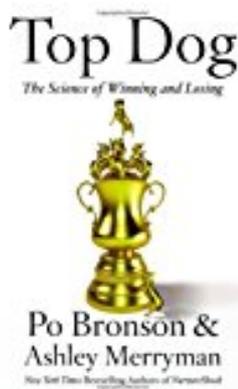


[PDF] Top Dog: The Science Of Winning And Losing

Po Bronson, Ashley Merryman - pdf download free book



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Description:

Q&A with Po Bronson and Ashley Merryman

Q. Are you refuting the concept that it takes ten years of practice to get great at anything?

Po Bronson: Not at all, we feel our book is additive to that story. Nobody is judged on how they practice. They're judged on how they perform when it counts. Practicing is not the same as

competing. You can pitch a million baseballs to your son until he perfects his swing--but wait until he faces a pitcher who wants him to miss. You might have ten years of experience in the advertising industry, but how do you handle the day your biggest client tells you they're leaving for a rival agency?

Ashley Merryman: The truth is, nobody puts in ten years before they start competing. The world doesn't work that way. We are all thrown into competitive situations, long before we've had enough practice. Our results are still judged; our fate is still determined by how we do. To survive these trials, we need more than practice. We need competitive fire.

Q. Did researching this book change how you each compete?

Ashley Merryman: I'm a girl. All my life, I've been told to "play nice." I heard it on the playground and then the grown-up version they say in boardrooms: women are better at coalition-building, not competing. The science says that's wrong. And it's not just about toughening up. Women are prone to weigh risks more carefully than men; when women are confident they have a good chance to succeed, they'll compete. Sometimes this is an asset (in certain domains), but sometimes it's a hindrance. I've learned to recognize when to tap into my gender's knack for risk-analysis, and when to ignore it.

Po Bronson: I didn't let many people know it, but before working on this book, I'd had a full-hip replacement and a few unsuccessful surgeries on my leg. I had many setbacks during rehab; I could barely walk at times. This affected every dimension of my life--it sapped my energy for my writing work and my volunteer projects. I was just losing my edge and my will to fight. Researching the book inspired me; it reminded me who I am. It restored my zeal for attacking big challenges. I hope the book does that for readers, first and foremost: gets them eager to surmount the challenges in their lives.

Q. Everyone says that companies must innovate to remain competitive--but does it work the other way around? Doesn't competition destroy creativity?

Po Bronson: There is a belief that creative genius is fragile and needs to be shielded from competition and comparison. But the research says that's a myth. Leonardo da Vinci loved to have his art put side by side with the work of others for debate over whose was best; Bach, too, liked to compete against other musicians in public concerts. Chemical fire extinguishers, food canning, transcontinental air travel--each began as the prize winner of a competition. Competition doesn't kill creativity: it facilitates creative output by supplying motivational drive.

Ashley Merryman: Whether professional musicians or school children, studies have shown competition fuels creativity and even improves the quality of the work produced. More than that, the skills that make you a great competitor--such as a willingness to push boundaries, trust one's instincts, problem-solve--those are the same skills needed for innovation.

From Bronson and Merryman follow up the best-selling *NurtureShock* (2009) with this intriguing look at the nature of competition. Most of us are taught from an early age that it's good to be competitive, but we're not usually taught how to compete. Sure, we can learn how to play a sport, and we can practice the skills, but practicing is not the same as competing. You can perfect your baseball swing in practice, but how do you react when you're facing a pitcher who wants you to miss? The key element of competition, the authors say, is the ability to compete under pressure in

situations that are not under one's own control. Using plenty of real-world examples, from Olympic athletes to fighter pilots to intelligence operatives, the authors persuasively argue that technical skill is only one part—in many cases, the least important part—of what it takes to come out on top. Expect lots of talk-show play for this one. --David Pitt

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