

## THE WORLD'S BEST COACH!

Do you realize who your best coach is, or who potentially your best coach can be? What are you thinking at this point? For some reason, this story stands out in my mind: One day, years ago, I was working through a personal training session with my one of my clients. This woman at the time was in her mid-sixties. She was very thin with an athletic build. She was (and still is) extremely healthy, with ideal lipid profiles, blood pressure and every other yard stick I can think of. She looked to be in her 40's at best. And, I must add, all naturally. You get the idea. During this personal training session, she was going on and on about different articles she'd read or books she was going to read regarding health and fitness. I finally stated to her, "Do you know who your best teacher is?" I could tell she thought she'd offended me, so stated, "Rob, I know you're a good trainer. I was just talking about good reading". Finally, I stated, "Not me... YOU! YOU'RE the best teacher!". She needs to be teaching all of us! She looks great and is healthy as a horse. I wanted her secrets! So I told her quite simply... Just do what you've been doing and you'll be just fine.

This is my philosophy in coaching and in my personal training. Some of my clients have reasonable goals and some have unreasonable goals, but I don't concern myself with that. My goal for each person I work with is to put them back better than I found them. When they're done with my service, I want them to say that they're now better off. That's all I can do. Every person is different, as is every runner, which is why I've never subscribed to any set way. I don't believe in that. I call upon my knowledge, but more importantly, my coaching experience with each athlete. And I use this experience to help runners see where they have to go in the future.

Are you ready for a bombshell of advice? Here it is—it's the world's best advice: If something works, stick with it. If something doesn't, fix it. Boy, that takes a rocket scientist, doesn't it? You'd be surprised how many runners forget that simple bit of wisdom. It's a pretty common occurrence in my week to have another runner tell me I should talk to so-and-so runner about his training and really get him squared away (and usually they're talking about a fast runner!). I give them the same answer always, and that is "No way"! I look at what they're doing, and it's working. And when I say working, I mean getting faster and reaching their goals. That's progress. And when you have progress, you don't mess with it. Messing with success is the recipe for failure. I simply would never do that to a runner. It would be a disservice to the runner, myself and my profession to tell a runner to change a working formula just so he/she can do it "my way".

What I do with the people I coach and people I train is strive for success. Because success begets success. I know if a runner is having a string of good races, they will have a great race at their peak race. If it's not getting done, then I know we need to make some changes before we do hit the peak race. Through this, I try to show each runner why they're having success, so they can always call back upon their past experiences and do it again. It's like that famous definition of insanity: Doing something over and over and expecting different results. So logically, if you've been doing something (whatever it is) and getting results, you stick with it for future results, if and until it doesn't work anymore.

It all sounds so obvious, doesn't it? Sure it does. So why do people get away from it? Why do people start new plans and try new things? Why would somebody question what they've done? Not the coach... Themselves? Do they believe in themselves so little that they don't believe in their own past success? I can't answer that, but I can say it takes a champion to stick with success. Don't we see this in other sports? Why do teams change what's working? Here's an example: This year's Indianapolis Colts (I hope you guys/gals follow football!). They were clearly the most dominant team in football all year. They were on a roll that had the undefeated 1972 Miami Dolphins nervous. I believe they won 13 in a row to start the season. But then—**THEY CHANGED!** They locked up their division too early, so they began to rest their starters and play conservatively, so they could be healthy for the Superbowl. Well, guess what? What they got was out of rhythm, and yes they got healthy, but only healthy enough to sit and watch the Superbowl on TV, because they got eliminated in the 2<sup>nd</sup> round. I think if they had to do it over again, they would have played like they played it all year, and that is to keep bringing it until somebody stops them. Hey, it's Superbowl season, so I'll give another Superbowl example. You know the old "PREVENT DEFENSE"? We've all been through this, especially us Dolphin fans. We're watching our favorite team, and they're hammering a team 17-0 going into the latter stages of the fourth quarter. The defense has been playing aggressively all game, and really taking it to the other team by not letting them gain any ground. But then, our favorite team gets really smart! They decided they really want to win this game, so with just a couple minutes left in the game, they change their approach! So our team gets lax and sits back to simply avoid the "big play". Meanwhile, the other team marches down the field at will 20 yards at a time and scores. We know how this ends—they get the ball back and do it again! Brilliant! We're winning, so let's just change our whole defensive strategy so we can win! Only one team wins the Superbowl, and I can guarantee you if they're winning a game, they don't call off the dogs until the clock states 00:00.

To conclude, I've said it before, and I'll say it again. I don't take credit when the runners I coach do well. My role and goal with them is to help them discover what works for them. I use my own expertise and experience, at first, to help them develop their own, and then my goal is to guide them to continue to run on the path that they've already ran. Some runners have a hard time sticking to this (boredom, fear?), but those who can stick to it will continue to build a wealth of knowledge that they can always come back to or pass on to others. Those who don't often spend the rest of their time trying to get back to where they were. It's like going all over the world to get to some place when all you had to do was turn around. To avoid that is the key. Trust your inner coach and don't stray from success.