

Why Losing Should be Painful

Mon, 6/28 2:30PM 25:32

SUMMARY KEYWORDS

hurt, lose, vulnerability, loss, losing, players, jp, winning, address, larry, grover, pain, people, coach, parent, feeling, player, painful, goals, understand

SPEAKERS

Larry Lauer, Johnny Parks



Johnny Parks 00:05

Welcome to Compete like a Champion. You're here with Dr. Larry Lauer mental skill specialist with USTA Player Development and Coach Johnny Parks with IMG Academy. Today, we bring you another episode and we're going to dive into losing, and why losing should be painful. Before we kick off a thing, we give some backstory as to how we came about wanting to talk about this topic is a former guest of recently, Margie Zesinger here. One of my co workers at IMG Academy who heads up the female program sent me this fantastic clip from a guy called Tim Grover. And it was his real take on what losing is and you know, when you're losing, you get back up, you keep moving forward, and he had an interesting take on it, which we really liked. And is that, you know, losing really mean something and when his advice was, is when you're losing, don't just get back up again, because you'll fail at the learning from losing his eye, if you're losing, stay down, stay down, let it hurt, let it be painful, because then you're going to learn from it. And then when you get back up, you're going to be able to know how to move forward, and how to how to move forward with a plan and, and strive for those goals again, but it's it's that losing is actually a methodical process. Let it hurt, let it be painful, and and then create a strategy around what you're going to do to overcome it. So Larry, this is a pretty cool one. I'm really, really happy Margie sent me this because it was a great message. And



Larry Lauer 01:32

Yes.



Johnny Parks 01:33

I think we would all agree that most of us coaches out there would be after a loss with we're trying to pick the player back up. But sometimes we need to leave them down there and let themselves pick themselves up. Right. So what what's your take on this and your perspectives?



Larry Lauer 01:48


Yes, JP, I really liked the video when you sent it to me. And I thought it was pretty similar to something we've been talking about all the time on this podcast reflection, and reflecting on each experience. And the different take was, it's okay to hurt. I think a lot of times parents coaches do try to deflect because they don't want people to struggle, right? They don't want them to hurt. But remember that a lot of what occurs with learning occurs when we are struggling when we do when we do lose, we do fail. And that hurt oftentimes leads to increased effort, increased openness to coaching, increased desire to learn what happened, right? Why did this happen to me as Grover saying, so instead of just bouncing right back up, maybe you should reflect on a little bit. You know, for example, getting a little bit more practical. You know, I'll tell players like Look, you're, you're hurting from this loss, I get it, I wouldn't do that. Totally fine. Let's deal with that. Take the rest of the day to be crabby, emotional, I mean, don't treat people poorly, but, you know, feel what you feel for hurts and hurts. But let's start turning the corner the next day. Still got to get up and get a workout in if that's what you're gonna do or a hit. You got to start making moves for the next day. But it's funny that you texted this to me yesterday and I'm like, this is such a good video we need to do a podcast on this JP and then last night. I'm coming home from hockey practice. We have about 30 minutes in the car, my son and I and we were listening to game five of the Tampa Bay Lightning in the Carolina Hurricanes on satellite radio, and Hurricanes lost and their season is over. And their color commentator Trip Tracy has been there a long time. He was saying how that loss should hurt. It should be painful for the Hurricanes because they invested so much and they put so much into their season with everything that's going on with COVID and being away from their families and different things you had to do until they got vaccinated they weren't able to hang out they just had to go back to the hotel and these guys sacrificed time with family time with their teammates so they could play a game together and then to invest all that have a great season when the Central Division title and lose in the second round to the last year Stanley Cup champions is painful. So I think the point of it is JP is that it's okay to hurt from losing because that's a real and honest genuine feeling.





Johnny Parks 04:39


Yeah, and it shows you that they care that they're so engrossed in achieving their goals


and that they put everything into the process to make that happen and when it you know in its reality you're going to put sometimes you put everything you possibly can into it you do you make all the right decisions. You choose the most professional approach and you dedicate yourself, commit yourself. And it still may not happen. Yeah, it hurts. I mean, how many times have we seen fads? Murray, you know, is one that comes to mind with me, especially after the Wimbledon loss? You see them cry in the in the ceremony when they lose a Grand Slam final?

 **Larry Lauer** 05:16
Yeah.

 **Johnny Parks** 05:16
Like that stings it hurts. And, you know, these are these are players that have been through it so many times, yeah, it's still epically hurts. And you know, you'll get some media that jump on their backs for showing this level of emotion, they should be able to, like deal with it better and like, why? That's a human emotion that is that is that is put forward, because of how much dedication they put into something, you know?

