

I Will Get Ready and Then, Perhaps, My Chance Will Come

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This favorite idea of Coach Wooden's was one that he learned from Abraham Lincoln, who said: *I will study and get ready, and perhaps my chance will come.*

In his book *Wooden: A Lifetime of Observations and Reflections on and Off the Court*, with Steve Jamison, Coach talked about using this idea:

I used to say to an individual player who was unhappy because he wanted more playing time, "Young man, tell yourself, 'I will be prepared and then, perhaps, my chance will come, because if it does come and I'm not ready, another chance may not come my way very soon again.'"

The time to prepare isn't after you have been given the opportunity. It's long before that opportunity arises. Once the opportunity arrives, it's too late to prepare.

In his book *The Essential Wooden*, Coach described a player who benefitted from this approach:

Doug McIntosh, a nonstarter in 1964, heeded my advice to his advantage, and more importantly, to our team's advantage.

When opportunity knocked 10 minutes into the 1964 national championship game against Duke University, he was prepared for his chance to show competitive greatness.

UCLA's starting center, Fred Slaughter, got off to a slow start, and I signaled down the bench for Doug, who played the rest of the game and was an important reason UCLA won its first national championship in basketball.

Even though logic would have suggested that Doug McIntosh would have little impact in the championship game — probably not even play in it — he prepared as though he knew he would be called on, that his chance would come.

When opportunity came knocking, Doug McIntosh was ready.

Doug described what he learned from the experience:

He taught mental readiness: “Be ready and your chance may come. If you are not ready, it may not come again.”

Thus, he made me see there are no small opportunities. Every opportunity is big. If you only play for two minutes, make it the best two minutes possible. That’s your opportunity, whether in basketball or in life. Be ready; make the most of it. It may not come again.

In *Wooden on Leadership*, Coach summed it up this way:

Remind those under your leadership that patience is required, and if they continue to improve, their chance will come, often when least expected.

Yours in Coaching,
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