

CHASING INFLUENCE

WELLNESS: SHARPEN YOUR LIFE

"Give me six hours to chop down a tree and I will spend the first four sharpening the axe." -Abraham Lincoln

Way up north, there once was a woodsman who went into the forest to harvest wood to sell. He was very strong, and on the first day in the woods, he felled 18 trees and brought them to the timber merchant. "You are the best woodcutter around," the merchant said and gave him his pay. On the second day, the woodcutter went into the woods with great motivation to harvest even more trees. But by midday, he had only taken down eight trees. He worked through lunch and didn't take any breaks. Still, he had only 15 trees to sell to the merchant at the end of the day. "Well, you are still a strong woodsman. Here is your pay," the merchant said. On the third day, he began chopping at first light and continued through lunch and into dusk. He tried even harder than the first two days, yet he cut down only 12 trees. Day after day, he was bringing back fewer and fewer trees. I must be losing my strength, the woodcutter thought. He apologized to the wood merchant, saying he could not understand why he wasn't more productive. "When was the last time you sharpened your ax?" the merchant asked. "Sharpen? I had no time to sharpen my ax," said the woodsman. "I put all my time into chopping down trees." Sharpening an ax is crucial because it makes cutting down trees more efficient and productive, leading to greater success in the long run. Just as it is important to take care of one's tools, it is also important to take care of oneself. Taking breaks, living healthy, maintaining a positive attitude, and staying mentally sharp can help us work more effectively and achieve greater success. Sometimes, we get so busy that we don't take the time to sharpen our 'ax.' Which person are you today-the person chopping through the tree as hard as you can with a dull blade or the person who keeps the blade sharp and gets more done?

Most of us spend too much time on what is urgent and not enough time on what is important." -Stephen Covey

Connecting this quote to the story. In this story, the woodcutter initially focused on cutting down as many trees as possible without sharpening his ax or taking care of himself. By doing

so, he gradually became less productive and efficient, ultimately bringing back fewer and fewer trees. To succeed in the long run, we must prioritize what is important, not just what is urgent.

Reflection Questions

What practical steps can athletes and teams take to ensure they take care of themselves and their tools and ultimately perform at their best?

2. In what ways do athletes and teams prioritize urgent tasks over important ones, and how does this impact their performance?

3. How does the concept of sharpening the ax relate to practicing and improving skills in athletics?

4. How can athletes maintain a balance between working hard and taking care of themselves and their equipment?

