

Dear All

Over the weekend, I saw Viktor Axelsen of Denmark defeat Sen of India to win the All England badminton championship. Denmark has won the maximum number of all England championships in the open era. Axelsen is in a long list of danish champions like Erland Kops, Morten Frost, and Erik Lausen. This got me to thinking whether there is some magic to this kind of consistency. This is what I learnt:

1. A small tennis club Spartak, outside of Moscow has produced more Top 20 women's tennis players than the whole of The USA. Argentina Polo is always head and shoulders above everyone else. Egypt produces more squash champions than any other country. Brazil produces more outstanding footballers than any other country. USA produces more top golfers and basketballers than everyone else. South Korea produces better archers than any other country. Iran is a powerhouse in weightlifting. Why is this so?
2. When a country or region wins a lot, then government support comes in, academies get built and sponsorship comes in. Everyone loves supporting a winning cause.
3. Brazil has a 'football in the room' concept where people play in a small room 5 vs 5 with a small ball. Control becomes critical with a small ball, and passing has to be spot on. Most Brazilian kids play this game till 12 years of age. This system produces great footballers with great skills.
4. These are talent hotbeds for that game or skill. At a first level, this is about individuals in that locality being inspired by acts of winning and saying, if he/she can, I can also try that. How do I get good at it like them?
5. Malcolm Gladwell talked of the 10,000 hour rule to get good at something. Daniel Coyle in his book 'The Talent Code' says that talent grows in the brain with repeated intensive practice.
6. The institutions that produce winners regularly eliminate passive learning, they focus on active learning. For example in the Spartak tennis club, the young tennis players are just made to swing a racquet without hitting a ball. This forces them to focus on the swing and the follow through imagining a ball in front of them.
7. These institutions embrace, and celebrate struggle and repetition. Struggle is not seen as failure repetition is not seen as drudgery or boring.
8. For these institutions, talent is grown, it is about building a pattern, changing behavior. The practice is in a certain way – it's called deep practice. This is about velocity of skill/capability acquisition.
9. These institutions build on the past, they are never satisfied with what's delivered in the past, that's why you get a faster serve a new shot, a new pass, a new dribble. Businesses could well do to copy this. Businesses tend to rely on the past and extrapolate from there.
10. Understanding success, decoding success and making it into a capsule that can be repeated with an assembly line of prospective winners is the real answer.

What can companies learn from this method of building unique and high value talent that beats the world?

Feedback welcome

Wr
shiv