

# WHEN SUCCESS TURNS YOUR HEAD, YOU FACE FAILURE

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This favorite quote of Coach Wooden's was not about handling adversity, but rather about managing success. When Coach was asked: *You won ten national championships, seven in a row. Once you started winning those championships, how did you maintain your commitment to excellence without getting complacent?*

He replied:

Today is the only day that matters; it's the only day you can do anything about. Make each day your masterpiece.

The past will never change; anything that happened will never change. The future is yet to be; you've just got to concentrate on today and if you do that the future will take care of itself.

That doesn't mean you're going to win because maybe you're not good enough to win, but you'll come closer to realizing your own potential.

I love poetry and many of my players know that and many write me poems. One, Swen Nater, has written me over 100 poems. He has written a poem on almost every maxim I've used and all the Blocks of my Pyramid and one that he wrote was titled *Today*:

Coach, you're a hunter and a seeker,  
Not for silver or for gold.  
Not for treasure or for pleasure,  
Or for anything that's sold.

You're a connoisseur of living,  
As you move along life's way.  
With no worries of tomorrow,  
For you have found today.

You'll never know a thing you didn't learn from someone in the past, yes, you learn from the past but it's not going to affect what you do today — tomorrow will be affected by what you do today. Do what you can today. Don't put it off, do it today.

I tried to use that philosophy with my players, to try to just become a little better each day. That's what I taught — today is the only day you can do anything about — you can't just say it, you've got to do it, you've got to repeat it — repetition is one of the laws of learning and must be used over and over.

One way Coach created this repetition of focusing on today with his players was by not allowing them to celebrate excessively when they won or become dejected when they lost. Here is how he described that process:

I never wanted excessive jubilation because we outscored somebody in a game, nor did I want excessive dejection if we were outscored. You're not going to feel the same, that is true, but I want nothing excessive.

I want that peace within yourself, knowing that you tried your best; then we will not have anything excessive either way.

You can't get that 100% of course, that's perfection, but that's what you're trying for and that's what I'm looking for.

I wanted all of my players to try to be perfect. I know they can't be perfect. But I wanted them to try; we can all try.

Yours in Coaching,  
Craig Impelman  
[www.woodenswisdom.com](http://www.woodenswisdom.com)