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Clutch

Why Some People Excel Under Pressure and Others Don't

THE SUMMARY IN BRIEF

Sooner or later everyone encounters a situation in which the stakes are high and the outcome is vital. And even top performers can crumble when faced with such extreme pressure. Consider the CEO who panics in a desperate attempt to shore up his company's earnings, the veteran politician who grows overconfident and loses to the upstart candidate, the quarterback who carries his team to the Super Bowl but falls apart in the final quarter. All of them choked.

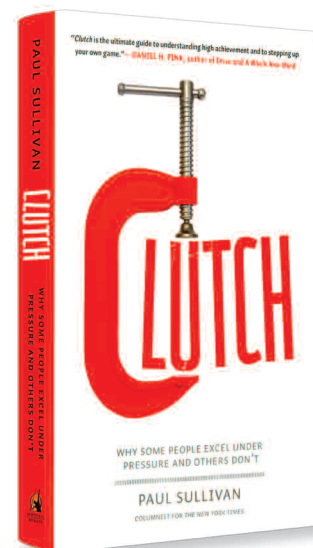
But then there are the performers who thrive under such conditions: the ER doctor racing the clock to save someone's life, the lieutenant who leads his platoon to victory after an ambush, the young attorney who refuses to be intimidated in court and wins the crucial case.

These people are clutch. Their ability to overcome extreme pressure consistently and beat the toughest odds fascinates us. How do they do it?

According to financial reporter Paul Sullivan, clutch performance does not stem from an innate ability. It's a learned skill — the art of operating in high-stress situations as if they were everyday conditions. Some of the most experienced and talented performers lack this skill, but *Clutch* shows that anyone can develop it.

IN THIS SUMMARY, YOU WILL LEARN:

- How a rookie baseball player pitched his team into its first World Series.
- Why some people choke.
- How to cultivate the shared traits that define clutch performers.
- How to overcome extreme pressure and achieve greatness.



by Paul Sullivan

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THE COMPLETE SUMMARY: CLUTCH

by Paul Sullivan

The author: Paul Sullivan writes the “Wealth Matters” column for *The New York Times*. His articles have appeared in *Condé Nast Portfolio*, *The International Herald Tribune*, *Barron’s* and the *Financial Times*.

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For additional information on the author, go to <http://www.summary.com> or www.PaulJSullivan.com.

Introduction: What’s Clutch?

What does it mean to be clutch? Most sports fans are pretty sure they know the answer.

Most people associate clutch performances with a triumphant sports moment: the home run that wins the game or the basket or stolen pass at the buzzer. But each of these contains an element of luck, and clutch is not luck. Being clutch is not the hole-in-one to win; it’s the well-struck shot close to the flag and the putt that drops in with the tournament on the line. It’s the precisely executed series of plays in football, not the Hail Mary pass. It’s the fortitude to continue battling out a Wimbledon final as you always have — even though the whole world is wondering whether you are going to choke.

Clutch, simply put, is the ability to do what you can do normally under immense pressure. It is also something that goes far beyond the world of sport. And while it has a mental component, it is not a mystical ability, nor somehow willing yourself to greatness. After all, every professional athlete is mentally tough or he or she wouldn’t have made it that far. For that matter, every chief executive of a company has shown leadership to get where he or she is. But that does not mean he or she will be clutch.

Being great under pressure is hard work. This is part of the reason why we are so impressed by people who seem immune to choking. These people come through in the clutch when others don’t. If they’re business leaders, they become gurus other executives want to emulate. In politics, the person who runs the gauntlet wins the election, but if he or she can do so in a particularly cunning way, he or she becomes an example of strategic

excellence. In combat, it is the leaders who come under fire and get their platoon to safety who are recognized as war heroes. If the people are sport figures, their triumphs become legendary. ●

PART I: WHY PEOPLE ARE CLUTCH

Focus

Focus is the foundation for any clutch performance. It is the basis on which the other traits of pressure performers are built. Yet being focused is not as simple or obvious as it may sound. The reason is, many people confuse focus with concentration.

