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# Great Teams Think of Themselves as Winning Underdogs

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*It's David versus Goliath, and I hope we remember to bring our slingshots.*

—**HERB BROOKS**, prior to the U.S.—Soviet game  
at the 1980 Winter Olympics

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**P**eople remember that during the Olympics, the mask I wore had shamrocks on it—one on the right and one on the left, to the outside of the eye openings. The shamrocks were for luck, and also a nod of pride to my Irish heritage. During the 2010 Vancouver Winter Olympics, the U.S.A. starting goalie, Ryan Miller, played with a mask on which were painted Olympic and patriotic images—and also a shamrock, which I was honored to learn he had placed there as a tribute to me.

I am a mix of Irish and Scottish ancestry, with a bit more of my lineage weighted to the Irish side. My people came from the British Isles. Fundamental to my family history is something that is fundamental to the history of tens of millions in America: Leaving a place—a familiar place, even if at the time it was a place short on opportunity—and traveling to a place about which a lot had been read and talked about, a place that held great promise, yet no guarantees, and about which there was still a lot that was unknown.

You came to the United States because you were persecuted, hungry, and hoping for something better. Many came here because they had to escape something, or get away from someone or something, even the law.

You came with dreams—big dreams. You had big hopes. You believed you could defy the odds, do the seemingly impossible, even the miraculous.

And if you were one of those who got off the boat and were on your way to making a name for yourself, you stepped onto American soil with something to prove; you had a chip on your shoulder. You were a “winning underdog.”

Peggy Noonan, author and newspaper columnist, former speechwriter for President Ronald Reagan, and a chronicler of the American experience, recognizes that people infused with the spirit and identifying themselves as a winning underdog made America great. In one of her *Wall Street Journal* columns she wrote, “Our people came here not only for a new chance, but to disappear, hide out, tend their wounds, and summon the energy, in time, to impress the dopes back home. America has many anthems, but one of them is ‘I’ll show ‘em!’”

“I’ll show ‘em!’ is about being a winning underdog.

Great teams think of themselves as winning underdogs

### Kindle Your Competitive Fire

I am one of eight kids who grew up in a lower-middle-class family in North Easton, which is actually a village within the incorporated town of Easton. North Easton is located about 30 miles south of Boston. I had four older sisters; I was the third oldest of the brothers. My mom, Peg, and my father, Don—the man for whom I famously searched the stands at Lake Placid—were devoted, loving, and very warm people.

My father was a talented athlete (he is a member of the Oliver Ames High School Athletic Hall of Fame, the high school from which he graduated in 1936, and from which I graduated in 1975). He was a Big League prospect in baseball, and had a full athletic scholarship to attend Assumption College, but the very summer he was to head off to college, he seriously injured his hand while working in a factory. He did not go to college.

My father made most of the money coming into our household as the food service director at a local community college; he also worked part-time jobs, and volunteered on the town board of health for close to 30 years, as well as being a youth sports coach. He was busy. Yet not as busy as my mother who, as a homemaker with eight kids and our family’s chief operations officer, worked around the clock.

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Our home was small; it had one bathroom. When I speak to groups, a story that always gets a loud laugh—and if you are part of a big family, you laugh with understanding—is when I tell of how growing up in the Craig family, on those rare occasions when we had a steak dinner, if you had to get up from the table for anything—to answer the phone or go to the bathroom, whatever—then you took that steak dinner with you; because if you didn't take it with you, you could be certain that when you returned to the table, the steak would be gone, if not everything else on your plate as well.

We didn't have a lot, but we had enough. We were also a team. It was understood by us, and in town, that if you touched one Craig then you touched them all.

I was a kid and I was already indoctrinated in the “all for one” and “one for all” quality that enabled a group of guys, unheralded and underestimated, to one day make history in the Adirondacks. And soon I would have something to prove. I had attitude that kindled the fire—and I would become a winning underdog.

