

DETERMINATION

Nothing in the world can take the place of determination.

Talent will not; nothing is more common than unsuccessful men with talent.

Genius will not; unrewarded genius is almost a proverb.

Education will not; the world is full of educated derelicts.

Persistence and determination alone are omnipotent.

~ Calvin Coolidge 30th President of the United States

As I was reading the above quote, by Coolidge on determination, I found myself drifting back over sixty years ago when I was about ten and thinking about an event that happened to me. It was as vivid as if it just happened yesterday.

I had recently moved crosstown with my family and was new to the neighborhood. The neighborhood boys played baseball nightly and always began with choosing the two teams. Despite being new, my lack of baseball skills were well known, and I was picked last among all the participants. The boy who picked me was named Johnny Hott, another third grader who was one of the neighborhood leaders.

To be picked last by Johnny Hott caused an immense hurt. I made up my mind right then and there that I would never go through the humiliation of being picked last again. The next day I began a daily regime of throwing a baseball against a concrete block wall over and over, hours on end. Also, I hung a baseball on a string, swinging the ball away from me trying to hit it with my bat on the return. I quit only when I could no longer throw the ball or swing the bat.

It worked! I got very good at baseball and ended up playing through high school, earned a college scholarship, played in college and in a semi-pro

league. I was never picked last again! I don't say this to brag, quite the contrary. I have never possessed anything beyond average athletic ability or intelligence. So, how does an average person of average talents produce above average performance?

I owe everything to Johnny Hott, for picking me last and igniting in me a fire of determination that impacted me my entire life. That life lesson taught me to work hard, stay late, and not leave the field until the job was done. Napoleon Bonaparte once said: the truest wisdom is a resolute determination.

If discipline is the spark that ignites the fire of excellent habits, then determination is the long-view commitment to the mission. When everyone else is done for the day, the determined stay for an extra hour working on a skill or studying something new. World class performers aren't always the most naturally talented at their craft. They are, however, the hardest working and most determined to be the best they can be at what they do. They are the ones who will do today what others won't so tomorrow they can do what others can't.

~WGG