

The Coach and the Athlete – Working Together for Olympic Gold

Alan Campbell's story is quite remarkable. Little more than a novice sculler when he first met his coach, Bill Barry, five years ago, he confidently declared that his ultimate goal was to win Olympic gold. Some would have laughed but Barry recognised a spark of something exceptional in Campbell and decided to take him at his word.



Campbell responded, leaving a career in the army to embark on his ambitious campaign; at times sleeping on the floor of his rowing club with nothing more to eat than a packet of porridge oats. But little over a year later, his persistence paid off and he secured himself a place in the men's quadruple scull in Athens. The crew came twelfth; and it was at this point that Barry took Campbell aside and did something quite unexpected. He drew up a business plan.

The idea of merging business with sport came naturally to Barry. Himself an Olympic silver medal-winning rower, he has enjoyed a successful business career, including time as CEO of a publicly listed advertising company. Now, in addition to coaching Campbell, he heads up business coaching company 121partners, and his client list is diverse, global and growing. Barry recognised that by applying business principles, Campbell's goal could be achieved.

In June 2008, Campbell suffered a major setback having surgery on an infected knee. He defied medical opinion to recover in time for the Beijing Olympics and qualifying for the final where he came fifth, missing out on a medal by three seconds. Sir Stephen Redgrave, commenting on his achievement, said 'To lead the Olympic final to 750 metres was absolutely fantastic having missed five or six weeks of training. I can't emphasise enough what a performance this was.'

Bill and Alan have now set their sights firmly on a gold medal at London 2012. Already, Alan has appeased some of the disappointment of Beijing by winning the silver medal at the 2009 World Championships. This unique partnership of coach and athlete has entered a new and exciting phase. It seems Olympic rowers – just like leaders in all walks of life – never give up on the dream.

Reference Material:-

Boardroom Magazine Article 1008 -

http://www.121partners.com/downloads/article_boardroom_1008.pdf

Daily Telegraph Article 1108 -

http://www.121partners.com/downloads/article_telegraph_1008.pdf

BBC TV Interview - <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=g9gP6ZFDVK4>