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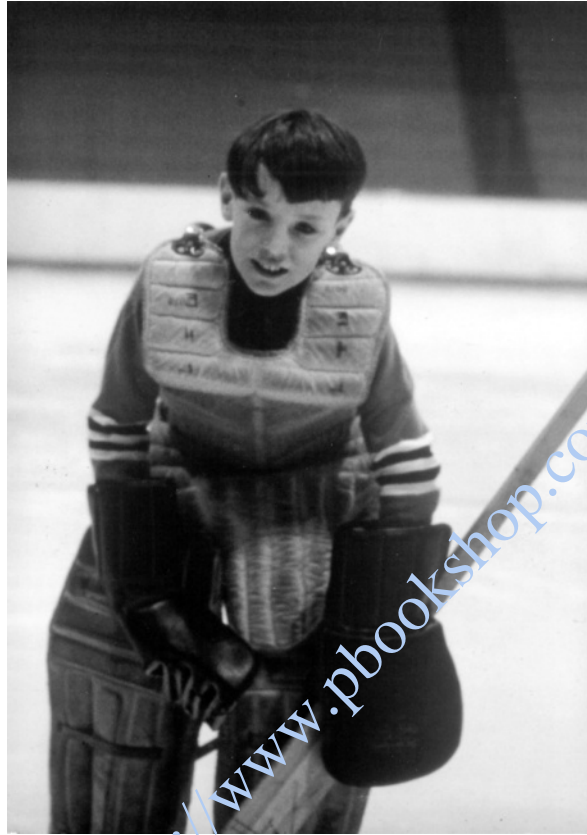
I was in fifth grade. It was 1968. Back then, Easton had three youth sports leagues: Little League, a church basketball league, and an ice hockey league. That was it, which in many ways I think is a good thing. (I am concerned that today we start kids in sports too early, and that they are overscheduled, but I won't go on about that here.)

I was already playing baseball; I was a catcher. I didn't play hoops, but our postman, Phil Thompson, told my parents that he thought hockey would be good for me. Smart guy, that Mr. Thompson.

I started out with borrowed skates; they were a little big so I put cardboard in the toes. I played goalie, because I liked the equipment; it looked similar to a baseball catcher's equipment. Plus, it seemed that the goalie didn't need to know the rules. No rules for the goalie—just stop the puck.

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The young goalie – the dream begins. (Notice the baseball catcher's chest protector that Jim is wearing. Not long after this photo was taken, Jim's parents bought Jim a hockey goalie chest protector. "Money was tight," recalls Jim, "but my mom and dad said that I shouldn't be out there without the right equipment. So they bought me that goalie chest protector.")

*Credit: Jim Craig*

I was good—I could skate and had solid reflexes. I was also small—smaller than almost all the other kids in the league. Being small, though, didn't prevent me from dreaming big. I wanted to play in the Olympic Games. One time, in seventh grade, the teacher saw me not paying attention to her lecture; instead I was busy writing

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on paper. I was near the back of the class, and the teacher walked toward me and called out, "Jimmy, what are you doing?" I looked up and said, "I am practicing my autograph. I am going to be in the Olympics some day and people are going to want my autograph."

I was all of 12 years old, and already I had attitude and was kindling my competitive fire.

When I was still in junior high, almost every Sunday morning throughout the year, I used to travel into Boston with the older guys who were already playing hockey for Oliver Ames High School, the school I would soon attend. We traveled the 25 miles to Boston Arena (now Matthews Arena) so that we could play against the best high school and amateur talent around.

A car would pull into my family's driveway at about five A.M. Among the players I drove in to the city with were Ricky Bodio, Ray Daly, Peter Deibel, and Billy Condon. They were juniors and seniors at Oliver Ames, and since they were talented and tough athletes, I looked up to them figuratively; and, since at the time I was 5'1" and 120 lbs., I also looked up to them literally.

I would lug out my equipment, join the guys, and, all packed together, we were on our way. We got on the ice around 6 A.M. and put in a good five hours; sometimes we would play until noon. It was a sacrifice and tiring—but I also loved it. I would stay in net sometimes for four hours straight and take the best that the older players could dish out. I knew they were determined to break this little squirt in net, but I was just as determined not to fold. I wanted to prove to the older guys that I could hack the pressure and, if I was already in high school, that I could back them up. Just as importantly, I wanted to prove to myself that I could take it.

The practice paid off. I started for the varsity when I was a freshman. Yet I remained small. As a sophomore, come hockey time, I was all of 5'5" and 120 lbs. Yet even a few years prior to becoming a Boston University Terrier, I was already a terrier in practice in games; that is, I played with emotion, confidence, and attitude that were outsized for my frame. After practice ended, I stayed on the

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ice and had our assistant coach, Gerry Linehan, fire shot after shot at me.

