in Jesus Christ be a perpetual compass.”⁸ The world does not respond like this unless a person’s faith is so visible that it compels them to pen such words. Josh Hamilton is a changed man with a love for his Jesus!

When asked about his big night, he replied, “I think about what God has done in my life, and everything I’ve done to mess it up. . . . What God has allowed me to do, to come back from everything I’ve been through and still be able to play the game at the level I play it—it’s pretty amazing to think about that.”⁹

Jeremy Lin’s story is radically different from the stories of these two other men. He was never offered a basketball scholarship after high school. He was not drafted to the NBA after playing for Harvard University. In 2010, he was given a chance by the Golden State Warriors but was demoted to the

NBA D-League (development league) three times before being waived. The Houston Rockets picked him up, then quickly released him. Finally, on December 27, 2011, the New York Knicks picked him up.¹⁰ The rest is history. Lin received a chance and never looked back. In one highlight, he scored 38 points in a win over the LA Lakers. Linsanity began!¹¹

However, this is not the best part of Lin's story. Lin has not bemoaned the fact that his journey to the NBA has been such a roller-coaster ride. In fact, he cites Romans 5:3-5, which reads:

We also rejoice in our sufferings, because we know that suffering produces perseverance; perseverance, character; and character, hope. And hope does not disappoint us, because God has poured out his love into our hearts by the Holy Spirit, whom he has given us.

Lin understands that God is in control, working in the details of our lives. During an interview with a Taiwanese evangelical Christian channel, Lin said,

The Bible talks a lot about how God takes bad situations and tough situations and he teaches us and he uses those times of suffering to draw us closer to him and that's what I try to focus on during those times. . . .

There were just so many different things that really had to happen in order for me to make it into the NBA and you know I have a list of about 12 to 15 things that had to happen and none of it had anything to do with me and it was all in God's control. His fingerprints are all over my story.¹²

This perspective has impacted everything about Lin and how he pursues life and basketball. He said,

To understand that I'm not playing for anything on this earth, I'm playing for my prize in heaven, for the upward call that

Paul talks about, that's what I need to remind myself every day when I wake up.

I [have] to really understand that I'm not playing for all my fans, for my family, even for myself, I really have to play to glorify God. . . . And when other people see me play basketball . . . the way I treat my teammates, the opponents, the refs, that's all a reflection of God's image and God's love so that's the stuff I try to focus on. . . .

Every time I step on the court and there are 20,000 fans screaming . . . I try to block everybody out and . . . just pretend like God is sitting courtside right there . . . and just play, play for him.¹³

What a perspective. He gets it. When asked how he can maintain this perspective, Lin replies that he understands he is a sinner saved by grace.¹⁴

While this is certainly not a guarantee in the Christian life, Lin's patience and perseverance was rewarded during the summer of 2012, when he was extended, and accepted, a three-year, \$25.1 million contract with the Houston Rockets.

Three men with three different stories—one a well-known, deeply loved, and respected star athlete with a record of walking the straight and narrow, another with a story line of redemption and a new beginning, and yet another who rose from humble and modest beginnings to become, for a time, the most talked about name in basketball. Different men with different stories—yet binding them together is their love for Jesus Christ and their willingness to acknowledge him, follow him, and play for him. They have a drive to share their God with others and show what he has done for them as they live out their faith through athletics.

You may or may not compete on a grand scale like these men have in the NFL, MLB, or NBA. That is not the point. As your story continues and your season begins, what perspective

PERSPECTIVE CHANGES EVERYTHING!

will you hold about faith and athletics? How you answer this question changes everything! Clarity on this point will bring everything into focus, allowing you to use your giftedness and purposefully pursue athletics through your faith in Christ.

PERSONAL EVALUATION/DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Prior to reading this chapter, what was your view of what it meant to be a Christian athlete? Has it changed? If yes, how so?
2. Which passages here did you identify with? Did they cause you to view faith and athletics from a perspective that you previously had not held? Share the verse and explain the change in perspective.
3. Do you disagree with anything about the perspective that is described in this chapter? Explain.
4. In your own words, summarize what it means for your faith and athletics to merge.
5. Of the three examples of Christian professional athletes, whose story do you identify with the most? How so? How is their story encouraging to you?

NOTHING CAN MOTIVATE, CHALLENGE, AND INSPIRE A TEAM TO GREATNESS MORE THAN TEAMMATES WHO ARE FULLY DEDICATED TO EACH OTHER. BUT THIS RELATIONSHIP DOESN'T HAPPEN ON ITS OWN.

Shawn Brower calls on his twenty years of high school and club coaching experience to demonstrate the secrets to training and building better performance as a team. In this guidebook, teams will find:

- True accounts and quotes from famous Christian athletes
- Personal evaluation questions to help players focus on both their individual and team performance
- Scripture quotations that have inspired real athletes
- Examples from a wide variety of sports, applying the lessons to any team

Learn from Coach Brower how to develop the discipline you will need to succeed both as an athlete and in the rest of life.

“Its lessons don’t just apply to the pursuit of winning trophies, but more importantly assist us through the journey of life.”

—**Gary Kirsten**, 2011 Cricket World Cup Winner as Coach of India

“Coaches, athletes, and teams at every level need this practical guide to . . . [help] them grow and develop relationship bonds, championship attitudes and actions based on biblical principles, and a rock-solid spiritual foundation.”

—**Roy Heintz**, Women’s Basketball Coach, University of Alabama in Huntsville; Former Chaplain of Orlando Magic

“An excellent combination of biblical truth and practical insights on how to maximize your performance on and off the field, developing the deep character issues that will benefit you all the days of your life.”

—**Rod Handley**, Founder and President, Character That Counts



SHAWN BROWER has been named the National Coach of the Year for Boys’ Soccer in 2002 and 2012, and his teams have earned four state championship titles. He is the upper school principal and men’s soccer coach at Jupiter Christian School in Jupiter, Florida, and the author of *We Became Men: The Journey into Manhood*.

COVER DESIGN: CHRISTOPHER TOBIAS
www.tobiasdesign.com

Cover photo courtesy Basketball Alberta

www.prbpbooks.com

PRB
PUBLISHING

YOUTH

ISBN: 978-1-59638-668-6

EAN



9 781596 386686

5 14 99