David Boies represented the United States in the antitrust case the United States Department of Justice brought against Microsoft in 1998 and, 10 years later, he faced off in a lower Manhattan courtroom against a formidable opponent in Ted Wells, of the litigation department at Paul Weis, a major New York law firm. The two sides were fighting over \$4.2 billion and whether Hank Greenberg, the longtime head of the insurer AIG, essentially had the right to the money when he was ousted as chief executive.

Boies has defined his career through high-profile cases that have been intense, pressure-packed and public. Early in his legal career, he started to focus on the same two questions for every trial. First, “What are the facts?” and second, “What are the basic principles of law here — not what were the detailed holdings of 50 cases, but just what are the basic principles of law that apply to this area?” Such an approach seems too simple to have led to Boies winning a half-dozen major cases in his career. But Boies’ focus on having a clear understanding of the issues and laws creates a solid foundation. He builds the



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Rebecca S. Clement, Publisher; Sarah T. Dayton, Editor in Chief; Andrew Clancy, Senior Editor; Edward O’Neill, Graphic Designer; Chris Lauer, Contributing Editor

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morality play around that. However, it is not the play that helps him excel under pressure, but his focus on telling the story in court. That ability allows him to withstand the immense pressure of any high-profile trial.

In the Bubble

Once the trial starts, Boies' focus puts him into a bubble. At times, he said, the only people he will socialize with are lawyers on his team and the opposing team. He doesn't want to lose his edge and start thinking of other things. In the courtroom, he said he not only has no idea how the trial is going on a broader level but he does not care. "It's totally irrelevant," he said. "I judge it by how the evidence is coming in — whether you can support what is being said. You sometimes get a sense from the judge, sometimes the juries, but that's very hard." How can the progress of the trial not be relevant? How else would he know where he stood? But that is actually one of the keys to being clutch.

If Boies stopped to congratulate himself on a particularly deft cross-examination or tried to tally up where he stood, he would lose his focus; he would be out of the bubble. He is concerned more with tangible measures. Whether he is winning or losing at any given point, he said, is "a very abstract concept while it is going on. What you're really focused on is the next step, the next witness, the next argument." His focus does not make him myopic. It allows him to follow the tack that he or his opponent is taking at that moment and recalibrate his argument. That is what he can control. "When you're doing a trial, you're so focused, you're not thinking about anything else," he said. ●

Discipline

Discipline is almost always a battle against yourself. You may be in front of a Senate committee, but the true battle is against your own will. Members of the Olympic riflery team in the 1970s realized this when they sought out Ari Kiev with a simple question: How could they calm themselves enough to shoot as well in competition as they did in practice? As the first psychiatrist on the U.S. Sports Medicine Committee, Kiev's task was to teach top amateur athletes how to perform under the stress of elite competition. At the time, sports psychology was little known and less understood. Many were suspicious of psychiatry in general, and several athletes begged off working with him. One exception was the riflery team. They went to him because they knew their success was based on becoming more disciplined. They knew they needed to master their emotions to

Clutch Player: Tiger Woods

When golf champion Tiger Woods was asked how he always seemed to win a tournament when the pressure was greatest, the simplicity of his answer was striking. "I've put myself there, in that situation, more times than anybody else," he said. "I've also failed more times than anybody else. But along the way, you do succeed."

achieve success under pressure. Unlike hockey or soccer players, riflemen had no opposing player and no team to fall back on. A rifleman simply had to stand in competition and shoot the same way he stood and shot in practice.

But the best in the world missed. In the clutch, the pressure got to them. And that was where Kiev, a Harvard- and Cornell-trained psychiatrist, came in.

"I was interested in learning how to help them manage stress," Kiev said. "I looked at what helped them focus and not get distracted."

Pressure at the Highest Level

Working with the riflery team, Kiev gained a greater understanding of how pressure affected someone at the highest level. What they did was a pure example of how being disciplined affected their success or failure in competition. He found that the key for the riflery team was to learn to shoot between breaths. This was something they could focus on and, with discipline, control.

