

Deep Dive

My wife and I have encouraged our children to be active in sports from a young age, and unless I have work commitments I cannot reschedule, I am present at every one of their competitions. As my son went through badminton training I helped out with his coach and we had many discussions about his coaching philosophy, badminton tactics, nutrition, fitness, and agility. The badminton coach's ideas are often insightful and practical; he was, after all, scouted by the Singapore government to coach the national team of our country in the late 1990s. Nonetheless, I was sceptical whenever he told me about certain matches that his students played in since I could not imagine how he was able to remember every match the players of his elementary and secondary schools played, some as far back as fifteen years ago. He talked about how some players lost a particular game, how some parents' behavior off-court impacted the player negatively, or how close the scores were for a particular game and what happened to break the stalemate. The minute details he talked about made me think he was pulling my leg.

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During one training session, the coach corrected my son's position on the court. The coach reminded my son that the wrong court positioning was the cause of a loss when he started out leading by a wide margin. During the break, I approached the coach and asked him which match he was referring to. He gave vivid details of the match, the competitor, and the margin that my son originally had. I was actually in attendance at the game six months ago. I have a few impressions about the match, but I cannot recall all the details the coach has. Considering he had so many players pass through him every year, I was wondering how he could remember these matches!

'Since every match is important for my players, whether it's their first competition or they've been competing for some time, I pay attention at every match and have to know it intimately', replied the coach.

I found the coach's reply refreshing. Despite feeling highly involved in my son's game, there was obviously a significant distance between my highly interested involvement and the coach's immersive involvement.

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I had worked with people whose success and fulfillment eluded them because they weren't digging deep enough; business school students who demonstrated little interest for the commercial world, MBAs and EMBA's who missed geopolitical events even though they are affecting their business, next-generation family business leaders who manage only by reviewing financial statements and ignoring key customer and supplier relationships, senior human resource practitioners who know so little about their organizations' competitive environment, entrepreneurs who have low empathy for the needs of the customers they serve, or, executives who spend time managing internally while ignoring the realities on the ground and eventually losing touch with their businesses. Some of them did not know what or how to dive deep, while others subconsciously or consciously did not embrace their role fully. Some felt jaded.

Would you see a dramatic change in your life and career if you dug deeper?

Are you simply involved or do you fully immerse yourself in your career and commitments? I certainly hope you aren't casual about it.

Let's work on it together.

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