

Never give up: Determination and persistence in the face of adversity

SPORT

Fr Vlad Felzmann

Hilary Hinton “Zig” Zigar (1926-2012), an American author, salesman, and motivational speaker said: “I believe success is achieved by ordinary people with extraordinary determination and that you were born to win. But to be a winner, you must plan to win, prepare to win, and expect to win.”

Determination calls for motivation, the drive behind the effort and accomplishments across those PIES – the Physical, Intellectual, Emotional and Spiritual dimensions of our life. Without the determination to improve, all of the other mental factors – confidence, intensity, focus, and emotions – are meaningless. I don’t know about you, dear reader, but consciously I work on developing my virtues because I know that, unconsciously, they shape my life.

Douglas ‘Doug’ Clayton Durdle (born 1972, an English retired professional wrestler), said: “Never give up, never give in, and when the upper hand is ours, may we have the ability to handle the win with the dignity that we absorbed the loss.”

“Persistence can change failure into extraordinary achievement,” said Matt Biondi (born 1965), an American swimmer and former world record-holder in five events, who competed in the Summer Olympic Games in 1984, 1988 and 1992, winning a total of eleven medals.

Abby Wambach (born 1980), a six-time winner of the US Soccer Athlete of the Year award, a regular on the US women’s national soccer team from 2003 to 2015, reminded us: “You must not only have competitiveness but ability, regardless of the circumstance you face, to never quit.”

I am happy to admit that – before taking my morning shower – I use the vices of pride and vanity to fend off temptations to sloth and cowardice from the lower Vlad who whispers “why bother with these 86 (I am 85 years breathing, plus nine months in my mother’s womb) push-ups or full-squats? You deserve a rest – and you’re getting older!”

“Set your goals high, and don’t stop till you get there,” encouraged Vincent Edward ‘Bo’ Jackson, American former professional baseball and football player. He is the only professional athlete in



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history to be named an All-Star in both baseball and American football.

Thomas Charles Lasorda – currently aged 93 – American former Major League Baseball pitcher, coach, and manager, best known for his two decades managing the Los Angeles Dodgers. made it clear that “the difference between the impossible and the possible lies in a person’s determination.”

I keep working on the physical. not only to show I appreciate God’s gift of my body, but also to stay fit, flexible, avoid obesity and – hopefully/prayerfully – do not end up in a wheelchair before its time. How about you, dear reader?

I used to work on my intellect to pass exams and accrue qualifications. Now I keep studying not only to kick dementia down the road but to stay ahead of the

accelerating curve of knowledge all around.

To sustain my spirituality – with its motivational power – I strive to keep an eye on the divine presence in everything and silently discuss with Jesus – Yesh as I call him – what I see and hear. Ever since I passed those first four-score years of life, this prayer-dialogue has replaced many of my needs of ‘saying prayers’.

Billie Jean King (born 1943), won 39 Grand Slam titles: 12 in singles, 16 in women’s doubles, and 11 in mixed doubles. From her own life experiences, she could say that “champions keep playing until they get it right.”

Theodore ‘Ted’ Samuel Williams (1918-2002) was an American professional baseball player and manager who played his entire 19-year Major League Baseball career for the Boston Red Sox from

1939 to 1960. He knew what he has talking about when he said: “Just keep going. Everybody gets better if they keep [at it](#).”

Alexandra ‘Alex’ Morgan Carrasco (born 1989), American professional soccer player who co-captained the United States with Carli Lloyd and Megan Rapinoe from 2018 to 2020, encouraged people to “always work hard, never give up, and fight until the end because it’s never really over until the whistle blows.”

Remember, you are captain of your ship. If you accept that your willpower is inadequate for the task, you might benefit from a personal trainer or Pilates classes – if you can afford them. If not, you might just need the help of a friend, a partner at your gym. To get my engineering degree, I teamed up with Doug. Mutually, we shamed each other into studying together

the hours we had set ourselves. It worked.

Larry Joe Bird (born 1956), American former professional basketball player, coach and executive in the National Basketball Association, widely regarded as one of the greatest basketball players of all time, encouraged us to “push yourself again and again. Don’t give an inch until the final buzzer sounds.”

Muhammad Ali, who needs no introduction, admitted: “I hated every minute of training, but I said, ‘Don’t quit. Suffer now and live the rest of your life as a champion.’”

When at the offertory at Mass, I say: “Fruit of the earth and work of human hands”. Although I accept I cannot change my DNA, I know it is up to me how I shape my life: how I respond whatever life throws at me. When Covid came onto the UK scene, I was determined to put it to good use. ‘Staying at home’ not only ‘saved lives’, it gave me the opportunity to write – and finish – not only ‘my masterpiece’, *Life Squared* – a handbook for life in an accelerating world – but the third volume of my memoirs, *A Journey to Eternity - 3*.

Joseph ‘Broadway Joe’ William Namath (born 1943), quarterback in the American Football League and National Football League during the 1960s and 1970s, posed a good question: “If you aren’t going all the way, why go at all?”

If you have a competitive character, use it as a motivator. Compete – if not against your friends – against yourself. Aim to improve your PB, your Personal Best across those PIES of yours: the physical, intellectual, emotional and spiritual dimensions of your life.

James “Jimmy V” Thomas Anthony Valvano (1946-92), an American college basketball player, coach, and broadcaster – with an excellent coaching career with multiple schools – knew what he was talking about when he said: “Never give up! Failure and rejection are only the first step to succeeding.”

What would you, dear reader, like to have on your grave’s headstone? In my will – though I plan to be cremated and the stone will be small and horizontal – I have asked to have the words “He kept trying” written below my name and dates.

The targets of your determination need to be realistic. I don’t know about you, but – until that stone – I am determined to age as gracefully as is possible. I keep on keeping on, helping God make this world a better place; more like He would like it to be.