I grew. My senior year, when I stood in net for the Oliver Ames Tigers, I was 5'10", 170 lbs. We lost only one game during the regular season, and we made it a couple games into the state tournament before losing to the eventual state champion. I made a couple of local newspaper all-scholastic teams, but I didn't make the big city newspaper teams at the *Boston Globe* and *Boston Herald*. Not one Division I college was interested in offering me a scholarship. I knew I could play at that level, but it seemed, with the exception of my mom and dad, no one else did.

As well, I had next to no concept of what was involved in applying for college. I had worked hard in the classroom in high school and done all right but not great in the grades department. I didn't do well on my SATs. I am not even sure if I took any Achievement Tests.

I wanted to go to college, but it seemed I wasn't prepared.

I mean, the application essays were daunting. And there were application fees. Just swinging the money to apply to college was going to be difficult.

But I got the break in the person of Mike Addesa, the hockey coach at the College of the Holy Cross, an independent NCAA Division I program. Mike had been a high school hockey referee who worked many games in which I played. He was impressed by what he saw, and he told me he thought I could play major college hockey. He helped with the process of applying to Holy Cross, and he told me that, provided I was accepted—which he said was just about guaranteed—I would receive a full athletic scholarship.

Things looked good. That was until I didn't get accepted at Holy Cross.

What now? I consulted and talked with my family and friends, and we felt that an excellent option would be to attend Norwich Academy, a military college in Vermont that had a Division III hockey program.

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I applied and was accepted to Norwich. I arrived for the fall semester. I stayed at Norwich Academy for about two weeks. This wasn't a good fit. What confirmed that this wasn't the place for me was when an upperclassman came into my room, and in the mode of indoctrinating me took a framed photo of my mother, who was battling cancer, and threw it on the ground. I went at him—and I guess I wasn't supposed to. I said enough of this and headed back to Easton.

What now?

I needed to stay in school—and to continue studying and to continue playing hockey.

I enrolled at Massasoit Community College, in Brockton, the gritty city that borders Easton and is better known as being at one time the world's biggest manufacturer of shoes and the hometown of undefeated heavyweight world boxing champion Rocky Marciano, and the adopted hometown of world middleweight boxing champion Marvin Hagler.

Massasoit had a hockey team, even if not many people knew about it. And, as I started classes at Massasoit, good fortune struck in the person of Neil Higgins, who had played goalie at Boston College in the early 1970s. Neil recognized that I could play Division I, and he told me to consider Massasoit Community College to be my tryout for the big time. I could go through the motions at Massasoit, he said, and mope and play with a piss-poor attitude, or I could approach the opportunity as a proving point.

Well, I was a winning underdog. I used this to my advantage. Being overlooked and underappreciated kindled the flames. The Massasoit Warriors made it to the national community college championship game. I made 60 saves in that game, and we won 1-0. Word had been getting around about my play at Massasoit, and my performance in the championship game certified the talk that I could compete at the Division I level. Within a couple weeks, Boston University coach Jack Parker was at my family's home offering me a full scholarship.

Who would have thought that Massasoit Community College would be my opportunity to play big time college hockey?

You never know when that opportunity will present itself. When it does, you need to be ready and to commit and to go for it.

But as for that scholarship to BU—there was a complication.

“I already offered the scholarship to someone else,” Coach Parker told me and my mom and dad.

*What?*

“But this kid has not made a decision,” he continued. “And if he chooses to go someplace else, then the scholarship is yours.”

“Well, who did you offer the scholarship to?” I asked.

“Mark Holden.”

Holden was another Boston area goalie.

“Well, I’ve seen Holden play,” I said. “And he is very good, but he is not as good as me.”

Mark Holden ended up going to Brown University, but that decision was made only partly because of the opportunity of an Ivy League education. Another reason was that he thought he had a better chance of playing at Brown than he did at BU.

I got that scholarship.

When I showed up at BU, I wasn’t readily embraced by the players on the team. Who could blame them? They were all recruited from strong hockey programs. I was recruited from Massasoit Community College, hardly a hockey hotbed.

I hadn’t proven myself.

I was confident, though, that my chance was coming—and soon. And I would be ready.

### Herb Brooks—A Winning Underdog for the Ages

There would have been no “Miracle on Ice” if Herb Brooks had not been cut from the 1960 U.S. Olympic hockey team. But he got cut, and in about the most painful way possible.

