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PERSPECTIVE

A championship mindset leads to winning mediations

By Joel Bertet

The cramp in my left hamstring shot waves of pain with each revolution of the pedals. My competitor was starting to ramp up the pace. I fixed my eyes on his handlebars and legs. A flick of the handlebars or twitch of his legs would signal the sprint was on. I wanted to keep him about five bike lengths in front of me. A perfect position to get the “run into him” and slingshot around him. He drops down the velodrome trying to shake me on the straight section and then drives straight up the 45-degree banking pushing very hard. I push hard to stay on his wheel. Faster still, he pounds on the pedals trying to shake me. We hit 50 kph. I can sense the jump is going to come at any moment. We are at the top of the track in turn 4 looking down a 4-story drop. He dives down the track at full speed. I match the jump, and we are both going almost 66 kph as we head into 1 lap to go. My hamstring is screaming in pain. That pain has been overtaken by the excruciating molten lava of lactic acid blowing up my legs. Heartrate is ticking at 180 bpm. Everything in my body is telling me to stop. Just give up. This is too hard. It’s not worth it. There is always next year. The evil voice starts to whisper in my mind “The pain is too great, silver is a good win, it’s ok.”

The championship mindset kicks in, and I shut down that negative voice. My positive self-talk takes over. “A champion never gives up until the end. Fight all the way to



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the finish line. Let’s gooooo.” My target is his rear wheel. I need to time my slingshot perfectly so that I run up into his draft and slingshot around him. I start to close the gap as we enter turn three. I come up on his hip approaching turn four. As we exit turn four the finish line is fast approaching, and our front wheels are matched. I push with every ounce of energy I have left. We have both fought through 10 rounds of sprints. We are now in the best of three sprints for the Gold Medal. We each won a sprint. This is the third and final sprint for the Championship. We are both physically destroyed. Neither of us has anything left to give. It all comes down to who wants it more. I know

what I need to do. If I can just edge past him in the slightest I will “take his soul.” I edge past his front wheel as the finish line quickly approaches. I see his head drop and shoulders slump. Gotcha, soul taken. I pass the finish line ahead of him by almost a full bike length. Championship Win!

I am a Track Sprinter in the velodrome. The velodrome is a 250-meter bathtub-shaped structure featuring steeply banked corners of two 180-degree circular bends connected by two straights. The corners are angled up to 48% allowing riders to hit speeds in excess of 80 kph. Track cyclists ride their bikes on the velodrome on specialized track bikes that have no brakes and fixed

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gears. There is no free wheel so you can't stop pedaling. You use your legs to decelerate. There are many types of racing events in the track world. Individual timed events, team events, and bunch racing are all Olympic events. Sprinters are a special breed of track racers engaging in the Match Sprint. Match Sprints begin with two riders lined up side by side. Rider one and Rider two each held in place by their respective coaches. The commissaire checks that they are ready and then blows the whistle starting the race. It's three laps and the first to cross the finish line wins. It starts off with a chess game for positioning and finishes off with a full gas sprint. Match Sprint tournaments are comprised of several rounds. You must win each round to advance to the next round. Qualifiers, eighth-finals, quarter finals, semi-finals, and finals. The semi-finals and final rounds will often

be the best of three races. By the time you get to the championship round you would have gone 10-12 rounds with about one hour of recovery between each round for a 12-hour day. Each sprint requires tactical concentration and maximal effort. It's utterly exhausting. The winner of the gold medal has the strongest willpower and winning mindset. Physical strength is meaningless in the final round. Everyone is fried. It's the person who wants it more that will eventually win.

This winning mindset and ability to go round after round and never give up is what it takes to be a great mediator. In mediation it's called impasse. In sprinting is called pushing beyond your limits. It takes a mindset of never giving up no matter how hard it is to make it to the next round. There will be several rounds in a mediation where an impasse is reached. It would be easy to give up. You must fight to find solutions

to get past each obstacle. When racing a faster competitor, you need to outsmart him tactically to win. You need to find his weakness or his strength and use it to your advantage. Similarly in a mediation when dealing with difficult parties or complex and difficult issues you must find solutions to get past the roadblock. Breaking through walls, getting past difficult rounds is what will provide the momentum needed to resolve even the most difficult mediations. I learned this lesson when I won my first championship event. The goal seemed impossible. In my mind, the competitors were faster, stronger, more experienced. I didn't feel worthy of winning, of belonging in the Club of Champions. Something magical happens when you win your first championship event. Your mindset changes. You now see yourself as a winner and a champion. You expect yourself to continue winning

and you feel worthy of competing for another win. As a mediator, I arrive with a similar mindset. This is a competition and resolution is the way to win. It's a team event and to have a winning team mentality you have to make it clear to all parties that you are going to ask them to work very hard as well. The mediator will facilitate and assist with all possible options and alternative ways to view the case. It is also important for everyone to agree and understand that everyone is going to work hard to find an acceptable settlement. The mediator is going to challenge and ask them to consider making hard decisions. Most importantly the champion mediator will never give up until we all cross the finish line. The end result will find us all standing on the top podium with a win. Exhausted, tired, and spent, but content and proud for having left it all on the field.