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The Nature and Nurture of Sports Performance, Blog 3

Alina Nguyen

Virginia Commonwealth University



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THE NATURE AND NURTURE OF SPORTS PERFORMANCE (UNIV 291)

<https://rampages.us/naturenurture/author/nguyenam5/>

Alina Nguyen



Arrogance vs. Confidence – Don't Stray to the Dark Side!

by [Alina Nguyen](#) on September 25, 2015 in [Say Again?](#)

Yesterday, I was able to spend some quality time with my friend while we were watching the Men's Individual Trial Times Races. We paced up and down Franklin Street, and we eventually made it down the 5th and Broad Street: the finish line. All around us were UCI fans, families/friends of the cyclists, and even some of the cyclists themselves! My friend and I were in awe because in a way, they are like celebrities of their sport. We got to talking, and I asked her, "Do you think self-confidence has anything to do with your success in a sport?" The conversation that followed proved to be very interesting!

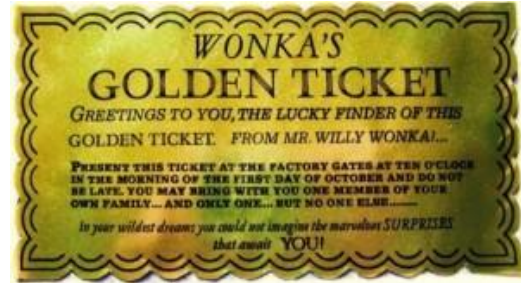


As we got to talking, I realized that we both agreed that confidence is a necessity for success. You have to believe you can accomplish something to accomplish it, right? According to Forbes, [confidence breeds success](#). This article states that confidence is not something you're born with, it's a teachable asset that can lead straight to success! But then I thought to my friend, "Could you be predisposed to having confidence?" What if you were born with incredible genes, like a slender physique for speed or impeccable hand-eye coordination? Despite being able to nurture a person to success, sometimes *what you've been born with is the key to determining your future*.

My friend had a very quick response to this though. He stated that sometimes having too much confidence can actually hinder your success. We both agreed that there was a fine line between confidence (a controlled sense of self-worth) and arrogance. According to Google, the definition of arrogance is, "having or revealing an exaggerated sense of one's own importance or abilities." Going back to Gladwell's moderated panel, coach-ability is something that is very important in developing an

exceptional athlete. If arrogance gets in the way, you are less susceptible to the advice of other people/coaches/teammates that can help you get better as an athlete.

I guess the golden rule is truly to find balance in believing in your skills and being open to others' advice. Confidence and humility seem to be the golden ticket.



But here is a funny link to [15 Most Cocky Athletes in Sports History](#). Maybe one day they will plateau!

Word on the Street: Certain Sports Require Heart, and Some May Require a Little Extra

by [Alina Nguyen](#) on September 22, 2015 in [Word on the Street](#)



I interviewed a relative about the UCI athletes explicitly. "Do you think these athletes were born with the skills to become professional bikers? Or do you think that their environment played a role in their upbringing?"

My answer could be summarized as follows:

Talking about the UCI bikers explicitly, nurture plays a huge role in their success. Of course, you start with the love for the sport and the passion to pursue the sport, but there's a certain point where love and passion stop. My relative stated that biking, especially at an elite level, is very expensive. If you haven't heard, Team Switzerland had one of their team member's bike stolen, and it was retailed at \$10,000! [Read about it here](#). You also have to account for training expenses, equipment, flight expenses, and many more. There's a certain point where the love of the sport stops, and environmental upbringings come into play. The connections you have, the resources that are available to you, they really start to shape the accessibility that you have to the best.

Although I agreed, I also contradicted this statement with the role of sponsors in the sports world. If you truly are an exceptional athlete (which requires a lot of love, passion, and skill), surely you'd find someone to sponsor your sport and allow you to succeed. This prompted me to search how easy it is to get a sponsor: [How to Seek Sponsorships: 12 Steps](#). But this is rather difficult too. I started to lean more with what my relative said about the difficulty of truly being one of a kind and having someone invest what they've earned in you. This made me realize that environment is very important. There are those very rare cases where someone who sings a cover on YouTube gets discovered, or the right scout so happened to have seen the right high school athlete at the right time, but those are *rare*.

