



a league of their own

SPORTS ANALOGIES HIT A HOMERUN IN THE BOARDROOM BY JEANINE GAJEWSKI

“He’s a team player.” “He dropped the ball.” “We knocked it out of the park.” When it comes to sports and business, the language of the field is often the language of the boardroom. Chances are, you’ve heard (or used) these familiar sports clichés in your own company – and with good reason. The world of sports has a lot to tell us about the world of business. *SmartCEO* asked these business leaders what sports has taught them about running their company.



Steve Wolford, president and CEO, Fan Cans, LLC

“I had a great coach at the high school football level who said to me, ‘If you are going to show up, make every play count.’ If you are going to put your foot on a field or in the office, stay focused, be disciplined in your mindset and consistent in your practice. Sports has taught me to come up with a game plan, and then when you execute against it, to be disciplined about it, focus and be consistent.”

“In college, I was not the best player on the team by any stretch, but I was one of the hardest workers. I was the guy who would stay after practice and do the extra shooting. I really applied myself in the classroom and to the sport of basketball, and by my junior year, not even as a starting player, my peers honored me the opportunity to be their captain. It was the leadership, hard work and discipline that they recognized. As I reflect on it, those were clearly life lessons and skills that shape who I am today.”

Scott Hallenbeck, executive director, USA Football



“I was a baseball player, but when I got to high school, I realized I wasn’t good enough to play with these guys. But I wanted to be part of the team. So for three years, I was the team announcer. It helped me learn how to relate to the players – I was on the team, but I wasn’t exactly on the team. Today in advertising, I am not a creative guy. I am the accountant guy. Understanding how to relate on the baseball team helped me understand how to fit in with the creative team, how to stay away from that typical antagonistic relationship. It made a big

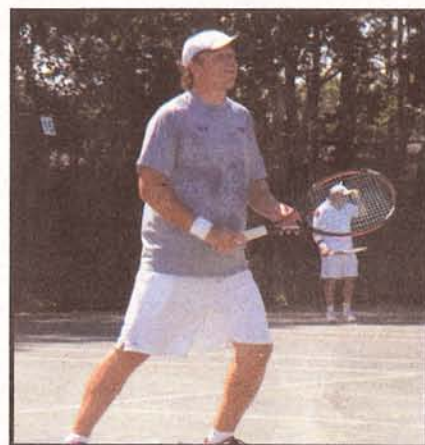
difference as I started my own agency because I understood the creative people’s perspective and how to support them doing their job.”

Jeffrey Goldscher, president, Havit Advertising



“I recently purchased the Washington Kastles (a World Team Tennis franchise), and I think tennis is a great sport for training someone to be a CEO. It teaches discipline and focus. It trains you to adapt to changing situations and strategies. On the court, you can draw from tennis great Roger Federer as an example. To him the standard wasn’t related to anyone else; it was just being the best that he can be. It wasn’t good enough to be a little better. In business, even if you are the market leader, you want to get better all the time.”

Mark Ein, founder and CEO, Venturehouse Group, LLC



“When I worked with the Washington Nationals, I was enthralled by how they managed to move their team from another country. So when I’m faced with a challenge where there is no simple or easy answer, I think back and say, ‘I didn’t move an entire franchise from a different country and launch a team in basically five months.’”

Marc Bluestein, president, Aquarius Sports Group

“Like every businessperson, every athlete knows that it is not going to be easy when you are setting lofty goals. When I’m climbing and I get to a point where I think I am at my limit and I can’t go any further, I have a mantra: I can do this. It’s simple but sometimes you have to say it out loud, because if you can say it, you can believe it, and if you can believe it, you can do it.”

Lillian Chao-Quinlan, president, Sportrock, Inc.