Only a couple weeks remained until the opening ceremonies of the Squaw Valley games, and Herb Brooks, a three-year starter for the Minnesota Golden Gophers, was on the team. He was even in

the official team photo. Then U.S. coach Jack Riley received word from former Harvard University standout Bill Cleary that he was interested in playing for the U.S. squad—but only if his younger brother, Bob, who also starred at Harvard, was brought on as well. Riley, 37, who had grown up outside of Boston and had played hockey at Dartmouth College and was on the 1948 U.S. Olympic team, had wanted both the Cleary brothers to try out for the team, and if he could only have one of the brothers it would be Bill. But the Clearys were running an insurance business in Boston, and they couldn't leave the business for the two-month training camp and pre-Olympic game schedule. Two weeks, though, they could do. Riley felt he needed Bill Cleary to be competitive at Squaw Valley, and if that meant agreeing to the Bill and Bob package deal, then that is what he would do.

Room needed to be made for the Cleary brothers—and two players needed to be cut. One of those players was Bob Dupuis, a former All American at Boston University. The other player was Herb Brooks.

Herb didn't take it well—no surprise there. He got on the phone to his father, Herb Sr., who was back in Minnesota, and who had been critical of his son putting off getting a paying job so that he could chase Olympic glory, and started blabbering about how he had received a royal screwing.

"You aren't going to believe this dad; this is an East-West thing, and Riley had it in for me," Herb Jr. complained. "He needed some more Boston guys on this team, and I was the fall guy. This is so unfair; this is just out-and-out wrong . . ."

The elder Brooks, a stern, no-nonsense insurance salesman, allowed his son to rant for a minute, and then said, "Are you done?"

Herb Jr. had no reply. His father, however, wasn't through talking.

"Because if you are finished explaining about how you got railroaded," continued Herb Sr., "then you take your playbook and you go see Coach Riley, and you shake his hand and thank him for giving you the chance. Next you shake the hand of every one of your former teammates and you wish them the best, and you tell them you hope

for them that they win the gold. And then you get your butt on the next plane home to Minnesota.”

It seems Herb Jr. should have sought a sympathetic ear elsewhere.

Herb Brooks made it back to Minnesota. Bill and Bob Cleary made it onto a U.S. team that entered the Olympics every bit like the underdog that would be the U.S. team that showed up 20 years later at Lake Placid.

Both Clearys were stellar at Squaw Valley, with Bill leading the team in scoring, and Bob third in scoring. The Americans had huge upsets over Canada and the Soviet Union on their way to a 6-0-0 record, and they qualified for the gold medal game against Czechoslovakia, also heavily favored against the Yanks.

It was February 27. Back at the Brooks family home in St. Paul, Herb Jr. and Sr. watched together the black and white telecast of the United States–Czechoslovakia game. The U.S. was behind, 4-3, after two periods. In the third period, the Americans scored six unanswered goals and won, 9-4.

My future coach watched the jubilation; he watched his former teammates celebrating, along with Bill and Bob Cleary. And still not a word of sympathy from his father. Herb Sr. did have words for his son, though. He turned to him and said, “Well, Herb, I guess they cut the right guy.”

Those words kindled a competitive fire. They were akin to taking a flamethrower to a swimming pool full of gasoline.

### Commit to Proving the Doubters Wrong

*Well, Herb, I guess they cut the right guy. Ouch!*

Herb Brooks always had a fiery spirit, and an outsized desire to compete and prove himself. It was February 1960 and the events of that month were the catalyst and the beginning, of something much more, much bigger. If Herb Brooks did not live that February 1960, there would not have been a U.S. hockey team standing atop the victory podium at Lake Placid in 1980.

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Herb made the 1964 and 1968 U.S. Olympic teams, and he was a co-captain of each. Neither of those teams won medals. Herb realized an Olympic dream, but he also came close to being part of one of the greatest episodes not only in U.S. Olympic history, but in U.S. sports history. Coming so close and not making it would be the fuel and energy that supported his obsession to achieve something great, something epic, in hockey. Now, I am not so sure that in February 1960, or even in the few years following, that that achievement was specifically defined as coaching just the right team as it played optimum hockey on the world stage against the most talented competition yet assembled. Yet there is no doubt that that is what it became.

