

BUILDING CHARACTER

The Tao of Racquetball

BY MICHAEL JOSEPHSON



Already my re-entry into racquetball has yielded unexpected dividends. I've found that pounding a little rubber ball against a wall in an enclosed room 40 feet long, 20 feet wide and 20 feet high can reveal profound truths about life. Well, at least they seem profound at the time.

For example, in the past I often hurt myself crashing into walls or pulling muscles in a wanton pursuit of every shot. Now, I'm much more deliberate about what balls I go for. Sure, this new strategy was induced by my considerable physical limitations, but that doesn't dilute the wisdom of realizing how important it is in life to choose one's battles. If you go "all out" on every single play regardless of the likelihood of success, you may not have the resources to make more sensible efforts.

Yet, as I began to develop a little more agility and skill, I realized that I was giving up too often and too easily. Some balls were "gettable" with a reasonable but aggressive effort.

Being too conservative is as unwise as indiscriminate recklessness. Yes, you should pick your battles, but be careful that timidity, fear or laziness don't blur your vision as to what's possible. You can't succeed at anything unless you push yourself beyond perceived limitations. We can all do more than we think we can.

Finally, my natural tendency was to try to win points by hitting the ball as hard as I could. In fact, placement and timing are much more important than raw power. I scored more often when I was strategic and thought about the angles. So it is with most of life's challenges. Think ahead, have a plan, use tact. It's a lot easier to persuade than pulverize the opposition. ■

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