 **Larry Lauer** 05:45
Yeah.

 **Johnny Parks** 05:45
It's gonna hurt. There's something that they're epically passionate about. And they're willing to do what it takes. So it should hurt. But I got this question for you, Larry, is how much do you see of this, right? You see, players that that hurt, you can see the loss hurt them, but they just really want to quickly move on and forget about it. They don't really want to address it, you know, how much damage does that actually do in their long term development? You know, it hurts and you let them know it should hurt, but they're just not willing to address it or more. So there's coaches and parents that don't help them understand how to address it or engage in that. How much do you see of that? And how do we overcome that?

 **Larry Lauer** 06:26
Yeah, that's a great question. I think we see it a lot. And if it's happening, I don't, I try not to judge people for because it happens so easily. Because you don't want your young

people to hurt, you don't want people to suffer, right? You try to minimize how much it hurts. But I'll go back to Jose, he says, and that is, you know, when when we're not learning from these things, we're living a lie. We're not really facing the truth. There's something in there that you can learn from, to make you better. And and it may be that, honestly, your defense mechanism is to try to move on quickly. So you don't have to address what's going to be harder than a loss. And that is long term change. Losing hurts, long term changes hard, right to do something different. You've never done before, to put that work in. And folks understand that you do this well, knowing that there's never a guarantee with outcomes. Because a coach will come to you and say, Well, if you change your forehand in this way, you're going to be better. But they shouldn't be guaranteeing Grand Slams or guaranteeing national tournament victories or whatever it is because we can't know. But what we have to take faith in is that if I put in a hard work, it is going to pay off. I don't know when I don't know how. But that's what I'm willing to do is to put that in, but I think you're right JP, a lot of people it's a defense mechanism will pull away from that hurt and not process it. Because it's easier to keep telling themselves you know what, it'll happen for me, it'll happen for me or it won't happen for me, poor me and just kind of go either of those roads. The hard road is to take a good look at and say, You know what, this does hurt. What do I need to do about it? And what what am I willing to do? And typically, honestly, where do we see people really opening up to that pain is when they hit rock bottom. When they're really suffering and it's been going on for a while they lose 10 matches in a row, they you know, whatever's happening right? Then Then they open up to that pain and start communicating it. And now you're, you're digging out of a big hole, which is fine. That's what we got to do. We'll we'll do it. But what if you had process that? You know, there's a famous story from agassi's book, right, his book open? He goes through it was at the Summer 95 right where he went undefeated during the hardcourt season the summer season us makes it all the way to the US Open final and loses Sampras, right. And that loss in that US Open final was like devastating to him. And he lost his motivation. He lost his focus for a long time. It's why he struggled all the way up until he you know, eventually wins a gold medal at the Olympics, he was able to get himself spurred again because of the opportunity at the Olympics in Atlanta. You know, these moments they hurt. And then you got to find a way to channel it into effort into change. And that can be hard to do sometimes.



Johnny Parks 09:48

Yeah, absolutely. And there's, there's such a tremendous amount of vulnerability and somebody that is hurting after a loss and we won't go down this road too much, but there's obviously an exploitation of that vulnerability. See the we've heard examples of in the tennis world in the past where you exploit players athletes through that hurt, which lead to very, very negative outcomes both socially, emotionally and everything in

between. But what we are going to talk about is, the positive side of that vulnerability, if you address it in the right way, is, essentially when they're vulnerable after losing, and it's painful, you have some people that do want to block it out, they don't want to feel vulnerable, and especially in front of others, right. So if you talk about a little bit more stubborn personalities that don't want to show others their pain or show others they're hurt, they're going to be the ones that will try and somewhat avoid addressing that, because of the feeling of vulnerability. However, in that they're showing that they do want somebody to help them through that they do want somebody to care. And I think as a coach, or as a parent, number one timing of when to address it. And number two, how you gradually get them to open up to addressing it not addressing the pain and the hurt of a loss, but addressing the strategy to move forward so that they learn from it. That is the key is in that vulnerability, show them that you care, show them that you're there for them, and create that space where it's okay for them to open up to you. And that can take time for an athlete, a young, a young player, any any player really, that can take time for them to get comfortable to do that. But be patient, like as coaches or parents, we got to be patient, be patient and keep asking them. Okay, let you know, let's talk about this a little bit if they're not ready for it, be patient. But at some point, they got to know it's got to be addressed. And in those moments of vulnerability, what is the goal? The goal is to figure out a strategy that moves forward in the right direction.



