

## *Sometimes Winners Lose*

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**One of the great contradictions in life is that winners never lose. Nothing could be further from the truth!**

Please pardon the personal reference. I won the World Championship of Public Speaking for Toastmasters International in Vancouver, British Columbia, Canada in 1978, an organization (*at the time*) of some 65,000 speakers in some 60 countries throughout the English-speaking world. I lost that same World Championship in 1977 in Toronto, Ontario, Canada because I went eight seconds over my allotted time limit and was disqualified. I'm fond of saying that you have to go through Toronto to get to Vancouver. *Sometimes winners lose!*

I remember when I competed in Vancouver. I took the time to visit the site of a marathon in which the noble Jim Peters of Great Britain had run the demanding marathon, an imposing 26 $\frac{1}{4}$ -mile event. Peters was competing in the 1954 Commonwealth Games in Vancouver, exactly 24 years prior to my visit.

He was easily the pre-race favorite, and he attempted to destroy the field with a blistering pace, which worked quite nicely for the first 26 miles. The problem was, the race was 26 and a quarter miles long.

When Peters came into the stadium that year, he had a 17-minute lead on his closest competitor. The announcers were going wild because this was about to be a new world record. History tells us that the atmosphere in Vancouver was humid and hot that particular day, but Jim Peters was determined to make his mark.

As with most marathons at this level of competition, Peters ran the first 26 miles outside the stadium in Vancouver. When he came into the stadium for the last quarter mile lap, the lactic acid in his muscles all but consumed him.

He began to suffer from severe cramps. Some 300 yards from the finish line, Peters collapsed on the track.

But he refused to quit. He got up, and he ran a few more steps, and he collapsed again. Peters got up a third time and walked a few steps before collapsing again. Altogether, Jim Peters collapsed 16 different times on the Vancouver oval that particular day. But he *still* refused to quit. When he tried to get up the 17<sup>th</sup> time, he crawled on his hands and knees in an agonizing show of guts until he collapsed one final time across a white line that he thought was the finish line. He was 200 yards short of his goal.

As a child growing up and hearing of this story, I was struck by Jim Peters' bravery and determination. It illustrated the bulldog spirit. Or was it just another example of the British not accepting the reality of the situation? It would be nice to say he went on to win the gold medal at the next Olympics. However, following medical advice of his doctor, he gave up racing. Jim Peters never won the gold medal he so desperately wanted.

Sometimes, no matter how hard you work, no matter what price you pay... sometimes you fail, not *because* of yourself but *in spite* of yourself. Life is full of failure. Dolly Parton is fond of saying "You've got to have the rain to have the rainbow."

Me? I believe the road to Vancouver goes right through Toronto.

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