

# Look For The Notetakers

Mike Deegan | Life Lessons Learned Through Sport  
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When Doc Rivers was the coach of the Boston Celtics his friend, Bill Belichick, asked him to speak to his New England Patriot team. As the players gathered, Rivers noticed that Tom Brady sat down in the front row and pulled out a notebook. Rivers, who was a successful and established coach, became a little nervous. Arguably the greatest quarterback in NFL history was on the edge of his seat eager to take in his words. Brady was there to learn. He is a notetaker.

## **Look for the Notetakers:**

Do you know what is undervalued? Notetakers. People who see every interaction as an opportunity to grow.

Many of my coaching colleagues will use phrases like, “it takes zero ability to listen.” The thinking is that certain attributes: size, speed, athleticism and others are innate. What you can control, according to most coaches, are things such as your energy level, hustle, zest and attitude.

It is an unpopular take, but I believe the “controllable” things listed above are not given the proper value they deserve. By nature, some people are more curious than others. Also, the way one is raised plays a role in their quest for knowledge acquisition. Sure, you can be intentional about trying to improve these skills, but it comes much easier for some folks than others.

One reason I believe curiosity is undervalued is because an intense learner typically is passionate about the subject. And, when you are passionate about the subject you become obsessed with learning. The learning then leads to growth.

### **Internal Audit:**

How are you as a listener at meetings? How is your body language? Are you listening with your eyes? Head nodding?

I ask these questions because after speaking to professionals for the last several years I've been amazed at the disengagement I frequently witness from leaders of organizations. The same people that impress upon their employees the importance of emotional commitment are less than present when others are speaking.

I challenge you to be a notetaker in every situation you encounter. There is always something to learn. And, modeling this curiosity will set the tone for everyone in the organization.

### **Final Thought:**

As a coach, I can tell the athletes who are going to thrive in our program. They crave new information. They are excited and engaged in meetings. They are constantly looking for an edge. Athletes can try to trick you for a little while. They can force head nods or sit in the front row. Over time, however, those tricks get exposed.

Whatever your line of work, I encourage you to seek the notetakers. These folks won't be as easy to identify as the ones who typically grab your attention: the loud person, the brilliant person, or the squeaky wheel. In the short-term, they may not appear as valuable, but in the long-term notetakers will enhance your team. Coaches fall in love with athleticism; it's easy to see and oftentimes overvalued. What traits are you overvaluing because it is easy to identify? Have you underappreciated a notetaker?

Make it a great week,  
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