After his playing days, Herb became a coach, a great coach. He didn't need to have coached the 1980 U.S. team to achieve that distinction. At the helm of the University of Minnesota's Golden Gophers, he won three NCAA championships, in 1974, 1976, and 1979. Herb studied everyone and everything that had to do with hockey. He drove his players hard. He pulled greatness out of individuals, while never allowing for "one man" shows or prima donnas. In this way, he built a great program and great teams.

Herb was a winning underdog. Those athletes who played for him exemplified that trait, and so did his teams. Being a winning underdog and having something to prove is a powerful motivator; it focuses energy and the mind wonderfully.

For every member of the 1980 U.S. Olympic hockey team, every time we stepped on to the ice at Lake Placid to compete, we were winning underdogs committed to proving the doubters wrong.

### Victor, Not Victim—Results, Not Reasons

Neil Higgins advised me not to mope. Herb Brooks moped when he got cut, and his father quickly and coldly let him know that there was no future in that.

When you are moping you are playing the victim, not the victor. You are looking for reasons to fail and are not delivering results.

Get ticked off. Get angry. Get focused. Get organized. Get smarter. Play the victor, not the victim. Results, not reasons.

Turn defeat and setback into positive energy, into the fuel and fire that nurtures success.

It's interesting—I am a big reader and lover of books. I also like to write. I write almost every day in a journal, and I handwrite at least 10 notes a week that I mail to people. I wrote the Foreword for the *New York Times* bestseller, *The Boys of Winter: The Untold Story of a Coach, a Dream, and the 1980 U.S. Olympic Hockey Team*, by Wayne Coffey; and now I am a co-author of the book you are now reading.

I bring all this up because among the best examples of people who are winning underdogs, who have something to prove, who stay after it, and who go on to achieve greatness, are writers.

History's most famous and accomplished writers used the rejection letters they received as a sort of motivation, even putting those letters in places where they were sure to confront them.

Jack London received more than 600 rejection letters before selling his first story; he framed and displayed some of the letters. Stephen King accumulated a large pile of rejection letters; he used to impale them on a spike to a wall in his home. F. Scott Fitzgerald wallpapered his bedroom with rejection letters. And on the topic of motivation, it seems that a young lady named Zelda Sayre, with whom F. Scott Fitzgerald was in big-time love, and to whom he proposed, said that, yes, she would marry him, but not before he published a novel.

Motivational speaker and bestselling author Joe Girard understands that rejection is just one step on the way to proving yourself. Mr. Girard says, "Every no gets you closer to yes."

*Every no gets you closer to yes.*

I like that.



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When you are a winning underdog, you have something to prove and you prove it; you don't look for a way not to do something. You do it.



*With best wishes  
to Jim Craig*

*Jimmy Carter*

President Jimmy Carter, Jim, and First Lady Rosalynn Carter in the Oval Office, February 25, 1980.

Getting to the top of the podium at Lake Placid required the coaches and the players to repeatedly confront whether we were going to act like victims or victors. For most of us, that choice, and whether we had the fortitude to make the tough choice, resulted from upbringing and experiences that started early, when we were

just kids. It started long before we all got together for the first time at the Olympic Training Center in Colorado Springs in the summer of 1979.

In recruiting and assembling the players for the 1980 team, Herb Brooks and assistant coach Craig Patrick evaluated and judged beyond the physical—beyond speed, passing, dexterity, strength, intelligence, and the capacity to build stamina (there is more about this in the “Picking the Right Players” chapter).

If you look at the makeup of the team, and go into the formative years of each player and each coach, you will discover a history rich with caring parents and supportive mentors. You will find virtues and strong community. What you won't find is a lot of money, luxury, indulgence, or downtime.

This upbringing was just the right clay and raw material from which could be molded and constructed a team that would work and sacrifice enough, would be tough enough, would have enough confidence, would not collapse under setback and defeat, which would have just enough respect for authority, and be just open and receptive enough to coaching and mentoring (while never sacrificing our edge and spirit), to take on the world and set a standard for overachievement.

When our coaches searched for the people who could win the unwinnable and beat the unbeatable, they found us. They found winning underdogs.

### Expect Adversity—It Never Gets Easier

At Boston University, a few games into my sophomore year, I earned a starting position, alternating in the net with Brian Durocher. I went 20-5-1 that season, and we made it to the NCAA semifinals, losing to the University of Michigan.

It was a breakout season for me, and I was on the path to achieving my dreams. But then came more adversity—and this adversity hurt in a new and terrible way. My mother became seriously ill with cancer.

