

Homilies on Honour

Advice for young sports stars

Success is something we all strive for. Occasionally we fall victim to our own ignorance or are swayed by the ill-informed opinions of others and lose sight of the true meaning of success. We forget that success has no end-game. We forget that success is not the trophy in the cupboard. Playing a game of sport is a means to an end; a way of striving for those things that matter more than victory on the sports field. Success is more than winning; it is a way of life.

- Dennis Price

Once you embark on the journey of success, nothing is certain except this: you will experience success and you will experience failure. Success and failure can never be separated and if you have chosen to strive for success you have also chosen to experience failure. Open your eyes to the opportunities to succeed that present themselves daily and do not allow obstacles or temporary failure to distract you from purpose.

- Dennis Price

Success is not the absence of failure or disappointment and it is not an outcome. Success is a process – the actions taken towards your goals. Success is simply the adoption of a worthy goal and the concerted actions taken to achieve that goal: nothing more, nothing less. When you climb a mountain, success is reaching a greater height than the day before.

- Dennis Price

Losers give up at the first sight of failure or difficulty but champions press on because they know failure is inevitable but success is always possible.

- Dennis Price

The hard shell of an oyster shields a pearl, and so too must opportunity be discovered in adversity. Opportunity often masquerades as failure but champions seek out the opportunity that is present in every obstacle and rise to the challenge. If you play against the best, strive to win a few points and then strive to win a few more. That is how success is achieved.

- Dennis Price

Success is relative and measured by a unique personal yardstick and must thus be kept in perspective. It is not about the absolute achievement of results, status or material possessions. It is not about being the winner, but it is about being the best you can possibly be and not giving up until you get there. Swimmers always aim for a 'PB' – Personal Best and winning is a bonus. Everyone who achieves a PB is a champion.

- Dennis Price

Successful people never pursue money or fame in the first instance. They know that if money can buy it, it is cheap; and nothing cheap is worth having. But truly important things cannot be bought: Love. Happiness. Health. Respect. Dignity. Faith. If money is your primary motivator for pursuing success, failure is guaranteed. Money and fame are consequences, not goals worthy of a champion. Always keep sight of what is really valuable and resist the lure of empty riches.

- Dennis Price

Champions never chase records and they don't seek to emulate other people. Champions don't measure success by someone else's standards you ultimately compete against yourself. Your PB is the only record that really matters. The spirit of a champion is revealed in the way in which he or she competes for the prize, not because they have won the prize.

- Dennis Price

The harder you try to win, the more elusive victory proves to be. Champions don't strive to win on the sports field. The aim is rather to play well and the result – winning or losing – is only a measure of your progress. Focus on what you can influence and the result takes care of itself.

- Dennis Price

Even the greatest champions don't win all the time, only more often. An ounce of extra talent, an extra drop of sweat or dash of extra passion is usually what makes the difference. Success is measured in fractions. The margin of error at the highest level is minute and still shrinking: a 100th of a second in swimming, one golf shot over four days of play. The person who commits exponentially more effort to achieve a marginal improvement becomes the champion.

- Dennis Price

To beat an opponent does not make you successful, even if makes you a winner. And losing a match simply means that you have lost a match and that does not spell failure. Success means you aspire to more than simply beating an opponent.

- Dennis Price

If success demands anything more than virtuous effort, it has been corrupted.

- Dennis Price

Happiness does not follow success as much as it does a job well done.

- Dennis Price

The journey never culminates in the achievement of a winning result. Success is not a destination. It is the ongoing test of the champion's ability to perform at the highest level of his or her capabilities. Those who conquer their personal limits are champions of equal stature to those with great talent who win fame and fortune. Progress towards your purpose is the purpose of the champion.

- Dennis Price

Winners firstly conquer themselves, then the limits of their sport. Every person who has broken a bad habit or acquired a good one, every person who has overcome a fear or weakness, every person who has improved his or her abilities in a small way has already started the journey of success.

