

Extravagant Passion

The lack of focus that stems from not believing you can achieve great things is a pitfall that stands squarely in the path of even the most talented people in the pursuit of remarkable performance. An individual's passion must be extravagant in order to dedicate themselves to the preparation, self examination, and sacrifice that remarkable performance is born of.

I spent over a year of my life at Bronco training camp in a twelve year NFL career. Those were the most physically, emotionally, and mentally challenging days of my life. Dan Reeves would bring one hundred and ten NFL hopefuls to camp each year and every one of them had the physical tools, the raw talent to make the team. At the end of camp the forty nine man roster would be set, and sixty one physically capable players had been sent home.

NFL clubs have scouting staffs that scour college and pro rosters across the country in search of athletes that have the physical tools to make their teams better. They run exhaustive tests and interviews on prospective draft choices and free agents. I was a twelfth round draft pick, the three hundred and tenth player drafted out of college in 1983. The Broncos sent two different scouts to test me and interview me at the University of Minnesota before the draft. One of the scouts even interviewed my girl friend. Imagine the scrutiny first and second round picks go through. The scouts make sure that each of the players they bring to camp can help the team, but the majority of the players don't play a regular season down before they're fired.

One of the main reasons that talented people fail is that they limit their passion to the short term and the average. If my dream had been to be invited to an NFL training camp my chances of making that team would have been zero. I would have accomplished my dream before camp even started and at the first difficulty in camp I would have folded. Extravagant passion begets perseverance. My passion was to be the best football player that ever played the game. Despite my twelfth round athletic ability, I set off on a relentless pursuit of greatness, and because of that passion I would not settle for average or even good performance. I wasn't trying to make the team; I was determined to be an all pro captain of championship teams and more. That focus shaped and influenced the way I approached preparation. Instead of having a short term goal of not getting hollered at by the coach during practice, I took chances and tried different ways of reacting to plays in an attempt to find what worked best with my skill set for the long run. When game time came I performed remarkably because my style of preparation allowed me to anticipate problems, and gave me options for how to handle them.

Each year at training camp the Broncos would bring in linebackers with much more athletic ability than I had, to compete for my job. I would watch them as plays unfolded in practice and observed how they reacted. Instead of responding to plays the instant they recognized them, they would hesitate and double check in fear that they might make a mistake and get in trouble with the coach. Because they limited themselves in preparation, their performance was limited. They were concerned with the short term instead of believing that they could accomplish great things in the long run.

On the football field, I found that if I took the first step in the right direction before anyone else did, all the angles would be changed in my favor. This approach is not only limited to NFL performance but is true in school, business, relationship, and personal goal achievement. The focus that extravagant passion brings to your preparation allows decisiveness in decision making. My speaking business affords me the opportunity to meet and discuss success principles with many business owners. It's surprising how many of them have told me, in describing the start of their successful business, "This wasn't the plan. I saw a need as an opportunity and responded to it before anyone else did." They had the courage to be decisive and were rewarded with a successful business.

To avoid the pitfall of lack of focus brought on by a lack of passion, I consider my desires whenever I make decisions. Obviously I can't be a great football player as a broken down forty seven year old, but I have other passions in my life. As a speaker I am committed to inspiring long term positive change in teams and individuals. As a husband and father I am committed to providing love and support to my family. As a Christian I am committed to reflecting God's love in my words and actions. If you can articulate your passions in life and consider them when you make decisions, you will avoid this pitfall on the way to remarkable performance.

This article was written at the request of Mark Sanborn for the Sept 2nd kick-off his new book [The Encore Effect: How to Achieve Remarkable Performance in Anything You Do](#)

Former Denver Broncos captain Karl Mecklenburg played in six Pro Bowls and three Super Bowls establishing a track record of remarkable performance. His leadership and success programs inspire long term positive change for corporate, association and collegiate clients. www.karlmecklenburg.com