Kiev was a serious medical scientist, not some snake-oil salesman. He was trying to get people to realize that when it came to making big decisions under pressure, they failed because they lacked the discipline to evaluate their choices in the present, without interference from the past. This interference could come from a family crisis — a bad childhood, a difficult relationship — just as it could come from a decision that had not turned out as the person thought it would — a missed shot. ●

Adapting

The Secret Service's plan is for nothing to happen, but that is not always realistic. Adapting is key.

John Hinckley emerged from the press pool and shot President Ronald Reagan in March 1981. That he succeeded in shooting the president was an enormous failure on the Secret Service's part, but how they adapted showed the service's strength. Each man fell into his role. Timothy McCarthy stepped into the line of fire

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and took a bullet meant for Reagan. Jerry Parr and Ray Shaddick threw the president into the bulletproof limousine. The one, though, who stood out most was Drew Unrue, the driver. He was initially told to drive to the White House, but when it was clear Reagan needed immediate medical attention, he was redirected to George Washington Hospital, finding it quickly in an era before every car was equipped with a global positioning system. Every man had a job to do and did it. They did not bemoan the enormous breach of security that had enabled Hinckley to fire five shots. That would be handled later. They fell into line to save the president, allowing the others to clean up afterward. Their plan of protecting the president had failed completely when he got shot. But they didn't focus on that. They adapted and saved his life.

The Plan vs. the Fight

They relied on their training to adapt to any possible scenario and focused on the outcome: protecting the president. This is the key difference between people who are great under pressure and people who are not. Those who wilt when the pressure is hottest fall back on what they expected to do ahead of time, as if it were a security blanket or the only way forward. Those who succeed under pressure readjust: They focus on the goal that needs to be accomplished, not a specific way to accomplish that goal. ●

Being Present

In David Rabe's play *Streamers*, the actor who plays Sergeant Cokes only appears onstage twice. The play takes place in 1965, and the Vietnam War is about to heat up. Set in a barracks in Virginia, *Streamers* tells the story of a group of recruits contemplating going off to Vietnam as their fears, prejudices and innocence rise to the surface. The 20-minute monologue Cokes delivers, the last words of the play, has become one of the most important in contemporary American theater. Whether the play succeeds or fails rests on the shoulders of the actor who plays Cokes, making it a moment ripe for stage fright.

On a late fall night in Boston, the play opened at the Huntington Theater, a respected regional venue, and Larry Clarke was playing Sergeant Cokes. This was the first major revival of *Streamers*, considered by many to be the best of Rabe's four "Vietnam Plays," in 30 years.

The popular image of opening night is one of actors pacing and full of nerves as they wait for the curtain to rise. For seasoned professionals, it is different: That pres-

'Fight the Fight, Not Fight the Plan'

Colonel Thomas Kolditz, the head of the behavioral studies department at the United States Military Academy at West Point, said: "We teach our cadets to fight the fight, not fight the plan. There is a break point where the plan goes in the trash. That's the skill. The focus is on intent. It's outcome based."

sure charges them up. It signals that this is not a rehearsal, this is what they have been working toward. They are completely committed to the present. Regardless of what their fellow actors or the audience throws their way, they're prepared to react under the pressure of live theater.

Clarke, a veteran stage actor whose everyman look became widely known through a recurring role on *Law & Order*, was excited for the curtain to rise in Boston.

Becoming Present

It might seem hard to believe that Clarke was not nervous to take on such a risky and important role. But he had long ago mastered the art of being present.

What does it mean to be present? Being present is a learned behavior. It is partly the result of the previous three clutch traits — focus, discipline and adaptability. But being present is more than the aggregate of these other traits. Being present is a state that makes someone ready for whatever comes his or her way. It is a heightened awareness that prepares him or her to respond. It can be a bit edgy, but it is more that feeling of being aware of nothing other than what you are doing.

