

# WHY YOUR EGO CAN KEEP YOU FROM ACHIEVING YOUR DREAMS AND REACHING YOUR GOAL

*By Sam Obitz*

Vision is one of the most underrated traits in sports, as well as in life and business. I do not just mean your eyesight when I speak of vision (although that is hugely important as well) I mean the vision in your mind.

When your ego gets out of control, it works like blinders that stand in the way of seeing what you need to see. Imagine a point guard in basketball that has blinders on which block his peripheral vision. Will he see the court better or worse? Will he make more or less plays? Will he turn the ball over more or less often? The answers to all of the above are obvious.

Blinders inhibit our personal learning and growth. Yet many players/people never reach their true potential because they get in their own way and block their own progress in this way. They are no different than the teenager who “knows all there is to know” already. Unfortunately, the player or person that let’s this happen has to learn the hard way and unlike the teenager, they do not have their whole life in front of them to recover from this avoidable mistake. Sadly, most players and people that get to this point do not recover and have no one but themselves to blame.

One of the exceptions of someone getting to this point and turning it around would be a high level NBA player I used to use as an example in my speeches of someone with a great mindset for top performance. Unfortunately, at the end of the 2011 NBA season I noticed a change in this player that shocked me. Somehow his mindset changed from the example I used him for, of a ‘get better’ oriented mindset, to a ‘look good’ oriented mindset.

When you have a ‘get better’ mindset, it allows you to play with abandon. A ‘look good’ mindset makes you risk averse, which is what I saw in this player’s performances at the end of that season. Most people simply thought the pressure was getting to him, but what I saw was a temporary change in the way he was processing things in his head.

This past season, I noticed that this player got back to his old ‘get better’ mindset, that had served him well for so long, and he had perhaps his best season ever. He deserves a lot of credit for turning things around, as most less driven athletes never recapture what fueled their rise to the top if they lose it for any period of time. It takes a brave person to even acknowledge this type of problem, much less correct it so thoroughly and so fast. Happily, I am now able to use him to illustrate more than one example of the effects of a proper mindset in my speeches now.

One of the causes of this problem is the way our brain naturally works. When an individual begins to achieve success at a high level in any area of their life, they start to receive more attention. As they move forward, they tend to become surrounded by more people who tell them what they want to hear and less people who tell them what they need to hear. This is what I call the ‘Sycophant Trap.’

Once you fall into the ‘sycophant trap,’ it causes your brain to lean heavily, if not rely completely, on the left or logical side of your brain for all decision making. The problem with this is that many of the most important decisions we make everyday are better served by the right or emotional side of our brain. Multiple studies have shown that a majority of decisions made based solely on logic are regretted down the road.

The right or emotional side of our brain is where we get what we refer to as “a feel” or intuition we have about things. Essentially, when we shut off this side of our brain, we lose touch with reality and are blind to the instructive feelings we used to get that helped us get to the top of our field.

Athletes and people that I have worked with who have let their ego get out of control are usually so blinded that when I describe this problem to them, they have no idea I am talking about them personally. In fact, most of them respond by saying “I know people just like that,” proving beyond any doubt that they have completely lost rational sight of themselves. Keeping your ego in check is vital to your progress regardless of what sport or field you are working in, and having the proper mental attitude and tools will help you keep your ego in check.

Are you surrounded by people who feel secure enough to tell you what you need to hear? If not, chances are, you are not performing as well as you could be in your chosen field.