

Baseball Wisdom for Lawyers

By Talmage Boston— (April 4) – Like all lines of work, a lawyer’s career will have some peaks and plenty of valleys. Maybe a big client goes broke. Maybe one’s law firm splits. Maybe a big jury verdict goes the wrong way. Maybe a whole segment of the economy tanks. Maybe new legislation restricts one’s capacity to maintain success. Maybe a disgruntled client files a grievance or pursues a malpractice claim. Yes, there are many ways a bullish career can suddenly and unexpectedly turn bearish.



Talmage Boston

Lawyers who stay in the trenches more than three decades will probably get to experience many, if not most of these adverse circumstances. Some find a way to keep their heads up and continue putting one foot in front of the other until they find a way out of the valley; though some do

not, and deal with career setbacks by engaging in various addictions intended to numb the pain.

Given the reality that practicing law over the long haul has the potential to drive one’s ego into the ditch and shatter self-confidence, our line of work readily compares with the daily grind of the position player in big league baseball who, even if he’s a star on a top team, will necessarily fail at the plate more often than two out of every three at bats, as his ball club loses at least two out of every five games.

Some recent thoughts on maintaining one’s equilibrium while riding out hard times in the valley come to lawyers from an unlikely source: the reigning AL West Division Champion Texas Rangers, thanks to the thoughtful “outside the lines” reporting of *Dallas Morning News* lead baseball writer, Evan Grant.

In the August 20 issue of the paper last summer, Evan explained how Shin-Soo Choo turned his season around last year – when he hit a whopping .221 during the first half of the season; but then well over .300 in the second half. Choo turned it around at the All-Star break last season, thanks to a heart-to-heart conversation with his wife, Won Mi Ha. Her good counsel was essentially based on a well-known biblical metaphor and gave Choo an epiphany. Here’s how he described it.

“She said everyone’s life is like a building. You spend your life building this building. Some people build things very quickly and very tall, but it doesn’t have a solid foundation. Some people build their building on sand and when it shakes, it falls. The importance is in the foundation. She told me that as a ballplayer, I’ve built a very strong building, but like everyone, it’s going to get shaken, and she told me my building is built on a solid foundation and I shouldn’t try to change it, because it will stand up sturdy over time.”

Along the same line of wisdom dispensed by Mrs. Choo, at spring training this year, Evan Grant reported in the March 19 Morning News issue about how Rangers’ third base coach Tony Beasley counseled young infielder Joey Gallo recently on how to bounce back from his disappointing entry into the big leagues in 2015, as the coach provided life advice to the young slugger while receiving four hours’ worth of chemotherapy intravenously in his battle with cancer.

Gallo asked Beasley how he managed to stay positive every day in spite of his major health issues. The coach answered, “Life is 10 percent what happens to you and 90 percent how you deal with it. I can go to work and function or I can lay at my house, sleep, and mope. If I do that, I’m defeated.” >

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Then Beasley, quite the psychologist, zeroed in on Gallo's state of mind as the young power hitter now tries to fulfill his massive potential in the context of his strikeout-laced performance last summer during his few weeks in a Rangers uniform, which caused him to suffer through what he calls "the toughest year of my life."

Beasley: "I told Joey that in baseball, if you allow yourself to be defeated mentally, if you dwell on what's happening while you're in a slump, it's going to get worse. When things aren't going well, you have a choice whether or not you're going to believe in yourself."

Grant reported that Gallo left the hospital after their four-hour conversation in the cancer treatment center with Beasley, went to the ballpark, and immediately hit a monster home run in the spring training game that afternoon, and has now devised a different hitting approach that has thus far significantly reduced the frequency of his strikeouts.

The coach told Evan Grant that as the summer goes on, and Joey Gallo reflects on the time he spent in the Arizona hospital with his new

mentor in a room filled with people receiving chemotherapy, Beasley believes, "He will look back and say, 'These people were fighting for their lives; why am I fighting myself over an 0-for-4?'"

Lawyers who now find themselves dealing with a setback in their practice should take to heart the words from both Won Mi Ha Choo and Tony Beasley. If one is satisfied about the quality of his/her "foundation" as an attorney, then let the winds blow and the storms come, and they will soon pass. If one makes the decision not to focus on a temporary career drought, and commits to believing in his/her talents and life's big picture, therein lies the path that can take a lawyer out of the valley and ultimately on to higher ground.

Talmage Boston is a shareholder at Winstead PC, and a Media Member of the Texas Baseball Hall of Fame. His books *1939: Baseball's Tipping Point* (Bright Sky Press 2005, foreword by John Grisham) and *Baseball and the Baby Boomer* (Bright Sky Press 2009, foreword by Frank Deford) can be found at amazon.com.

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