Clarke was in a difficult role, but he was not thinking of the people who had done it before him, of failing and taking the play down with him, or of what he was going to do after the show. He was present, and that was why he could be clutch with one of the most challenging roles in contemporary American drama. ●

Fear and Desire

The force of fear is a remarkable factor in helping someone make crucial decisions under pressure.

In 2007, researchers at the University of Bath, in England, found that fear of something less desirable provided great motivation under pressure. They studied 281 university students, two-thirds of whom regularly went to the gym. The researchers were focused on physical

fitness and what motivated some students to work out and others not to. Half of the students were asked to imagine themselves as overweight and unattractive. The researchers then further divided the sample by asking half of the group to imagine themselves failing at their workout regime — and thus becoming even less attractive — while telling the other group to see themselves succeeding wildly and in doing so becoming much more attractive. Over the course of the study, the researchers found that the group that was motivated by the fear of looking awful, stuck to their workout better than the group that was doing it with the hope of looking better. The gap between the two groups was significant, with 85 percent who wanted to avoid becoming unattractive continuing their workouts when told they were failing compared to 65 percent who were told they were succeeding. Even if both groups started out going to the gym regularly, the ones that were doing it to look better than they already did dropped off, while those who felt, in essence, that they had to dig themselves out of a hole were the ones who continued.

It would make sense that once someone has attained something tangible, like a degree of physical fitness, fear would not work as a motivator anymore. For executives who have motivated themselves through the push and pull of fear and desire, the pressure is always on and there is no end zone. They feel that they need to keep going or else they will be drawn back to where they started. That combination of fear and desire allows them to be clutch when someone motivated by just one of these emotions might fold.

Lousy Childhoods

Some people show skills that have made them clutch in particular events. But those who have navigated through pressure-filled upbringings to successful lives are different. Theirs is an overarching life strategy for being clutch. It is macro, not micro. Fear and desire enable them to be clutch, but these are not strategies they can turn off. Obviously not all people who had a lousy childhood or suffered a business setback will learn to succeed under the pressure of leading an entrepreneurial life. But some people can use fear and desire to succeed under pressure. ●

Double Clutch: What Billie Jean King Did for Women

On Sept. 20, 1973, Billie Jean King and Bobby Riggs entered the Houston Astrodome in a procession worthy

of gladiators. King, one of the greatest female tennis players of her day, was carried in on an Egyptian litter by four barrel-chested men in togas. Riggs, a player once ranked No. 1 in the world, was wheeled into the stadium by a bevy of voluptuous women pulling a rickshaw. Some 30,000 people had filled the stands, and the match was broadcast live to an estimated 48 million American homes as well as beamed via satellite to 36 foreign countries.

Riggs, 55, had been shooting his mouth off about women being inferior athletes compared with men, and King, 29, had stood up to prove him wrong.

From the outset, King ran Riggs all over the court. She served and volleyed to beat him at his own game. She went on to beat him 6–3 to win. In the *New York Times* story the next day, King was lauded for her victory. The paper reported that she took just over two hours “to reaffirm her status as one of the most gifted and tenacious competitors in sports, female or male.” King proved that women, under extreme pressure, could be as clutch as men.

The Burden of Double Clutch

When a woman succeeds under the inherent pressure of what she is doing but also while being judged against men, she is double clutch. Here’s why. If one woman beats another under the pressure of a major tournament, coming from behind to do so, against expectations, she is clutch. But transpose that to worlds where women have not historically been leaders — the business world, scientific research, the military — and the woman who succeeds there is double clutch. She first has to perform under the pressure of the task at hand as anyone would, but then she also has to navigate through an inherent bias that says women have not succeeded historically in these fields. She has combined all five elements that would make us say she was a clutch performer but then taken her skills to a higher level. She has made her sex irrelevant and her performance paramount. She has done this against the inherent pressure of the task and also the pressure of institutional bias.

What Does It All Mean?

