

What UVA Basketball Can Teach Us About Healthy Living

This is The TD Fitness Podcast with Coach T, episode number 73.

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Hey guys, Coach T here. Welcome back to The TD Fitness Podcast. This is episode number 73. This episode is about belief, patience, and trust. Many of you know that I went to the University of Virginia. That's where I attended my undergraduate schooling. And, if you follow college basketball at all, you also know that UVA, the University of VA, won its first ever NCAA men's college basketball championship this past week. That's the first time ever for UVA. In fact, it's the first time that either UVA or their opponent Texas Tech has even made it to a championship basketball game. So, it was gonna be a historic night either way. Fortunately, things came out on the good end for us UVA fans, but I'll tell you, if you recall, a little over a year ago I recorded episode number 27. That episode was entitled March Madness Dis-Belief.

In that episode, I relayed what happened in last year's NCAA basketball tournament, when UVA, as the number one seed entering the tournament, meaning they were most favored to win out of all of the teams of over 64 teams, UVA was the most favored, they were matched up against one of the least favored teams in playing University of Maryland - Baltimore County, UMBC. A number one seed has never lost to a 16 seed, in this case that UMBC was seeded as. A number one has never lost to a number 16 in the history of the NCAA tournament. You probably know, or maybe you remember how this turned out, and the simple fact that I recorded podcast on it probably gives you some clue, but this was the first time ever that a number one seed, this time UVA, this is a year ago, had lost to a number 16 seed. This was truly historic, and I'm not exaggerating at all. In that podcast, in that episode number 27, I talked about a couple of things. I talked about hope and hopelessness. I said that the story ends with UMBC accomplishing the impossible, which was kind of a self-fulfilling prophecy. The story also ends with UVA experiencing the impossible, which was also a self-fulfilling prophecy.

If you've heard me use this quote or maybe you've heard this quote before, whether you think you can or you can't, you're absolutely right. Henry Ford said that. What that means is if you wanna achieve your goals, it has to start with a belief that you can. You have to visualize it. The opposite is also true. Getting down on yourself, doubting yourself, that works the same way because one small thing can set it off and eventually it can snowball. Just as hope and belief are grounded in the power of the mind, so is despair and disbelief. My point with that was that if you accept an unhealthy lifestyle, if you accept unhealthy habits, then you're destined for poor health. It's that simple.

Fast forward one year and here we are. This is truly a Hollywood type story because a year after that historic defeat, I'm obviously telling this from the UVA point of view, it was a historic defeat, the team and the coach are literally crowned as the best team in college basketball for 2019. How does that happen? As I said in the beginning, this episode is about belief, patience, and trust. These are all things that you need to understand in your healthy living journey. I get it, I'm not trying to purport that sports are everything. I'm not necessarily a sports junkie. I understand that there are things in life that are much more important,

believe me. I don't intend to offend you by saying that this is a big deal that UVA won and try to overshadow any kind of challenges that you may have from the health and fitness standpoint, but I think this is important because we can use it as an example. And I think it's a great example. That's my intent here.

Let's start with those three things, belief, patience, and trust, number one being belief. This is point number one. As I said, UVA literally went from making history in probably the worst possible way. A number one seed had never lost to a 16 seed, let alone the top seeded number one seed. The best team going into the tournament. They literally go from making history in the worst possible way to making history in a pretty profound way. It's not just that they won this year, because let's be honest, someone is going to win every year. But, think about what they had to overcome and how they had to persist on that journey. A year, a season after that crushing defeat. It's easy to succeed when everything is going your way, but it's hard to succeed when things are hard. I've watched a number of the player interviews after the games. The reporter asks questions, and a couple of times I've heard a couple of the players refer to some of the things that Coach Bennett, the UVA coach, his name is Tony Bennett, they say what he tells them is that you have to play one play at a time.

So, when you ask, as I asked, how they did it, how'd they go from such a low to such a high? How did they do that? The answer is that if you win plays, then you can win the game. If you win games, then you can make the tournament. And, when you make the tournament, you have the opportunity to play against the best. When you meet the best, guess what? You go back to winning plays so that you can win the game. It's a building block approach, and that's what Coach Bennett has his players focus on. The point here is, just like your goals are also made up of habits and behaviors, if you increase the number of healthy habits that you practice, then you will become healthier. And if you piece enough of them together, then you can reach your goals no matter how unreasonable they may seem.

It's important to point out here that UVA is not a perfect team by any measure. No team is in that regard. But, they didn't need to be perfect. They just needed to be better than their opponents in 40 minutes of play. That's the length of a basketball game. In basketball, being better in a game means scoring more points, essentially. In the championship game though, they actually weren't better after 40 minutes. They were tied. So, the game went into overtime, and then they were better for the next five minutes. My question to you is what's your better? You're not eating perfectly now. Neither am I. You're not perfect with your exercise. Neither am I. But, you can be a little bit better, and you can build on that. We all can. The point is to be better, not perfect. Each of us can believe that we can do a little bit better, but it's much harder to believe that we can be perfect, because we can't. That's point number one, belief.

