

DREAM BIG



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We have had some amazing sporting events over the last couple of months. A fantastic FIFA Men's World Cup final, and a college playoff series—mixed in with the excitement of the holidays, and it is going to be tough to get back to “normal” after all the additional adrenaline.

Watching these sporting spectacles and some of the more preeminent athletes perform showcases some of the amazing life stories of the teams and players that compete for some of the greatest championships in sports.

When you watch, in awe, the likes of Lionel Messi play, you realize that not only is he one of the best to ever play soccer, but that the skills he so effortlessly displays are far beyond the “normal” athlete—in any sport! I am not suggesting that he has not worked at his game, honed his craft and overcome some pretty significant challenges in his life. I suspect Lionel was first one in, last one out in training! While his journey is similar in that respect to what we see from youth and adult athletes today, it's not exactly a realistic journey for our own children or our friends' children. G.O.A.Ts are different. Like different planet stuff.

But don't get discouraged if your athlete isn't GOAT status just yet. Hard work pays off. Look at Stetson Bennett. Defying logic, making heads turn, making people notice him when for years they dismissed him. A walk-on and a transfer to the University of Georgia Bulldogs College Football team (typically not the road to stardom), he joined the team not once but twice. He had a dream. And Dawg-gone-it, he was going to make it happen. Growing up a lifelong UGA fan, his dream was to play for the Dawgs. He wasn't a “superstar”, had average skills compared to the others, and he was “small.” Some critics would argue that he is not a talented quarterback at all (they must be 'Bama fans), and perhaps not even the best on the deep UGA roster. Somehow, against the odds, this young, dedicated individual has succeeded in the face of adversity.

Stetson is a shining example of how dreams are achievable. He's the boy or girl I coach who may have work to do, skills to improve upon and drills to learn, but he's that kid. We all know this, but if you are willing to work hard and believe in yourself, it's out there for you. Now that is very relatable for all of us, no matter what dream motivates you.

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Youth sports can provide an amazing arena for growth, setbacks, and overcoming adversity, which all help create winners on—and off—the field. And sometimes, it's more important to be that winner off the field. Creating winners who succeed and use failure as an opportunity requires coaches, players, and parents who all invest in a process of development over short-term wins. Although Rush Union is passionate about soccer, we believe sports create an amazing proving ground for children to succeed and fail. Failure can be the greatest gift.



I love hearing the stories of adversity that people have to overcome to achieve their goals. It's what makes things special when we are rewarded for our hard work. We all know that not everyone can be a sports star, college athlete or World Cup winner. We can, however, accomplish great GOAT-like things by dreaming big and working hard. You don't have to be the star, but you can have a starring role every now and then, so keep on working and keep on dreaming big.

As adults, parents, coaches, and mentors, if a young child or athlete has seemingly over inflated dreams... don't squash them! Let them dream big and encourage them to strive for them. After all, they may be the next Stetson Bennett. And who knows, we may find a Lionel among them too! Dream big.

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