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For a stretch of several weeks, she was an inpatient at Massachusetts General Hospital. Since it is located in Boston, I could travel to it on the trolley every day after practice to spend time with my mom. Almost every family gets hit with cancer, and it can be scary and very painful for both the patient and the people who love the patient. My mother was suffering, and I hurt. My mom knew that things didn't look good, and she knew she might not be around, in person that is, to see my biggest triumphs, in sport and in life. She did, though, want to be part of them, and she made me promise that if I ever had a chance to represent my country in hockey that I would do it, no matter the sacrifice. My mother also made me promise that I would graduate from college. I made those promises to her.

It was the following September and our entire family was down at a small cottage we owned on the south coast of Massachusetts, in a town called Mattapoisett, a few days prior to classes starting for my junior year. My mother was with us, spending her final days. Cancer had destroyed her; she weighed 46 lbs. I was swimming with my younger brothers at a beach about 300 yards from our cottage. I dove into the water, and as I descended into the cold and blackness, I was taken with a feeling of calm and understanding that my mom was gone; her suffering had been relieved. I got out of the water and told my brothers we were going back to the cottage. We had walked only a few steps, and I saw my older brother Don hurrying toward us. I knew what he was about to say.

I tell this story in my speeches, and a reason I share this with the audiences is that I feel that when someone who loves you dies, the spirit and energy of that person is passed to those people he or she loved. Perhaps that sounds very New Age to you, but I believe it. I also believe it is up to those who remain here on earth to take a hold of that spirit and energy and to do something positive and important with it. Making this commitment helps you to win no matter how much of an underdog you are—and no matter what you have to prove.

### Accept the Challenge—Embrace the Opportunity

So I took that spirit and energy, and I got to work. In my junior year, I went 16-0-0 in goal, a record that included Boston University winning the ECAC and NCAA tournaments. In my senior year, I made All-American, and my play attracted the attention of Herb Brooks, who was coaching the U.S. squad that spring in the World Championships in Moscow.

He asked me if I wanted to be a part of the team, and I jumped at that chance. This would give me a good reason to skip class (with the understanding I would quickly go back and earn my degree), I would have a passport for the first time, and I could do some sightseeing.

But here's the thing—I wasn't heading overseas with something to prove. I felt at this time that I had kind of proven it. Sure, I had a dream to play in the Olympics, but now that Olympic-level competition was on my radar screen and directly ahead, well, I might have been lacking some enthusiasm. So, I was just going to travel, meet some foreign girls, sit on the bench with a towel around my neck (the posture of any good backup goalie), cheer on my teammates, and have one heck of a time. I thought that Herb Brooks just needed me to fill out the roster.

Herb was actually thinking bigger picture for me. He had not yet been named as the coach of the 1980 Olympic hockey team, but he was in the running, and he was figuring in his head who his goalie would be for Lake Placid—and I was on his short list of three. Many top coaches and experts, though, felt that for the collegiate season that had just ended there were four or five better college goalies than Jim Craig. But Herb liked my confidence, my swagger. He understood that it was tough to overestimate the value of those traits when you are playing on the world stage. Little did Herb know that when I got on the plane to fly to the Soviet Union, I was a bit deficient in confidence and swagger.

In Moscow, the U.S. team lost its first game of the preliminary round to Canada, 6-3. It wasn't my fault; I didn't play. Up next was

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Finland, and it was 1-1, late in the third period, and Herb Brooks looked down at the end of the bench—*toward where I was sitting*. I saw him looking for me—and I ducked. No, no, I wasn't on this trip to play. I was a passenger. I wanted to have no responsibility, and just have fun. Herb decided not to put me in. It was still 1-1 when the game ended.

We weren't going on to the medal round, but in two days we were playing the tournament's top seed, the Czechs, who were very much in contention for the gold medal and, because of the way the tournament points were tabulated to determine who won gold, silver, and bronze, the Czechs had every incentive to put a big whooping on the United States. This fact created all sorts of anxiety for me. You see, I was fairly certain that since we weren't going on to the medal round, and that our game against Czechoslovakia was our final game of the tournament, that Herb Brooks was going to start me in that game. I needed to dodge this bullet.

When the final horn sounded from the Finn game, I got to the locker room as fast as I could. I quickly threw off my uniform and got into my street clothes and started for the exit . . . and then . . . "Hey Jimmy."

