



Take Advantage of Opportunities

Opportunity is everywhere. You just have to keep your eyes open and focus on finding it. Once you spot an opportunity, if you decide you are willing to do whatever it takes, it's only a matter of time before you get what you want.

In November 1987, we had just arrived at the luge track in St. Moritz, Switzerland. We were about to begin training and qualifying for the World Cup Race that weekend. The International Luge World Cup Circuit is like a traveling circus. Every week, you see the same group of athletes at a different track. We typically travel on Mondays; train and qualify, Tuesday through Friday; race on the weekends; then travel to the next track.

As soon as we got to the St. Moritz track, I noticed something was different. There were only three sleds signed up in the doubles competition. Doubles luge is a wild sport consisting of two athletes lying on the same sled. They both steer, but only the top man can see. The top man gives body signals to the bottom man to tell him when to steer. It takes years to develop the trust, communication skills, and teamwork required to do well in doubles. I'd never done it. I'm a singles luge racer. But only three sleds! What an opportunity!

I ran to my best luge buddy, Pablo Garcia of Spain, and excitedly told him, "This is our chance! We'll never have another opportunity like this! We have to find a doubles sled and race. If one of those other three sleds crashes, we'll have a World Cup Medal!"

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Pablo's no dummy. He saw the opportunity right away. But we still had to talk Coach into letting us race. We told him the opportunity was too good to pass up. It was even worth the risk of injury. Coach said, "If you can find a doubles sled in this town, you've got my blessing."

Finding a doubles sled in St. Moritz was going to be a real challenge. Even though they have a track, St. Moritz is not a big luge town. They love bobsled and skeleton (head-first luge), but hardly anyone in St. Moritz does the luge. That didn't matter to us. We were determined to do whatever it took to make it happen.

I spent two days knocking on doors all around the town asking the locals if they had a doubles sled we could borrow. I was cold-calling in a foreign country – in a town that does not like lugers! They speak German in St. Moritz. I don't. But it didn't matter. When you want something bad enough, the facts don't count. You just do it. I knocked on the doors, regurgitated a German phrase I had memorized – "*Haben sie ein doppelsitzer rennrodern schlitten fur die weltcup renn?*" (Do you have a doubles sled for the World Cup Race?) and hoped they nodded.

Eventually, I found a man who had a twenty year-old rusted out sled in his shed. He agreed to let us borrow it. We spent the next two days getting that antique sled race-ready.

On race day, everyone came out to see Pablo and I kill ourselves trying to do doubles. We almost did! We were on the verge of crashing the whole way down. But we finished the race, placed fourth, and actually received a World Cup Medal (we'd never even seen a 4th place medal before, they usually only award medals to the top three finishers), got out pictures in the paper, and best of all, we earned so many World Cup Points for coming in fourth, that by season's end, we had a world ranking of 14th in the doubles.

The following week, the word that Pablo and I had taken fourth in the World Cup spread like wildfire in the luge circuit. Some of the athletes who had not shown up in St. Moritz heard about what we had done, but passed off our victory saying, "we were lucky." Pablo and I explained to them that "luck had nothing to do with it." We simply had seen an opportunity, and made a decision to do whatever it took to win, and in the end, won! We made our own luck.

I guarantee you that if you will develop that attitude – the attitude that you will go for it and give it your all, your life will be a lot more fun. People will be amazed at the things you accomplish. Jump and the net will appear. It really will!

Put it into action:

Take advantage of opportunities. Don't second guess yourself. If you feel an opportunity is right for you, take immediate action. You'll be glad you did.

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