

Art of Learning Assignment #2 (Chapters 4-6)

For all of these assignments it is very important that you do some serious self-reflection and give me honest answers. Please don't answer these questions with what you think I want you to say. I will not hold your answers against you if you admit a weakness. Through these assignments I hope to be able to help you become a better, more confident player and the more truth I have to work with the better.

What was Josh's key ingredient to his success? Is your personality clearly represented in your game? If not, why and how could you change that?

- Josh's key ingredient to success is that fact that he is able to show his personality in his chess game. I think my personality is represented in some aspects in my soccer game. For example, I am very talkative and extroverted off the field, and on the field I feel that I am able to communicate and be loud when talking with my teammates. However, I feel like I could continue to work on that so that my voice is always present on the field.
- One of Josh's key ingredients to success was that his personality reflected in his playing. I do not think my personality is clearly represented in how I play soccer. I am a pretty outgoing person outside of soccer and when I play soccer I do not take many risks because I'm often afraid to make mistakes. I have to be more willing to make mistakes and try to be more creative on the ball, because I think that represents me more as a person.
- His ingredient to success was that his style on the chessboard was a direct expression of his personality. I definitely think my personality is represented in my game as I am generally confident on the ball and I handle tight situations well.
- His style on the chess board was a direct expression of his personality. On the soccer field, I like to take risks and try new things, which is one aspect of my personality.

Josh talked about becoming at peace with the noise surrounding us. What kind of 'noise' (internal and/or external) surrounds you on a daily basis and how can you use it to affect your performance?

- Well, for instance, right now I am surrounded by noisy kids in the library as I am trying to read and fill out these questions. When I really focus on the task at hand, I am able to tune them out. Aside from the literal noise that we'll have from fans/parents at our games, I also will have internal noise going on in my

head that could potentially be harder to tune out. As we had discussed at practice, listening to music and really just getting into the zone before I step on the field will be the key to tuning all of that out.

- Social drama and school work are probably the two biggest distractions I would have. I try to forget about everything except for soccer, during soccer practice or soccer games. Also, when the football team plays music, which isn't always my first choice, I have to learn to use it to my advantage. I work out to music a lot, so I just have to learn use the music as motivation in a way.
- In a game, the noise of the crowd, opponents screaming drop or cover, or your own teammates yelling different commands at me can affect my performance poorly if I let it. However, I can also use noise to motivate me, and I can focus on myself and what I think is the right decision when my teammates are suggesting different ideas on what to do with the ball. I must be open to the noise and understand it will always be there, so I cannot let it frustrate me or be the victim of blame for mistakes.
- I think about academics a lot, especially when I'm not actively doing homework (like when I play soccer). That can certainly be detrimental to my performance. Soccer is a really important part of my day, though, because it is a time when I can work hard for a couple hours and think about something completely different. I just need to make sure that I don't zone out and think about school work while I'm at practice.

What is the Soft Zone?

- The soft zone is when you are intensely focused, but resilient and relaxed.
- Soft zone is the zone where you are able to, "flow with whatever comes, integrating every ripple of life into your creative moment".
- The Soft Zone is when you are quietly, intensely focused, apparently relaxed with a serene look on your face, but inside all the mental juices are turning. "You flow with whatever comes, integrating every ripple of life into your creative movement."
- The soft zone is what sports psychologists call it when a person is intensely focused and ready to react to external changes in a relaxed and orderly manner. Resilience is an important component of the soft zone.

What, in Josh's opinion, is the most critical trait of a world class performer? How strongly or weakly is this trait represented in you?

- Mental resilience, in Josh's opinion, is the most critical trait of a world class performer. I would say that mental resilience is something that I need to improve upon. My resilience isn't weak, but it isn't super strong. Especially as a center back, it'll be imperative that I am able to have strong mental resilience because my team relies on me to be strong in the back and continue to lead them through communication.
- It is critical to be able to "regain presence and clarity of mind after making a serious error". I think I represent this trait mediocrerly. I get down on myself after I make a mistake but I try to use what I just did wrong to improve the next time I'm faced with the same challenge. For example, if I make a bad touch, the next time I get the ball I will try to settle on the ball.
- Mental resilience is arguably the most critical trait of a world-class performer, and it should be nurtured continuously. I think that this is definitely something that I need to work on. I find it difficult to be mentally resilient when lots of things are going wrong. For example, it is difficult to still believe in the team and our play when we are down 3 goals in the first half. I know that this is something I can improve and I would appreciate the help in staying mentally tough and engaged when things go wrong.
- Mental resilience. I need to practice being more emotionally resilient when I play soccer. Sometimes a bad referee or an opponent who says bad words can really throw me off my game.

Give me your thoughts on Chapter 6. I don't want a summary of the chapter, I want to know what this made you think about.

- Chapter 6 made me think about the times that I've made a big mistake in games and then spent the rest of the game beating myself up about it. I now realize that beating myself up only made me play worse and continue in that downward spiral, instead of forgetting about it and just letting myself play without the weight of a mistake on my shoulders.
- At first when he was talking about the woman getting hit by the bike and the car I did not understand how it was going to relate back to chess or performance. Then when he explained, "after making an error, it is so easy to cling to the emotional comfort zone of what was, but there is also that unsettling sense that things have changed for the worse," I understood how they were connected. You can't let the negative emotions of one play, dictate the next one, otherwise you continue on the "downwards spiral". I really connected with and enjoyed the sixth chapter.

- Chapter 6 reminds me of last season because each game was like a downward spiral for the entire team. It was tough to be mentally resilient after mistakes because those mistakes would lead to costly goals that we'd have little opportunity to get back. It was hard to bounce back, and naturally we fed off of the energy of one another and would dwell on the mistakes we made as opposed to remaining positive and focusing on preventing those mistakes from reoccurring.
- I really connected with Waitzkin when he talked about his experiences with distracting noises during high-stress situations. I get distracted and sometimes frustrated when there are noises around me when I am taking a test. I have to train myself to regain my mental focus during those situations and not fixate on the noise or other source of distraction.

Describe a time on the field when things unfolded for you like they did in the bicycle incident, and explain. Knowing what you know now, do you have the tools to fix this kind of issue? If not, then tell me so we can work on giving you those tools.

- As I mentioned in my answer above, I definitely have had times where I've made a mistake and had a hard time bouncing back. The bicycle incident clearly showed how if you are still paying attention to your old mistake, something worse is bound to happen. I now feel like I will be able to come back by knowing what I know now and by using the clapping trick we talked about on the retreat.
- One occasion I fouled a girl right outside of the 18 yard box and it resulted in a goal off a PK. They were our arch rival team and the goal made me completely shut down and my coach had to take me out because I was making bad passes. I was no longer affecting the game in a positive way. Now I know that if I can control my emotions I won't have the same problem, and I intend to work on that throughout the season.
- I remember in the Blanchet game everything was going wrong—my passes were off, my dribbling wasn't working and the timing of my runs was all wrong. I was very discouraged and didn't know what to do. I realized, though, that when everything is going wrong, the only thing I can control is my work ethic. I focused my energy on pressuring, showing off of the ball, and chasing down passes. Slowly but surely but things began to turn around and go my way. I realized that working on what you know you can do and building up is the way to combat "bicycle incidents."
- I can't think of any moment in particular, but I recognize that I am often a victim of the downward spiral. When I make one error, I lose confidence and make more. Soon, the errors compound and I am no longer making a positive contribution on the field. This is where the strong clap and positive statements

can help me. I still need to practice implementing this new system because we just learned it on the retreat.