



Competitive Greatness

The Winning Combination for Sports and Life

3D COACHING 4 SIGNIFICANCE



Competitive Greatness (CG) is the ability to be at your best when your best is needed.
– Coach Wooden

Carlette Patterson, CEO and Sports Life Coach Patterson Sports Ventures

On July 27, 2004, I learned the true meaning of competitive greatness. It was early in the morning and the entire family was home. The older girls were back from college and our youngest daughter, only five at the time, was still sleeping. I woke up to my husband, Steve, lying in bed on his back, going through the motions of shooting a free throw. This was not normal, but nothing about our lives was normal anymore. Just three weeks earlier, Steve had been diagnosed with cancer and told that he was dying. For our family, normal was the simple hope of managing Steve's medication and keeping his pain at bay, so that he could spend time with family and loved ones.

Steve had been a member of three UCLA men's basketball NCAA Championship teams under Coach John Wooden, and the starting center on two of those squads. He was described by Ben Howland, current UCLA coach, as a "mirror image of what UCLA basketball under John Wooden was all about – team play, defense, rebounding, and sharing the basketball."

But what Steve gained from Coach Wooden had much more to do with living life than playing basketball. Steve practiced the building blocks for success, as outlined in Coach Wooden's Pyramid of Success, and transferred those into the game of life. The top block of the Pyramid of Success represented competitive greatness, and it was defined by Coach Wooden as "being at your best when your best is needed." Steve's best was needed in the 1971 NCAA Championship game and he scored 29 points, gathered 8 rebounds and dished out 4 assists in UCLA's 68-62 victory over Villanova.

In 2004, Steve's best was needed again. It had been 33 years since he had practiced basketball with Coach Wooden at UCLA. Yet when his mind was trying to make sense of something that made no sense at all, Steve went back to practicing the fundamentals that he was taught as a young athlete. Year after year, Steve was blessed with someone showing up in his life and coaching him on how to be his best. Some coaches spent years with him, some only moments, but their impact made him the man that he was – a man, that just a day before he died, was still striving to be the best that he could be.

As I opened my eyes on that July 27th morning and saw Steve practicing free throws, I asked him what he was doing. Steve replied that he was warming up for the game.

I told him the game was over. He stopped, looked a bit confused and then with a twinkle in his eyes, asked if we had won. With a smile of great love, I said, "Yes," And then he asked, with that same sparkle, "Did I make the first shot?"

I smiled and responded, "Yes, my Dear, you did and you were great!"

A few moments passed and I could tell he was processing his disconnected feelings. He evidently remembered the cardinal rule of always leaving the practice court after a made shot, because he emphatically asked, "Did I make the last shot?"

By this time I was snuggled up to him, holding him and living in whatever moment he was in. I replied, "Yes, Babe, you made the last shot and we won the game."

Steve died the next day, but the memory of that special moment never fades. I can feel his breath. I can see his smile. And that twinkle in his eyes is one of my favorite memories.

Steve's legacy and lifelong commitment to competitive greatness serves as the foundation for Patterson Sports Ventures and 3D Coaching 4 Significance. Our training programs for coaches are designed to empower them to become the catalyst for uniting players into a single, selfless team that accomplishes competitive greatness both on and off the court. Our training programs for athletes are designed to create unselfish team players who combine mental toughness, perseverance and athletic skill with superior sportsmanship and fair play. These athletes possess an indestructible will to win, optimism, and the courage to act for what is right.

Coaching today's athletes provides each coach with a golden opportunity to leave a legacy and make a profound impact on the lives of their athletes. Striving for competitive greatness is a life mission. It is a journey filled with setbacks, heartaches, and pain. It requires desire, discipline, determination, dedication and diligence to succeed. There is no place better to teach these lessons than on the playing fields of all sports, and there are no better teachers than today's coaches. Thank you for your commitment to being competitive about your pursuit of greatness, not for your purpose but for the purpose of the ones that call you Coach.