Larry Lauer 11:59

Such good points JP, I totally agree. As you were talking, I was listening and thinking about listening without judgment as an adult, right? As a coach, as a parent, this person's hurting. And it's it's really easy just to come in with all the reasons why, you know, while you do this, you do that if you don't do that, and that's like piling on at that moment, that's probably too much. So if you if you let them be your guide, and and if you have expectations around these things, right, if you say, look, again, this is what I try to do players, I'm not with them on the road all the time. But hey, if you lose, you know that it hurts, it's a painful loss, you know, that's okay. Be with it. That's fine, process it on again, the next day, we want to start start taking steps forward. We don't want it to affect our preparation. But certainly, you know, if we're listening without judgment, young people, all people are going to open up more, and be willing to share that pain and start to process it. But we often shut that down by immediately saying, Well, if you've done a, b and c, you would have won.



Johnny Parks 13:11

Yeah, I mean, then that that doesn't make them feel any better.



Larry Lauer 13:15

No, because it's that's why I'm sorry, go ahead.



Johnny Parks 13:18

No, I just say that it doesn't help them come to the Self Realization, which is ultimately one of the goals is they have to come up with why they think that they lost them what they think they need to do to move forward to get better at so that they could prevent losing again. So if the if you're stepping in go and do A, B, C, and that's all you needed to do to win, all that's gonna do is create more feelings of lack of self worth, I think, because they're the ones that need to figure that out. Our job is to guide them. to that. I have a question for you on the flip side of this, which is players lose, that don't show a lot of emotion and don't show that they're hurting is number one is, I guess, on one side of it is don't assume that they're not hurting, just because they're not showing it. And I think number two, which I think we we all know this as if they actually genuinely just don't care that they lost, then, you know, well, first of all, don't think they're gonna go very far in the sport, or maybe it's a blockade. It's a shield, right? So I wanted to talk to you about that side of it. And players that don't show a lot of emotion, maybe from the eye, the perception is that they don't care. How do you approach those situations?



Larry Lauer 14:33

Yeah, I would recommend not jumping to that conclusion unless you really know that person. They may just present that in different ways. They may be trying to hide it. They may be trying to hide vulnerability. They try to be acting tough. I know for a lot of guys, showing up vulnerability is not accepted. So you're going to do everything you can to not show that emotion that pain that hurt. Usually Alright guys, it comes out in anger, right? Like anger's okay to show in some ways and a guy, so then you're gonna crack a racket, you're gonna yell at somebody, you're gonna do something, right. And that's sort of your, your way to vent it, when in fact, you're hurting. You're really you need to process that pain and in that loss, and it comes out as anger many times before we get to the truth, what do you get, the reality is, you know, that disappointment that you feel in the result. But if someone, you know, if they truly don't care that much, then that's okay, too. I mean, obviously, that's tough and high performance, that they're not going to be able to reach the level that they would if they had the passion and desire to succeed, but at the same time, that's not something we give people. That's only something we reveal, through our work together. And so if we come to that, Revelation, if we know that, what we can do is say, look, okay, there's something you want to win, but you're not doing what it takes to win. And if you're doing that, to protect yourself, then what I'm, what I'm gonna say is you're protecting yourself from a really good life from a good career in tennis, potentially,

but you're gonna have to open yourself up to pain and loss to be the player you want to be. If you don't want that, that's fine. That's fine. But at the same time, sometimes that's, again, it's a defense to protecting themselves from loss protecting themselves from that pain. And that doubt of, am I good enough? Every every good players had to address that, at some point in time.



Johnny Parks 16:34

There's no growth if you're not willing to suffer and feel pain, but learn from it and move forward. But then you might feel suffering and pain again, but what's your process that allows you to be okay with that, and then pick yourself up in order to to create strategy. So it's all about growth, right? We know that there's a lot of growth in losing we know there's a lot of growth in winning, we know there's a lot of growth and being vulnerable. We know there's a lot of growth in being strong, there's but it all leads to growth. Right? It all leads to positions of improvement and maximizing whatever your potential may be. It's not separating that out, it's there's no assumption that winning and feeling that you got through a match because you were mentally strong is the only way that leads to growing, right, being vulnerable can lead to growth, feeling pain, feeling suffering can lead to growth, if you approach it and engage with it. And I think that was the point that he made in his video is stay down there. Right, don't pick yourself up right away, stay down there, almost like not say you can enjoy the suffering. But I think the right word is engage in it. Right? engaging process and



