

March Madness

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Every year the month of March brings the anticipation of sixty-four college basketball teams all playing for a national championship. The process of determining which team takes home the prestigious honor brings exhilarating highs and devastating lows. What makes this tournament so special is that every year there seems to be one or two teams that make a run at the impossible dream. One question I ask myself is, “what are the key elements that help lesser-talented teams win in a one-game format?” This is an important question because the answer brings some insight for how to maximize overwhelming odds to create advantage.

Beating teams that are superior in talent starts with accepting that the odds are against you when the other team possesses superior talent. Just admitting this allows you to play with a freedom and calm that eludes many that have high expectations and exhibit tentativeness and fear in the face of this pressure. The odds state when playing multiple games the most talented teams should win most of the time, except, when one team uses their mind to create an advantage.

Creating a mental advantage starts with the fight for control. Most teams have worked an entire season perfecting a style of play that maximizes their team strengths. In doing this they seek to control the game by maintaining that style of play. You will see that lower seeded teams in every sport seek to find advantage and win by taking higher seeded teams out of their comfort zone thus taking away control. The motto is... you may win, but not in the way you think. This happens to be a very helpful strategy in that the lower seeded team tries to eliminate the strength of the team they are playing. In Minnesota, the Vikings found a way to win this year and that was by using the run to score points and control the game. When teams began to figure that out they took that away and forced the Vikings to beat them in a different way. The Vikings never found a way to do this.

When coaches are courageous enough to speak the truth to their players and devise a strategy that tries to eliminate the strength of the other team it gives a degree of control to the higher seeded team and a plausible strategy to win in a one-game playoff. In competitive situations it is vitally important to understand your competition so as to devise a strategy that gives you a chance to utilize your strengths to come out on top.

Next time you watch a competitive event where two teams are competing against each other and one appears to be the long shot do not be surprised if the long shot wins by taking the other team out of their comfort zone and finds a way to come out on top. When this happens they were working with The Mental Edge!