How Billie Jean King prepared to play Bobby Riggs was a lesson in combining the five key traits of being clutch. One, King was focused on preparing for the match as if she were playing a top female competitor, not an old man. Two, she showed tremendous discipline in the shots she hit, picking the ones that would put Riggs at a disadvantage. Three, she had a plan to tire him out, but if, after the first of five sets, that plan was

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failing, she was prepared to adapt it. She was concentrating on winning the match, not winning it in any particular way. Four, after she had prepared, she put herself in the present, embracing the moment but never getting ahead of herself. Five, she was driven not only by the fear of losing to Riggs and the setback that would have been for women's rights but also by the desire to shut Riggs up. This was the total clutch package.

The flip side of this was Riggs, who made two of the three cardinal errors of people who choke. First, Riggs was shockingly overconfident. He had beaten Margaret Court and thought he would beat King just as handily. Second, he was already thinking of the accolades that would be bestowed on him when he beat her — before they had even played. While he was talking, he was not training, and that showed in how quickly he tired out. Yet, after his defeat, he did what many chokers do not or cannot do: He took personal responsibility for his loss. As King threw her racquet in the air to claim victory, he leaped the net and, in congratulating her, he said, "I really underestimated you." ●

PART II: WHY PEOPLE CHOKER

A Leader's Responsibility

Just as there are five traits shared by people who are clutch, there are three common causes of choking. An inability to take responsibility for your actions is one of them. The other two are overthinking and overconfidence.

When it comes to choking, a refusal to accept personal responsibility is often the starting point. The unwillingness to take blame for bad decisions and tolerate criticism for tough ones is a telltale sign of a bad leader under any conditions. It becomes a critical flaw, though, if he finds himself in a situation where serious, tough and probably unpopular choices are necessary. The longer he has to navigate under pressure, the worse he is going to make the situation. His desire to dodge responsibility is going to become more apparent and magnify his choking.

Pressure Reveals Who Has It and Who Doesn't

The psychological literature around personal responsibility has two strands. The first veers toward self-help. Most books are geared toward getting people out of bad relationships and bad behaviors. They take a consoling route: *I did this; I should not have; and I'm going to stop.* The second is the objective philosophy associated with Ayn Rand. It advocates a form of enlightened self-

interest that requires people to take responsibility for what they do and be rewarded for it: *I did this well, and I deserve to be compensated for it.* The psychology of self-help and Rand's enlightened self-interest share an emphasis on taking responsibility for what you have done, good or bad, and either becoming better or becoming recognized for it. The reward for the responsibility, though, comes after the fact. It's reactive.

The type of personal responsibility that is needed to be good in the clutch is different. It is always there, but under pressure it becomes purely focused and is the underlying force in the action: *I am doing this because it is the right thing to do, and if I fail, I know I tried.* Responsibility here is not an accounting for your actions; it is your actions. And however it turns out, you are the one who did it. You are the one in your office working on the deal; you are not letting someone else iron out the details.

Responsibility is doing what is right and leaving the rest to be sorted out. ●

The Perils of Overthinking

The baseball world was turned upside down in 2008. The New York Yankees missed the playoffs for the first time in 13 years and the Tampa Bay Rays, a perennial last-place finisher in the same league, made it to the World Series. Many factors guided the two teams to victory and defeat, but two players came to represent each team's divergent fortunes: an experienced, highly paid choker and a rookie who was amazing in the clutch. Both had been No. 1 draft picks in their respective years, but that was where the similarities seemed to cease. This is where we look at the second trait of chokers, overthinking, through how Alex Rodriguez (A-Rod) and David Price saw themselves during that time.

Overthinking What You Do

How could a young, untested pitcher be so clutch in the most pressure-filled moment in his team's history, while a seasoned player, a three-time American League Most Valuable Player, could spend season after season choking when it mattered most? The answer lies not in how they went about doing their jobs but in how they *thought* about doing their jobs.