- Dennis Price

A champion plays every point as if it matters. Whether you are leading comfortably or losing badly, the champion plays every single point with the same commitment and effort. That is how champions make a difference - that is how excellence is achieved.

- Dennis Price

Action is the universal language of success. Champions perform - not talk, not promises - just plain and simple action. The only thing that ever prevents you from embarking on your success journey - the only thing - is the decision to do something. To achieve success you have to do it, not talk about it.

- Dennis Price

Sport is firstly a battle of beliefs and then a contest of skills. The person who deserves victory will not always achieve it; but believe - and it will happen.

- Dennis Price

In the long run ... there are no shortcuts. To be successful you have to pay your dues - and your do's; there is simply no other way. Talent is not enough, ambition is not enough. Not even luck will ensure long-lasting success. Doing is the acorn from which the oak of achievement grows.

- Dennis Price

As champions embark on their success journey, they are often tempted to sacrifice their principles – the universal laws of being a champion. But the true champion has values that withstand the corrupting influences of fame and money and champions understand that it is more important to be a better person than a better player. Principles are never sacrificed for a winning result - winning is just not important enough. Champions never cheat and always play the game in the spirit of fairness because it is only then that victory would mean anything.

- Dennis Price

A better player is only the better player, not necessarily the better person. Your status in the eyes of God and fellow human beings are determined by who you are not what you have done. Never let your achievements blind to the worth of other human beings and never let your failures blind you to your own worth.

- Dennis Price

Reputation is won how games are lost. Champions cherish their reputation because fame is fleeting but respect endures.

- Dennis Price

The game will give you greatness if you give it respect.

- Dennis Price

The most valued prize is self-respect, which can only be earned by winning gracefully or losing gracefully. It is harder (in many ways) to maintain your dignity and lose with grace than it is to win. When you have lost, don't diminish your opponent by claiming that you have played poorly. And

when you won, you can easily afford to be generous with praise and allow the loser to accept defeat at the hands of a winner who is also a champion because winning does not mean you have to destroy the opponent's dignity by bragging.

- Dennis Price

To fear failure is to fear living.

- Dennis Price

Failure is inevitable and that it is not always within your control. Besides, today's failure only serves to sweeten tomorrow's victory.

- Dennis Price

Because fear always flees the harsh light of confrontation, the best way of dealing with fear of failure is to face up to it. Fear of failure dies from recognition. The reality is that the consequences of losing a match are not as significant as we occasionally lead ourselves to believe.

- Dennis Price

Success is only appreciated if you have risked failure. And failure is only a possibility when you raise the bar and challenge yourself. If a 100% success rate was all that mattered then you could simply compete against a lesser opponent. But champions always want to stretch themselves to the limit of their capabilities and are prepared to risk failure by doing so.

- Dennis Price

When competing, champions give it everything for then they can lose nothing. Opponents can only take from you what you have failed to give. Failure to give everything is the only kind of failure that prevents the achievement of success.

- Dennis Price

Never fear another person's opinion because that would credit them with more than they deserve. Champions believe in their goals because they have learned that you achieve what you believe. They always set goals because goals govern behaviour and behaviour determines success. Stay focused on the goal and it comes true.

- Dennis Price

Your purpose is your guiding light, and it should never be riches or fame. It is not just a set of goals, but a fundamental purpose that governs every action and every word. Purpose is what differentiates the true champion from mere winners.

- Dennis Price

Success seeks the most believing, not the most deserving. Conquer your doubts and accept that you too have the right to lay claim to the status of champion. Remember, being a champion is a state of mind, a way you chose to live your life.

- Dennis Price

Where the mind goes is what happens. If you act with purpose and the mind believes, the desired consequences usually follow. People who believe in nothing achieve exactly that - nothing. At the heart of success lies a worthy goal. People who believe in their goals, achieve them.

- Dennis Price

Champions simply have bigger goals than losers because winners goal boldly, where losers fear to tread.