There really isn't an "I" in "team..." Or is there?

by [Alina Nguyen](#) on September 21, 2015 in [Another Look](#)

Becoming the best athlete requires a lot of personal training and some genetic predisposition. But, to what extent does training yourself stop and depending on the support of others begin? Diana Nyad, the ultra swimmer who swam from Florida to Cuba, undoubtedly trained herself for years. 15 hour swim practices and multiple attempts to reach her goal are evidence of her personal trials. But at a certain point, she realized that without Bonnie and her boating team, her feat could've been impossible. So the question is, "What is more important? The work that you do yourself to prepare or the dependence of your teammates for support?" Idealistically, having a balance of both will lead to great success. But if I had to choose one, I would bet on myself first. Having the confidence in yourself develops a strong mentality that will enable you to overcome any obstacles that you might face. Even though having external support is helpful, teammates are never going to be the people to actually finish the challenge for you. Self-accountability and mental grit are very important.

I play ultimate frisbee; and I don't think I've ever participated in a sport that required so much team support and trust. Having chemistry on the field is very important. But when I take a step back, I realize that working on yourself really enhances the team in many more ways. Training to get faster, working on the accuracy of throws, and educating yourself on the tricks of the game will take your team farther. It's a personal sport first.

Going along with the Nature vs. Nurture debate, I still strongly believe that nurturing an athlete correctly will do wonders. Like the Tarahumara people, they nurture their bodies with secret antidotes that enable them to run for hours on end. That prompted me to search for some more common and available resources that can help us become more successful as athletes. Here's what I found: [10 Superfoods!](#)



Seems like you need a pre-req for everything!

by [Alina Nguyen](#) on September 14, 2015 in [Initial Impressions](#)

Like applying to professional schools, or learning how to bake a cake, there will always be "necessary pre-requisites" for everything you strive for in life. With professional schools, like medical school, students are required to take certain classes in Biology, Chemistry, Sociology, etc. to ensure a baseline qualification. With baking a cake, there are pre-requisites of a different kind: ingredients for the cake and baking instructions, just to name a few. Similarly, being a professional athlete comes with a long list of "pre-requisites" that obviously starts with being physically fit.



After establishing a general baseline for what is required, that is where room for embellishment comes into play. Like the nature vs. nurture debate, you have your pre-requisites, which is nature, and you have your room for embellishment, which is nurture. Athletes, to be considered competitive, are all born with a certain genetic makeup. Whether that genetic makeup is qualified for basketball, football, or soccer, is completely up to their discretion. After realizing the body that most athletes have to work with, their coaching, or embellishment, comes into account. The embellishment that athletes receive are what push them to excellence.

After reading these articles, watching the panel, and listening to the NPR talk, I realized that most successful professional athletes have the same things in common: a healthy balance of both nature and nurture. Successful athletes are born with the tools they need to prevail, and then they are nurtured to learn how to use their tools.

Alina Nguyen

by [Alina Nguyen](#) on September 4, 2015 in [What brought you here?](#)

Hello! My name is Alina, and this is my last year at VCU! I'm graduating in May! I am a Biology major with minors in Psychology and Chemistry. I'll be taking my MCAT in Spring, and I'll be applying to the Fall 2017 medical school cycle this summer!

I found myself taking this course because I was trying to find a 1 credit course to fulfill my status as a full-time student. Luckily, VCU is offering these classes on the bike race, and I decided that this course, "The Nature and Nurture of Sports Performance," was the most interesting! I really enjoy running, and I finished my first half-marathon this past March. I am currently training to run the Richmond Marathon in November! I also really love ultimate frisbee, and I play for VCU's club team. This course sparked my interest because I've always loved being outdoors and being active. I couldn't imagine doing anything else with my spare time. In contrast, my roommates are pretty active, but their level of activity is not quite as enthusiastic as mine. This prompts the question, "What makes someone active?" I'm hoping that taking this course, I'll be able to understand more about why I love playing sports and if my environment or my DNA has something to do with my innate drive to succeed in the sports that I play.

Twitter: @AlinaUNIV291