Let's talk about patience. When you miss an opportunity that comes around just every so often, like the opportunity to compete for a national championship, you miss that opportunity, it hurts. It hurts for a number of reasons, but probably the biggest reason is that it hurts because as a society we are becoming more and more accustomed to getting things when we want them. Just think about the internet. Whatever you want, you get right now. Whatever you want, you can order and it'll be here the next day. Even the ability to have fast food, which was already pretty fast and pretty convenient. Now, you can have it delivered to your door. Generally speaking, we want what we want and we want it now. It's not easy for us to wait. Patience is not something that comes natural to most of us. That's why quick fix solutions to weight loss and fad diets that promise quick results are so much more popular than the tried and true techniques like healthy habit implementation or aiming for just a pound of weight loss every week or two. But, as you've heard me say many times before, patience is key because it's a more sustainable and long term solution. It's not a short term fix.

For a minute, just put yourself in the shoes of the UVA players a year ago. They just lost in a pretty historic fashion. They probably wanted to prove right away that they were better than that, that they were much better than that team that they presented themselves as in that crushing defeat. Who would want that final impression of their team to be a losing impression? Who would want that out there? Not to even be given the chance to disprove it until over a year later. But, here's the thing to remember, and this is one of the reasons why Tony Bennett, the UVA head coach, is so endeared by just about everyone. One of the reasons is because he has such a great perspective on things. I heard him say in the post-championship game interview that before his team took the court here for the championship game this year, he played for them a song by Tauren Wells. The name of that song is called Hills and Valleys. If you're not familiar with that song, part of the lyrics say in the valley, I will lift my eyes to the one who sees me there. And when I'm standing on the mountain, I didn't get there on my own.

The message here is that life is full of ups and downs. It's full of hills and valleys. UVA was in a pretty low valley over a year ago, when they lost in the first round of the tournament. Now, they're standing on the proverbial mountaintop. The funny thing is that really the only thing that changed was something that we have no control over, and that's time. Time has passed. It's still the same team, more or less. It's still the same group of guys, just at a different time. The take away here is that when you hit the lows and the valleys, don't think that you're incapable. Don't think that you don't have what it takes. Just recognize that there's a time for everything. Some times are better than others and more conducive to your success. Understand that and try to identify those times to give yourself the best chance of succeeding. Some examples of that are times of lower stress or times when you have a support system or an accountability partner. Maybe when you're not traveling as much or maybe when you're not distracted with other things in life. Those are the best times to try to implement positive healthy change in your life. That's patience.

Now let's talk about point number three, which is trust. This is really important because it's related to both belief and patience. It's hard to have belief if you don't trust in your own ability and trust in your support systems. I'll tell you that UVA as a team, their team this year is maybe the strongest team I've ever seen in that regard. They trust each other immensely. Put yourself in the shoes of one of the players. By being trusted, you're more likely to succeed. So, believing in one another actually creates trust. But, they also trust in their own individual abilities. This, in my mind, is one of the primary functions of a good coach. That is to build his or her players up, to help them tap into the inherent ability that he knows they all have. Just like as a health coach, I try to help you identify that ability that I know you have. The ability to do just a little bit better, to be just a little bit better. It's important that you know that and that you trust yourself because at the end of the day only you can make the change you need. So, trust is related to belief.

There's another aspect of trust, and as I said, it relates to patience. It's the trust that what you've been through up to this point has happened for a specific reason, and it's the trust that where you are right now is exactly where you are supposed to be. That doesn't mean that you can't or shouldn't try to change or improve. It just means that right now you're in the perfect spot. Your past experiences and what you've learned have shaped and prepared you for where you want to go. Your current position, your current situation, your current size, your current weight, your current habits, they provide the starting blocks. They provide something for you to leverage going forward.

When UVA lost last year, I heard so many people say that it was a painful loss. You know how Coach Bennett described it? He actually called it a painful gift. It's all about perspective. Everything happens for a reason. I want you to remember that as you seek to improve or to live healthier and as you judge and measure your progress. That's it. Belief, patience, and

trust. All three are required for success of any kind, whether you're talking college basketball or individual health and fitness. I'll wrap up by saying congratulations to my alma mater, to my fellow basketball program alumni, to Coach Bennett and the staff, and to the 2019 NCAA championship team, the Virginia Cavaliers. Go Hoos. You can find links to Tauren Wells's song Hills and Valleys in the show notes. I've also linked to episode number 27. That was my podcast from a year ago on the UVA loss, or the UMBC win, and some perspective on that. As always guys, thanks for listening. I want you all to have a blessed week. I'm Coach T, signing out.