- Dennis Price

Success worships at the altar of positive attitude. A positive attitude is an enabler; it helps you to persevere, to cross the pain barrier and it allows you to make a comeback from injury or inevitable defeat. It takes just as much effort to be positive as it does to be negative, yet many people fail to adopt a positive approach. A positive attitude allows you see the humour where others only see despair and it allows you to put wins and losses in its proper perspective.

- Dennis Price

A positive state of mind is not a guarantee of success, it is a prerequisite.

- Dennis Price

To be a champion you must be rigid in conviction and flexible in execution.

- Dennis Price

Convince yourself before you convince others. Conviction follows the understanding that if you want to feel like a winner, simply act like a winner. Stand tall. Speak up. Play confidently. Confidence follows.

- Dennis Price

Be prepared to succeed and you will.

- Dennis Price

Becoming a champion requires good preparation. It is about creating the habits that will ensure lasting success. Take charge of your destiny by preparing and practising or Chance will.

- Dennis Price

Success rarely comes easily and almost certainly never to the unprepared. Practice is not a panacea that fixes everything; it is how you get better at what you do and that is why champions love it. Success is simply the systematic reduction of error through relentless practice.

- Dennis Price

The mathematics of success: (1 hour x 100% effort) > (2 hours x 50% effort).

- Dennis Price

Practice won't buy you a perfect game – just a better game.

- Dennis Price

All points are not equal but champions play them as if they were - they just play the game. Every point – even match point – is an opportunity to excel.

- Dennis Price

Competition is about imperfect people with imperfect games pitting themselves against each other - and they have fun doing it. The high stakes of professional sport can easily obscure the fact that a game is just a game and that you are meant to just play the game.

- Dennis Price

A game is played ... before it is won, no matter how high the stakes. You can never focus on the scoreboard and champions play like a winner even if they risk losing a match.

- Dennis Price

The bat, the ball and the net have no memory; therefore the last point has no connection to the next. Don't think about winning (or losing) - just play the game.

- Dennis Price

Winning is not the same as not losing. Play the game your way.

- Dennis Price

Build the foundation before you build the house: A positive attitude. Eye on the ball. Commitment. Position. Self-belief. Head still. A burning passion. Follow through. Never lose sight of the basics of your sport.

- Dennis Price

Pressure comes from within. Deal with it at the source. Pressure is not caused by the opponents, the officials, inferior equipment or the weather. Like steam that can be harnessed to power a locomotive, pressure can be used in a positive way to drive a specific outcome if you can see it in perspective for what it is.

- Dennis Price

If you allow yourself to feel no pressure you diminish your own effort; but if you allow yourself to feel too much pressure, you exaggerate your own importance.

- Dennis Price

Pressure brings out the best in champions and the worst in losers.

- Dennis Price

Time, heat and pressure forge diamonds from ordinary wood. Time, heat and pressure forges the champion spirit from ordinary people. Defeat is the crucible in which the champion spirit is produced. Find the diamond at your core – that is life's journey.

- Dennis Price

Pressure can be diminished by reducing the perceived importance of the outcome. Nothing is as important as it seems at the time. Maintain perspective. When the pressure is on it takes a real champion to play the easy shot like an easy shot. They can do it because they have the ability to focus completely on the execution and ignore any distraction or pressure. It takes a strong will to do it but it can be learned.

- Dennis Price

Pressure melts the pretensions of pretenders - only true champions shine through. Pressure - ongoing, relentless, mind-numbing, incapacitating pressure is part of the game. To achieve any kind of greatness, you have to trust your game and believe in yourself so deeply that you can withstand that pressure.

- Dennis Price

Only sore losers have uses for excuses.

- Dennis Price

Great success demands a deep and burning passion for the game. Passion is the lifeblood of achievement. It is almost impossible to become an achiever when you have no passion for what you are pursuing. Without passion there is no joy in reaching your goal – and no purpose in trying.

- Dennis Price

When two people of equal talent compete, the one with the most passion invariably wins.

- Dennis Price

A burning passion consumes doubt.

- Dennis Price

It is possible to win a match without passion, but real success is impossible. Passion makes possible the commitment, perseverance and effort that success requires.

