

# Extraordinary Achievers, Deliberate practice

Avid reader that I am on all sorts of things, I came across a spectacular few pages in a recently purchased book titled 'QUIET,' by Susan Cain from New York, and the reason for my use of the word spectacular.

Well, read the following excerpts, which I have retyped direct from her pages and if you in the bowls world, more specifically you who wish to be recognized as elite athletes, if these words, these ideas, these examples don't resonate with you (the way they rebounded off the page for me), well, where in hell are you!!!

So to start quoting:

'How do extraordinary achievers get to be so great at what they do?

Anders Ericsson, research psychologist has searched for answers using various fields of human endeavour including sport, music, technology.

In his famous experiment, he and colleagues compared a collection of violinists from an international music academy. Violinists were divided into three groups - the best who would be internationally recognised, those deemed very good and then a third group seen as good and competent performers.

All violinists were asked to keep diaries of their lifestyle especially musical time allocation.

All three groups spent the same amount of weekly time, fifty (50) hours, participating in music related activities. All three groups had similar demands in their normal course of life. But Ericsson found a striking difference among the groups.

That being the best two groups spent most of that 50 hours practising in solitude - 24.3 hours per week, compared to group three who allocated 9.3 hours to solitary practice.

The best group rated practice alone as the most important aspect of their music activity. Elite musicians, even those who perform in groups, describe practice sessions with a chamber, orchestra groups as 'leisure' compared with solo practice, where the real work gets done.

Ericsson and fellow researchers found solitude had similar effects for expert performers in other fields beyond music. Elite athletes in team sports spend unusual amounts of time on solitary skill practice.

What's so magical about solitude?

In many fields according to Ericsson, and his findings, it is only when you are alone that you engage in, what he refers to as a ...**DELIBERATE PRACTICE**; which he has identified as the key to exceptional achievement. When you practice

deliberately you identify the tasks or knowledge that are just out of your reach, strive to upgrade your performance, monitor your progress and revise accordingly.

Practice sessions that fall short of this standard are not only less useful – they're counterproductive. They reinforce existing habits and mechanisms instead of improving them.

**LT comment:** This fits so comfortably with me in coaching elite bowlers - motivate yourself to train independently to acquire the necessary skill to perform at elite level, therein stop giving over precious time to 'play' games, truly a leisure pursuit.

**LT comment:** In team bowls, it is called a team position such as a lead, so we need to be an expert in that role in the specific event, such as world championships.

Deliberate Practice' is best conducted alone for several reasons: It takes time and concentration. Other people can be distracting. It requires an intense motivation, which may often have to be self generated But more importantly, it involves working on the task most important to you, personally, only when you are alone.

If you want to improve what you're doing you have to be the one generating the move. In a group session you're only generating the move a percentage of that time together.

**LT comment:** In this past year (2012) with BCB, how often have you heard or read me state that you are to train with a purpose and an intensity, how apt to be reading this book just pre coming to Canada to have an external source of experts reinforce the approach. It will be hard for anyone to refute the findings and suggest we go any other way to 2014.

**LT comment:** As I am in full agreement, the dot points could have added to your level of discipline and your striving to fulfill your goals. Groups such as our Canadian national squad will have levels of mediocrity surface and that is a difficulty for the bowler aspiring for ultimate success. Unless I as coach jump on that mediocrity as soon as it raises its ugly head. And that assumes it is not me being the cause of the mood of mediocrity. Who keeps me honest - you, the player of character, wanting to strive all the way to success. Always remember you bowlers, you win the medal not me, not the organization.

The story of Stephen Wozniak (Woz) is exemplary. As co founder of Apple the IT giant, with Steve Jobs, his early meetings with various IT people at their Homebrew meetings was the catalyst for him to build the prototype PC introduced by Apple. But the knowledge and work habits that made it possible came from another place entirely.

Woz had deliberately practised engineering ever since he was a kid. Ericsson maintains it takes 10,000 hours of deliberate practice to be deemed an expert.

And Woz had these attributes – a passion; he built his expertise step by step; and, he worked alone.

(Wozniak) acquired a central ability that was to help him throughout his career, patience; which he felt was an underrated attribute.

He learned things gradually, figuring out what worked, what didn't; he learned not to worry so much about the outcome, but concentrate on the step he was on and try to do it as perfectly as he could do it.

**LT comment:** Terry O'Neil delivered in excess of 10,000 bowls in 2011 to work toward a level of bowls expertise. You readers, look at what is on the footer I send you..attitude is all about practicing habits. A passion for what you do makes it habit forming naturally. And coincidentally, if I coach approx. 10 hours weekly all year round this past 20 years , then I am around 10.000 hours of experience, rather than expertise, something I am forever and still striving toward.

**LT comment:** Again in an Arizona camp document, either 2011 or 2012, I urged you as players to aim for perfection (which was mat length delivery outcomes) and in falling short you will end up with excellence.

Pappa is in my (Elbows) squad and wondered if the thrust of the article goes against me being of use as a coach. No, I am a service agent for each of you as elite athletes, I provide skill in assisting you in furthering the tactical and mental skills set. I reinforce the necessary standard that prevails for international success.

But all you bowlers need to be like Pappa. He trains by himself about 6-8 hours weekly and still trains in our squad. His form this past two years is so exemplary as an elite athlete, everyone and many clubs want to have him in their teams.

To Bowls Canada and my Elbows squad, what a story in this book the pages of which I have retyped for our mutual benefit. Soak it up and stand (even) taller.

**Lachlan Tighe Sunday 6/5/2012**

**Attitude: all about practising habits**