

NOT MAKING IT - THE TRUE CHALLENGE

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One of the biggest gripes some people have when they don't make a team is that it has to do with some political process. They blame lack of success on favoritism or prejudice. So, rather than discussing or evaluating failure through lack of ability or performance, the issue is politics. The problem with that specious argument is that it is made by those players on the bottom of a roster. So if you don't want to leave it to chance, don't let it be close. Make a clear statement in the trial about who you are and what you can do. If you're a good player you are going to make it. If you're marginal, it may be left up to politics. If you want to be assured of making a team, be one of the top three or four players. Try not to be the 12th through 30th best for an 18-player roster, because in the selector's eyes, players below the top 11 hold diminished significance. You may feel you will improve, benefit from the training and contribute to the team, but that is not likely what the selectors are concerned with. The selectors are most interested in the truly elite. That is their main responsibility. The politics of a tryout are well within your control by taking charge of your performance. If you play exceptionally well, if you demonstrate you can help the team win, you will be picked. If politics is a factor in the decision about you, you're avoiding the fact that you need to improve. And as soon as you blame the politics, you're not going to improve. If you're not picked, don't blame the politics, blame yourself, so to speak. As soon as you accept responsibility, the world is your oyster, because now you are not at someone else's mercy, you are in control of your own destiny.

If you make a team, that is great. But if you don't, you get to demonstrate how determined, strong and noble you are. Rather than blame politics, or become devastated when your continual success hits a hurdle, take personal responsibility and use a setback to recover and refocus. You weren't selected, so you can begin to figure out ways to improve. You can resolve to come back next time, and be better. Ask yourself what your weak areas are, and because of this bump in the road, you will give yourself a chance to improve them. Whether you're chosen or not, you're going to win, because there are wonderful victories in both cases. In fact, I think the higher-level individual can triumph greater in not being selected, because the strength to take responsibility and recommit, or the strength to accept that our best was eclipsed by someone else's best, is a more powerful statement of character than just making the team. Through adversity, you can grow more as a person, and a part of the growth can be a decision on who you have decided to become as a player.