- Dennis Price

Choose to lose only against better opponents, never for lack of effort.

- Dennis Price

Victory is bland without the spice of effort, but tastes sweet when you have given it your best your shot.

- Dennis Price

Sport, as is Life, is best played hard. There is very little to be gained from living meekly or playing gently if you are striving for greatness. Success requires that competitors commit everything – absolutely everything. Not everybody is prepared to make such sacrifices because they may have other things that are too important and there is no shame in that. But to become a champion requires undiluted commitment and single-minded focus.

- Dennis Price

Champions rise earlier and stay later. They hit more balls or swim more laps or lift more weights – whatever it takes. Champions never yield to the temptation of taking it easy when the goal demands hard work. They are willing to work hard to achieve their goals because success is the return on sweat equity and champions invest everything they have in their goals.

- Dennis Price

Champions love the sweat smell of success.

- Dennis Price

Commitment cashes the cheque: champions commit to every point even if a match appears won or lost in the eyes of the casual observer; because the match simply has not been won or lost until the final whistle has blown.

- Dennis Price

Champions believe that if the game is not over – despite the score line at any given point in time, victory remains possible. The final whistle merely means running out of time to try again. And when the whistle has gone and you have given it your all, you can walk tall and start preparing for next time, because that is success even if victory proved elusive.

- Dennis Price

The crowd comes to see a battle passionately fought, not a victory – and champions give them what they want.

- Dennis Price

Many competitors have talent and most have skills, but the champion has more commitment and success comes to those who draw deepest from the well of commitment.

- Dennis Price

Talent is the promise upon which tenacity delivers; but talent alone is never sufficient. Back up your talent with total commitment and success is inevitable.

- Dennis Price

The path to success does not require giant leaps of innovation or improvement – small steps make a long journey possible. The champion takes those steps while losers ponder how high the mountain seems.

- Dennis Price

The first law of sport: technique and attitude requires equal measures of follow through.

- Dennis Price

There is no shame in losing against a better player, but when you quit, you lose against yourself. Champions might not always win a match, but they never lose because they never quit. Most people consider their options to be to either quit or try again. Champions consider their two options to be to either try, or try again. Losers quit and champions try again.

- Dennis Price

There are always obstacles on the road of success; so to achieve their goals, champions must overcome setbacks, personal sacrifice or pain. Medals are won on the other side of the pain barrier and the champion is prepared to pay the price.

- Dennis Price

In the formula for success the result is a variable but effort is a constant.

- Dennis Price

Perspective is always lost before dignity.

- Dennis Price

One small win is no giant leap for mankind. It is not a matter of life and death, even if it feels like that at the moment of victory or defeat. The sun always rises tomorrow - despite what you did or did not do in a match.

- Dennis Price

Champions maintain perspective on success because they understand that reality is already history and it cannot be changed; it can only be accepted and learned from. Do your best to control what you can, not what you want.

- Dennis Price

Life does not always reward the deserving. The world that we live in is not always fair. Luck – good and bad – plays a role in our lives. Accidents happen, bad people succeed and the best player loses a match. Get over it and move on.

- Dennis Price

A positive attitude – belief – is like a magnet that attracts fortunate incidents and conversely a negative attitude attracts accidents. Luck is what you think of it.

- Dennis Price

God gives talent, not results.

- Dennis Price

Even a falling leaf is of greater importance than a bad shot, a missed goal or a wrong line call; and to think otherwise is an insult to humanity. There is an entire universe that does not care whether you have scored the goal - or not. Never lose sight of your place in the bigger scheme of things.

- Dennis Price

Victory is temporary and failure is fleeting. Let neither govern your life, for then you would be living an empty life indeed.

- Dennis Price

Many people search for the secret to success in the wrong places. Some may try a new coach, a new training regime or a change of equipment. But the secret to success is easily found - just look in your mirror. Success - and failure - is entirely up to you.

- Dennis Price

Success is simply deciding to do the best you can and then doing the best you can. It is that simple: Decide - then do it. That's all folks.

- Dennis Price