Larry Lauer 17:53

Understand where it comes from. And just for young listeners, players, athletes, understand what we're saying, We're not saying, you know, stay down in the middle of a match. When it hurts, you're disappointed how to perform, don't get back up and give that effort. But what we're talking about is, when you have loss, when you've had that painful loss, it's okay to stay with that feeling for a while and feel that hurt. But what you want to do is you want to channel that into determination, into your goals into your work, and let it fuel your, your desire your passion to get better. Now you're taking that hurt, and you're using it to help you move forward, you got to move forward at some point. And to do that you're, at some point going to have to process those difficult feelings. Otherwise, again, you're really not being real with yourself. And so, to me, you can sit with those feelings, you can process them, you're going to start to feel better in a day, in two days, especially when you get in the gym, especially when you get on the court. Especially when you communicate with your coach with your parents with your mental coach with your strength coach, your physio, whomever it is, now we're getting a little bit more pro level but probably a parent for the kids out there in understand like champions, JP, okay, in

terms of when they lose, you brought up Murray and you brought the Fed and when they lose, okay? That result in their mind is unstable. It's like, okay, I lost that one, but I can win the next time. It's also something that they control what they can control. Right, so the other guy played great. Alright, there's not much I can do that about that. What can I control? Right? And then I start working on that. And it's his internal locus where they say, Look, I'm going to focus on the factors that I can control to get myself better to ready myself. There's I haven't seen any better quote on this than Nadal. And I'm sure I brought this up on the podcast before in 2011, when Djokovic, beat him in five or six straight finals. And Nadal said, Look, hey, the guy's the best player of the moment, I was the best player of the moment last year. So what are you gonna do you go back to work, you learn from it, you go to work, and you come back, and you give your best again, I'm paraphrasing at this point. And he did, and he ended up meeting Djokovic. And they've gone back and forth over the years. So, you know, to me, those moments are hard, and they're going to feel like you're taking steps backwards. But you might need to take that step, or at least that pause to process it so you can move forward. Because again, if you're if you're not doing what's necessary, learning from that losing, then you should expect more of that to come.



Johnny Parks 20:53

Well, Larry, this, we're gonna keep this a short one today. So you give us three bits of advice that we can apply the, how we overcome the suffering and the pain after a loss advisor, maybe parents, coaches and the players themselves?



Larry Lauer 21:08

Yeah, that's it's a great question. First of all, I would say, normalize it, understand it sit with it, this your response is okay. And sometimes we engage in this blame game of, well, if you had served better, you probably wouldn't have lost Well, that's the last thing they need to hear, right? Then. It's like, Look, he gave a great effort, you'll get back to work. It's okay. Let's just kind of deal with what's here. And then, you know, we support you, and we'll move forward with you. But so I think one is honor those emotions and, and let players sit with them for a little bit, not just deflect them, be be there and be open, and listening to what they're feeling so that you can understand it before giving advice. And they may even ask you What should I do? What should I do? Because I run into that, like, Larry, what should I do? Like, well, what do you think you should do? How are you feeling? Right? What do you want to do about this? So redirecting it back to them? You know, I think that's important as well. And I think it's important, you know, on the other the flip side of this, that, you know, especially in high performance, but to a lot of players, most players winning matters. Right? Now we talking about process all the time and process over

product and, but at the same time, winning does matter and winning matters to us. So it hurts when you don't win and hurts when you have a poor performance. And that's okay. So saying things like, Ah, you know, winning doesn't matter anyway, you know, it's just a game. It's just those things in those moments really don't help very much. Maybe later, especially if someone's catastrophizing, if they're making it too big, you come to some of those things. But at the moment, I think you, you, you accept the how they feel and try not to tell them, it's wrong to feel what they feel. And I think then you're there to help them redirect that when the time is right into, okay, what actions do you want to take? What do you want to do about this? Right? Like, what do you think? Yeah, my servers got to get better. Okay. What do you mean by that? What can we do to make it better? Or what situations like my experience with what pros are super engaged in own development is that they lose a match and they look at situations and they go practices situations, they go practice, whatever needs to change. And I think that's what you're trying to facilitate, as a coach as a parent, but it's okay to let that player feel that a little bit as Grover saying, because that can really drive them and motivate them to change and improve.



Johnny Parks 23:49

Very good takeaways for us all that I think ponder on and think about. And then again, I mean, none of this information is great unless we go put it to some practice. So yeah, next time you go watch your your players compete in a tournament, maybe try out some of these strategies after a tough loss if you play losers, and and see how it turns out so well, Larry, that's another great one a little shorter today. Great talking through this, you hear so many different perspectives on how to help an athlete a player through through losing. And this just provides another elements of normalizing the feelings around losing and so it's, it's just, it's good to talk through that and understand the different perspectives. But ultimately, I think we can all agree that learning needs to take place and we have to get to a point where the learning definitely happens in one way or another. Well, that's a wrap for this week's episode of Compete like a Champion we greatly appreciate you tuning in and listening in. If you want more resources or information, you can visit Player Development's website playerdevelopment.usta.com reach out to Larry and I directly on twitter at Larry Lauer or at Johnny Parks One. drop this episode to a friend who you think might find it useful. A fellow A parent, a coach a player and see what they think. But as we mentioned, reach out to us anytime you have any recommendations on topics you'd like for us to address, we always love coming up with topics and diving into some of the research science behind it and the art of applying it. So until next week, Dr. Larry and I are checking out.