Price threw the ball as he had been trained to do — hard and fast or with a curve to it — and struck out batters. Rodriguez was the one who struck out, hit into double plays, popped up weakly or otherwise hurt his team when it needed their greatest player most. The reason was, in the clutch, A-Rod overthought his every

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move; in fact, he thought of most of his moves in their historic place in baseball. Price, on the other hand, channeled his college success and his failures to get himself ready to pitch. Under pressure, Price pitched normally, but A-Rod played differently, as if the weight of expectations was sitting on the end of his bat.

Just as the Yankees won all the time, the Rays lost. It was the natural order of baseball: New York had the best players money could buy; Tampa Bay had rookies, middling players and aged veterans cut from other teams.

But by October, the feeling had changed.

The greatest piece of insight into A-Rod's mindset was a 2001 *Esquire* profile by Scott Raab. "It's hard to compete when you don't have a place in the game now as a shortstop, so you have to look years back to find someone to compete against," A-Rod said before signing the largest baseball contract ever. "That's what I do. I'm playing against guys like Ernie Banks or Hank Aaron or Ozzie Smith." All three are considered among the best to have ever played the game.

A-Rod's mind was filled with lofty assumptions: He expected to make the clutch plays fans crave, to be the perennial subject of ESPN highlight clips, to leave glory in the path to the Hall of Fame. Three years before pitching his team into the World Series, Price was considering a job at McDonald's. A-Rod imagined himself playing alongside Banks, Aaron and Smith when he needed to think about hitting the ball. Price focused on trying to pitch as well as he could whether it was a Vanderbilt [*where Price played college baseball*] game or the World Series. That is the difference between thinking and overthinking.

To avoid the perils of overthinking, a person needs to just do what he does — and not think of what he could, would or should do in that situation. ●

Overconfidence Starts the Fall

Overconfidence is the bigger, more destructive cousin of overthinking. It might be the most pernicious form of choking for one reason: its magnitude. When someone like A-Rod overthinks the situation, he fails personally, but other teammates can make up for his shortcomings. When the leader of a company becomes overconfident, his choking can be systemic. (The opposite is also true: A company that overthinks things may miss out on a deal and lose market share, but it can probably correct things. And a person who is blithely overconfident on his own most likely spirals into ineffectiveness — or bar-room solipsism — without doing greater harm.) But the

collapse overconfidence brings about is a complicated thing. It usually starts off as a feeling of unease, and that uneasiness may manifest itself as a sense that something is not sustainable, perhaps even at the top. Then, it abates, with months, years passing before anything more happens. But when the collapse comes, it is usually swift. And those left in its wake start to wonder how they missed something so obvious. The lies, the tales, the trumped-up reports were, of course, too good to be true. If it was fraud, and not mismanagement, the sense of betrayal is worse. And if it wasn't, then the steps to arrest the decline become obvious in retrospect.

Four Causes of Overconfidence

Tony Alvarez and Bryan Marsal, two of the go-to guys in the business that clean up when leaders fail under pressure, said one of four reasons always causes the overconfidence:

- The least pernicious reason is the business cycle. If your business is built on oil trading no lower than \$30 a barrel, when it is at \$50 a barrel, you're fine; if it goes to \$20 a barrel, you could be in trouble.
- The second state that creates overconfident executives is easy money. When Lehman Brothers filed for bankruptcy, a victim of too much debt and misplaced bets, Marsal was named the company's chief restructuring officer. He said: "They shouldn't have had so much leverage. They shouldn't have had such a disproportionate concentration in real estate assets. And they should have been smarter about using short-term debt to finance long-term assets."
- The third reason is the bad manager thinks he knows more than he actually does.
- The fourth reason that causes overconfidence is the fraudulent manager is uniquely and supremely overconfident. He thinks he can get away with something and never be detected. ●

PART III: HOW TO BE CLUTCH

How to Be Clutch with Your Money

"Money is the most powerful secular force in the world," Brad Klontz, financial psychologist and author of *Mind Over Money*, said. "Money is linked to everything — safety, health, relationships, creativity and spontaneity, social belonging. It's the one thing that intersects everything, and as soon as I'm talking about money, all the family dynamics come out."

