

## *What If We Are the Athlete?*

By Matt Tovrog

Have you ever been angry at a superstar athlete because they are disloyal (LeBron James), they take for granted their gifts (Ricky Williams), or they do something incredibly juvenile and risk their entire career (Tiger Woods)? It is almost like they forget that 99% of us “regulars” would give *anything* to play sports for a living and get paid handsomely to boot!

Or what about the athlete that admits he does not put in extra work or give 100% at all times? Or the ones that have an attitude and constantly complain about their coach, the referee, or another teammate?

Here is my point. Athletes speak out, moan, or make mistakes and they immediately become pariahs, especially in today’s 24x7 media. But how different are they from the colleague that complains about co-workers, the peer who cuts corners in their job, the employee who practices questionable ethics to get ahead, or the talented counterpart who is satisfied with the status quo and never goes above the bare minimum?

**What if we, those of us who have jobs, are the “athletes”?** I interview and coach talented individuals who are out of work. I talk to these individuals every day as a recruiter and as a career ministry volunteer. These are hungry and capable professionals who need a break and someone to believe in them. They are grateful for the opportunity to speak with a hiring manager and open to coaching and advice.

To say that those of us with jobs are similar to the iconic athletes I mentioned earlier is beyond a far stretch, I admit, but there are parallels. With unemployment at 10%, those of us with jobs are put on pedestals. The last thing an unemployed person wants to hear is an employed individual complaining about work stress, a frustrating colleague, or not enough compensation.

I often wonder if these athletes ever take a step back and look at the big picture to realize how lucky and blessed they are. But do we, the employed, also suffer from a lack of basic humility and gratefulness?

This Thanksgiving I am thankful to be employed and I am not taking my job for granted. To avoid the traps of a spoiled athlete, I’m committing myself to the following:

- Helping those in need. Everyone can give to a charity or donate money to a worthy cause, but to really have an impact, I would encourage you to visit a soup kitchen or a homeless shelter and lend a hand. Email me and I will share more about my recent overnight experience at a Men’s Homeless Shelter in Atlanta. “If you can’t feed a hundred people, then just feed one.” – Mother Teresa
- Helping the unemployed and underemployed. Check out “[Job Seekers Should Expect More from Us](#)” from Randy Hain, Bell Oaks’ managing partner, on how to do just that!

- To be grateful for what I *do* have, rather than dwelling on what I *don't*. John Wooden once said “things turn out best for people who make the best of the way things turn out.”
- To continually learn, self reflect, and improve myself. This is a challenge and I am one that will gravitate towards the Seinfeld rerun or football game rather than a book, but I am committed to devote time over these holidays to sharpen my mind rather than just relax it.
- To continually thank the people who impact my life.

In our materialistic world, it is far too easy to be frustrated by the items we do not have. This Thanksgiving, I am going to the mountaintop, looking down, and seeing that I have my health, a loving family, and gainful employment. That is three out of three on my “most important items” checklist. And I am truly thankful.

### ***About the Author***

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