

By Bill Guertin

The 800-Pound Gorilla

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Disappointment? Get Over It

As a Little League baseball player, it was a once-in-a-lifetime moment.

Just minutes before, Max Hana had led off the last half of the last inning with a solo home run, starting an improbable rally that had brought in a total of 6 runs. Now, with two outs and a runner on second, Max was up to bat again, with his team trailing by only one run. A base hit would surely tie the game, and another home run would win it, putting the young man and his team into the 2005 Little League World Series.

“I was sure that he was going to hit another one,” coach John Engleman said afterward. “There was no doubt in my mind that we were going to Williamsport.”

He had good reason to believe. His Limestone Little League All-Stars had come from behind several times to advance through the District 18 tournament, the regionals, sectionals, and finally the State Championship. Now here they were in Indianapolis, playing for the right to advance to the biggest stage in all of youth baseball.

Max came up to the plate, confident, nervous and excited all at once. He knew he could do it, even though he was the youngest player on his team. The opposing pitcher was rattled, but somehow he found his composure.

Max battled, but never found the pitch he was looking for. After several pitches, he went down swinging for the final out of the game and the end of the storybook season.

“He was devastated,” said Max’s mother, Lauren. “Even though we were there as a family for him, it didn’t help much. He felt like he had let his entire team down.”

Max was utterly depressed for about 24 hours, and it could have affected his desire to play baseball ever again. But Max found a way to look at the bright side.

“For the next two days, the highlights of our game were on ESPN constantly,” said Lauren. “They showed Max on TV practically every hour, and it really boosted his spirits.”

Coach Engleman saw something else that helped Max get over the devastating loss: focusing on something else. “The football season started three days later, and Max had to shift gears immediately. He couldn’t just sit and dwell on what had happened. He had committed to playing another sport, and it was time to concentrate on that.”

What Max did exceptionally well was find a way to move on quickly after his disappointment.

Think about yourself for a moment. How do you react to devastating setbacks in life? Whether at work, at home, or somewhere else, do you allow the loss to eat you alive, or do you take active steps to put it in the past and move on?

Reversing failures can be simple. It starts with admitting things didn't work, then taking time to reflect on what could be done differently. Once you reflect, decide what to do, and commit to taking action.

Whatever you do, don't dwell on your failures.

If you're interested in a set of exercises and techniques that can help you get beyond the fear of failure, or get you over the depression that can come from failure, I've created a valuable Failproof Kit that you can have for free. Just e-mail me at bill@The800PoundGorilla.com and write "Make Me Failproof!" in the headline. I'll be happy to send it to you via return e-mail.

Thomas Watson, founder of IBM, is quoted as saying, "If you want to increase your success rate, double your failure rate." Those who are failing more often are stretching, learning and growing at a far greater pace than average, and are destined to be more successful in the long run than those who play it safe.

No successful individual has ever allowed past failures or mistakes to consume their lives. On the contrary, many of the most successful people of all time have used their disappointment as the fuel they needed to grow.

Max sees last year's defeat as this year's fuel, and is looking forward to the upcoming All-Star season. "Six of us will be back on the team from last year," said Max. "We'll be even better, because we've already been there, and we know what it's like. We all know we can do it this year."

Max plans to keep on swinging. And so should you.

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