When many people saw their portfolios plummet in

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the Great Recession, loss led to anger and, worse, blame. However, there are lessons to be learned and clear ways to be clutch with financial decisions in the future. Here are five specific steps to take when the pressure you face is financial:

- **Accept.** The first step to getting out of a tough financial bind is to admit that you're in one. That's not as easy as it sounds. Americans are generally a future-focused group. Accept that your financial situation is not as you thought and the longer you wait to act, the more pressure will be on every decision.
- **Psychologically Readjust.** The faster this happens the better. You have to become aware of the feelings you're having about your money. In a crisis, it may be gone and that's not good. But obsessing about it is not going to make it come back.
- **Prioritize.** Once you have come to terms with what has to be done, you have to decide how to divide things up: What do you need, what do you want to keep and what needs to go immediately? Getting rid of what you can't afford in a crisis will go a long way to bettering your financial position.
- **Take Responsibility.** No one made you buy a house or anything else you could not afford. Regardless of what kind of deal or incomprehensible mortgage you were offered, the ultimate responsibility lies with you.
- **Focus on the Outcome.** You want to live to fight another day. Your goal is not to sell one thing to buy another. Your goal is to shore up your personal balance sheet. Once you have restructured your cash flow, you will be better positioned to make money decisions under less pressure.

Ultimately, being clutch in a personal financial crisis means embracing thriftiness to keep yourself out of such crises in the first place. ●

How to Be Clutch in Sports

Dale Lynch's breakthrough as a golf coach came when the mechanics of the golf swing began to make sense to him.

Making a player's game complete so he had no weaknesses under pressure became Lynch's goal. The player could still hit bad shots or get lucky or unlucky, but when he stood over the ball, he would feel confident that he could hit whatever shot was required. To get to this end, Lynch started to simplify everything in order to dissect the different shots. Then he measured the results so he could quantify what a player needed to work on.

His work was noticed by the Australian government, and, in 1991, he was hired to start a golf training school at the Victorian Institute of Sport, an Olympic-level training center.

From the start, there were five areas that Lynch emphasized:

- **Technique.** This was first and foremost. If a player was not technically sound, his swing would break down under pressure.
- **Physical Conditioning.** If you run out of steam on the 15th hole, no theories or tips are going to help you win.
- **Simulated Pressure.** Instead of letting students hit a particular shot 20 times, the coaches forced them to hit it right the first time or not at all. They began to emphasize quality over quantity.
- **An Unwavering Routine.** "When we work with young players, part of the coping package is working on their routine and making it consistent," Lynch said. "That helps their mental skills to cope."
- **Success on the Road.** Because of Australia's distance from the rest of the world, all young players had to travel. But this allowed Lynch to test their progress. On unfamiliar terrain, their deficiencies become apparent. This quickly increases their frustration and puts pressure on their game.

With all five points, Lynch's goal was to create a complete player.

Lynch's way to handle pressure is to get your fundamentals solid, and you'll know you can rely on them under pressure. Have any weaknesses and they will haunt you when your adrenaline is pumping and you are struggling to stay focused. The same can be said for any recreational sport, from tennis and squash to skiing, rowing or any number of activities in which you pit yourself against the elements: If your fundamentals are sound, you will do better under pressure.

It all starts with a know-thyself moment followed by hard work on the fundamentals of the game. Being clutch is not a mystical state; it takes work. ●

RECOMMENDED READING LIST

If you liked *Clutch*, you'll also like:

1. ***Mojo* by Marshall Goldsmith.** Performance, both on and off the job, is linked to a quality that Goldsmith refers to as *mojo*. In this title, he shows you how to get and maintain your *mojo*.
2. ***Executive Presence* by Harrison Monarth.** Monarth helps readers understand the power of perception and provides the techniques needed to take a career to its highest level.
3. ***Talent is Overrated* by Geoff Colvin.** Colvin dispels the myth that otherworldly abilities come from out of the ether. In this title, he explores the concept of deliberate practice and how it can be applied to business and life.