*Oh no.*

It was Craig Patrick, our player coach, and the person whom Herb had picked to deliver me a message. I turned around to see Craig hurrying toward me.

"What's up?" I asked, nervously.

Craig had something of a mischievous smile, and he said, "Jimmy, I got some good news, and some bad news for you."

Okay, I decided to play along, and I asked first for the bad news, even if I was fairly certain I already knew what it was.

"Well, Jimmy, you are going to start against the Czechs. And we are going to get killed."

Yeah, that *was* bad news. *And the good news?*

Craig still had that smile; he said, "But you are going to learn a lot."

Oh, man I hadn't signed on for *this*.

I hadn't signed up to be the answer to any number of trivia questions, all of which were a variant of "In international ice hockey competition, which goalie let in the most goals in . . ." and here, take your pick, "the first minute of the game?" . . . "one period?" . . . "two periods?" . . . "a game?"

I had to get out of this. Full of doubt and anxiety, I went back to the hotel and lay down on the bed and stared at the ceiling. I thought about all sorts of ways to render myself unavailable for the game. One option that was particularly attractive was to break my ankle. Sure, there would be physical pain, but it would save me from incalculable psychological injury.

After a while, though, I calmed and took stock of things. I needed to take on and embrace the challenge. I wanted to play in the Olympics. How the heck could I ever play in the Olympics if I couldn't summon the fortitude to play in the World Championships? I resolved that I was going to be in net against Czechoslovakia.

I didn't sleep well that night, but practice the next day was a great way to expend nervous energy. The night prior to the game, I tossed and turned. But on Tuesday, April 17, I made it to the Palace of Sports at the Central Lenin Stadium. It was show time. I remember those warm-ups, skating the ice. I was so nervous and my mouth and throat were so dry that I couldn't even swallow. Seriously, I tried to take a drink of water, and it wouldn't go down.

The game started, and I was still a bit frozen with fear; I wasn't moving that well. After maybe 30 seconds into the game, I faced the first shot. I did nothing to prevent it, and I had not reacted to the puck when it came. I am eternally grateful that the puck hit me, because if it hadn't, I think my competitive hockey career would have ended that day. But the puck did hit me; it came on a slap shot, and I was literally slapped out of my "deer in the headlights" stupor. I got down to doing what I worked so hard to do for so many years.

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I backed my teammates up; I played my game. My confidence returned—and so did my swagger. I made 59 saves, and we raised a whole lot of eyebrows when we tied the Czechs, 2-2.

That was the game in which Herb Brooks decided that if he coached the U.S. team at Lake Placid then I would be his goaltender.

### Beyond the Ice—Other Coaches and Mentors

Sentinel Investments, a company for which I have delivered three keynote addresses, competes with a winning underdog attitude. It is an attitude, a mindset, which underpins its success. Established in 1934, and based in Montpelier, Vermont, Sentinel is an award winning mutual funds firm. It employs approximately 130 people in five offices across the United States.

Midway through 2010, Sentinel had more than \$18 billion under management. That is a lot of money, but even that figure wouldn't put it in the top 100 companies in terms of assets under management. Consider that industry leaders in that category, such as Vanguard Group, Fidelity, and American Funds, each manage more than \$1 trillion (with a trillion equal to 1000 billions). You aren't a top-10 player unless you are managing in the neighborhood of \$150 billion.

But Sentinel Investments understands and is fully confident in the value it offers investors. Indeed, its products have long been a choice of investors and investment managers and advisers looking for funds that outperform, in a down market, the bigger and better known funds. Its products are known as "value funds"—not high risk or having a big potential for fast and stratospheric growth, but more conservative investments, with a consistent track record of stability and positive returns.

Sentinel Investments has its place—an important and essential place—and the company wants everyone to know it. One of its primary marketing messages is "Mere size and 'being all things to all people' do not concern us. We measure success by our ability

to withstand the tests of time, as a provider of core ‘back to basics’ strategies.”

When a manager or adviser is planning and putting together an investment strategy and portfolio for a client—when he is figuring on the best way to protect and grow the client’s money—Sentinel wants its funds to be in the mix. Jim Cronin, president of Sentinel Investments, even embraces the “little guy” identity of the company, and leverages that identity to position it on the radar screen of the organizations entrusted to invest and manage the hard-earned dollars of Americans. When presenting at a meeting, he is fond of saying, with a coy smile, that “Sentinel Investments *is* the largest money management firm in Vermont.”

Two of the keynotes I delivered for Sentinel were a few weeks apart, in May 2009, in Stamford, Connecticut. The speeches were a component of a Sentinel Investments effort to capitalize on the impending Morgan Stanley purchase of Smith Barney, the money management division of Citigroup, an epic merger that would create the firm Morgan Stanley Smith Barney. The merger was finalized in June 2009, with Morgan Stanley owning 51 percent and controlling interest in the new concern.

As the two firms prepared to ink the deal, the top producers from Morgan Stanley and Smith Barney were, of course, offered strong financial incentives to get on board with the venture. As well, these all-star managers and advisers were brought in to meetings so that they could be pitched and recruited in a more targeted and personalized fashion.

Sentinel Investments recognized that these meetings offered an exceptional opportunity—a place where everyone in the room was either a client with which it needed to solidify and strengthen a relationship, or a potential client. Two of the meetings were set for Stamford. And the managers and advisers invited to these meetings were the *crème de la crème*, those who, on the low end, managed a few million dollars, and who, on the high end, managed \$100 million or more.

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Big money. Big opportunity. And Sentinel—yes, *that* Sentinel, the largest money management firm in Vermont—decided it would sponsor dinners at the Stamford meetings, and bring me in to deliver keynotes. Sentinel had that energy; it always has that energy; it has something to prove.

Sentinel said it wanted an inspiring and entertaining speech, one that included interesting anecdotes from my experience in preparing for and playing in the Olympics. Sentinel also made sure that I talked with the Morgan Stanley and Smith Barney managers at the meeting so that I could hit the right words and themes, and speak to their objectives.

Jim Cronin spoke prior to my appearance in Stamford, and he included the “largest money management firm in Vermont” line. He introduced me. I talked for about 45 minutes and took questions. Sentinel also had other senior management attending the event, so they could meet with Morgan Stanley and Smith Barney people and talk more about the value that Sentinel offers.

One of those senior managers on site was Clara Sierra, executive vice president of Sentinel. Smart and always upbeat, smiling, engaged, and personable, Clara is the embodiment of a company that has something to prove, and is doing something about it.

“We are motivated day after day, in competing against companies that are much bigger than us,” said Clara. “We are a confident underdog, an underdog that understands it has what it takes to beat bigger and better known firms. We get after it and go head to head against the favorites; we do so with enthusiasm and confidence.”

Clara works out of the Sentinel’s New York City office. So she is on the ground playing with the big boys—and Clara is a lady that does not take a backseat to any of them, and neither does the company for which she works. Clara said that Sentinel Investments doesn’t use the down economy as an excuse to not compete and to not set ambitious goals.

“Especially in recession, it would be easy for Sentinel Investments to play the ‘woe is me’ card—but we don’t do that,” said Clara. “Sure,

we see the recession for what it is—a big hill to climb, an obstacle. But we also see it as a major opportunity. Sentinel may be smaller than the competition, but we look at it as an asset, helping us to be nimbler and more responsive and better able to adapt, all qualities that are more important when the economy is hurting than when it is healthy and strong.”

I’m encouraged and happy to report that things are going well for Sentinel Investments. Among the good news—on March 24, 2010, the *Sentinel Government Securities Fund, Class A* won the 2010 Lipper Fund Award for “Best U.S. General Government Fund over 10 Years.”

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## Great Teams Think of Themselves as Winning Underdogs—Chapter Recap

- **Kindle Your Competitive Fire:** Get in touch and hold tight to what drives you and what motivates you. Focus on it. Let it feed the flames of your desire to succeed.
- **Commit to Proving the Doubters Wrong:** Recognize that the world is full of experts who have been proven wrong. If you want to find someone to doubt you, or locate a cynic, the search won't take long nor be difficult. Believe in yourself—even if you are the only one who believes in you.
- **Victor, Not Victim—Results, Not Reasons:** No excuses—just get it done.
- **Expect Adversity—It Never Gets Easier:** You have worked hard and sacrificed and overcome many obstacles. You have earned success and no more barriers should be thrown your way. Right? It wouldn't be fair now to face more adversity. Right? Well, life isn't fair. When you overcome one obstacle, get ready for the next.
- **Accept the Challenge—Embrace the Opportunity:** Be more than a practice player. Training, sacrificing, and dreaming without giving it all in the arena is not the character of a champion.

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