



Zero Regrets: Be Greater Than Yesterday

By Apolo Ohno

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Over three consecutive Olympic games, Apolo Ohno has come to symbolize the very best of the competitive spirit—remaining equally gracious in victory and defeat, always striving to improve his performance, and appreciating the value of the hard work of training as much as any reward it might bring. In *Zero Regrets*, Apolo shares the inspiring personal story behind his remarkable success, as well as the hard-won truths and strategies he has discovered in good times and bad.

Raised by his single father, an immigrant from Japan who often worked twelve-hour days, the young Apolo found it difficult to balance his enormous natural gifts as an athlete with a wild, rebellious streak. After making a name for himself as a promising young speed skater, his career was almost over before it began when his lack of preparation caused him to finish last at the U.S. Olympic trials in 1998. A life-changing week of solitary soul-searching at the age of fifteen led him to recommit himself to his training, and at the 1999 world junior championships he won first place overall—one of the most remarkable turnarounds in sports history. From that moment on, the world of speed skating had a new champion and Apolo was on his way to legendary status.

Much more than an account of races won and lost, *Zero Regrets* is a compelling portrait of a father-and-son relationship that deepened over time and was based on respect, love, and faith in each other. For the first time, Apolo reveals what he knows about his long-absent mother; he makes us feel what it is like to face the best competitors on the planet with the eyes of millions of fans upon you; and he shares his secrets for achieving total focus and mental toughness, secrets that can be applied in situations well beyond sports. We learn the details of the unbelievably intense workout and diet that he endured while training for the 2010 Winter Olympics, a regime that literally reshaped his body and led to some of his most thrilling victories.

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PROLOGUE: TOWARD A EUPHORIC CLARITY

I am my father's son.

Because that is so, I am also very much my own man. My path in life is my own.

But it is because of my dad, Yuki, that I could find my way in the first instance and keep going at those moments when I faltered. And thus it is not the successes I have had—on and off the ice, at the Olympic Games and beyond—that I most appreciate.

It is the journey.

A journey I have undertaken in concert, if not always in perfect harmony, with my father and with the many others who have helped shape and guide me; a journey I have undertaken carrying this in my heart and my soul:

Zero regrets.

The late, great basketball coach John Wooden used to say, "Success is peace of mind which is a direct result of self-satisfaction in knowing you did your best to become the best you are capable of."

Zero regrets.

It's a philosophy not just about sport but also about life. School, business, academics, love—anything and everything.

Zero regrets.

Life is about making the most of it. While we can. Because we can.

It's complicated and yet not. You have to figure out who it is you want to be. Not what you want to be—who. There has to be a vision, a dream, a plan. Then you chase that with everything you've got. That means you have to put in the work, the practice, the training. There aren't any shortcuts. If you want something, you have to be 100 percent clear in how you plan to get it. You have to be relentless in your pursuit.

I didn't ever want to be complacent. I didn't want to think back about my day and think, *Yes, Apolo, that was good enough*. So this is what I would say to myself when I would lie down in bed at night: *Zero regrets*. I would think it, and I would even say it out loud to myself. This is what I would say to myself when I was hammering out miles on the treadmill: *No regrets*. Sometimes inside my head, sometimes out loud. This is what I would say when I was in the weight room: *Absolutely zero regrets*.

I knew to a certainty that if I pushed myself too hard on the treadmill, I would suffer the next day. Maybe I would be almost too tired on the ice. So I would say to myself, too: *Forget about tomorrow*. What if today were the last day of training you could be remembered for? What if this particular interval that I was doing on the treadmill right now—right now!—was the last one I would be remembered for? That's how I trained. That's how I approached it.

This path in the pursuit of victory within the Olympic Games was one that I took on occasion to the utmost extreme. This path was not mine alone; over the years, many people reached out and lent their expertise and their knowledge, eager to help me be my best. With a nod to such unbelievable support, I nonetheless decided to take a singular path in preparing for the 2010 Vancouver Games, one that was lonely, one that was hard, one that most would shy away from, one that came laden with unreal expectations. Simply put, I

needed to keep myself in a bubble. I wanted to create a very simple environment in which only a few key people were around me most of the day and for weeks at a time. From this place, I was able to confront my insecurities. I could smile as I confronted fear, my confidence building in my ability to do what I was trying to accomplish.

In the past, I may have faltered, taken a misstep, taken a step back. For me, this time around, that was not an option. I was attempting to be stronger than I thought possible. Such strength did not come from my physical self; it started within the depths of my mind. That severe shift in your mental approach—the “shift of mechanism”—was so incredibly important in creating victory, regardless of whether I would end up standing on the podium or not. The path or road less traveled is often one that is filled with the most reward and joy. I lived—I live—for the moment.

When I am asked now to speak at businesses, when I speak to the chief executive officers of Fortune 500 companies, what’s on the table is inspiration: how to get it, find it, keep it, to take that particular company to the next level. When I’m told, for instance, “We’re looking to take our skill set to the next level,” I like to say, “We all want something. Have you clearly outlined what it is? Do you have a clear understanding of how to direct your focus and get there?” It doesn’t need to be a complete plan in every detail—but the more clear you are about exactly what you want and the better definition you have of what it’s going to take to get to that point and beyond, the more likely those things are to come to fruition.

They say the more you think with particularity about things, the more you acknowledge the wanting of a specific thing, the more you articulate that out loud, then the more likely it is to come true. There is great truth in that. It takes a really clear understanding of how to reach a point and what it’s going to take to get there.

Ultimately, you test yourself. It’s race day. Or whatever the context: it’s a test if you’re at school, a big presentation if you’re in the business world. Whatever that context, you put yourself to the test.

Winning does not always mean coming in first. Second or third, even fourth—they are wins, too, no matter what anyone says. Real victory is in arriving at the finish line with no regrets. You go all out. And then you accept the consequences.

That’s what makes a champion—in sports, in business, in life, in your relationships with family and friends. You go with heart, with excitement and enthusiasm, with soul.

This is just some of what I have learned from my father—what he taught me and then what I have learned by and for myself. My father instilled in me passion, purpose, and pride. And, as well, dedication, discipline, and drive. I made those values mine. Along the way, I won eight Olympic medals. That makes me, they say, the most decorated American in Winter Games history.

THAT HUMBLER ME.

It’s especially humbling when you consider how it all started. My dad came to the United States with no money. He spoke no English. He had three cameras around his neck—one Canon and two Nikons—figuring that if times got really, really tough, he could sell them and have maybe enough money to eat. He made his way to Seattle. There he worked as a janitor, as a dishwasher. He thought he wanted to become an accountant and instead became a hairstylist. He raised me by himself. When I was young, he tried most of all just to keep me busy—swimming, singing, skating. Anything just to tire me out.

When I was eleven, we watched the 1994 Winter Olympics together on television. Those were the Olympics from Lillehammer, Norway, the Games most people remember for the Tonya-and-Nancy show. Not in our house. Short-track speed skating—now, that was cool. To me, the skaters looked like action superheroes.

I tried it. I liked it. My dad drove me around Seattle and the Pacific Northwest, to Vancouver. I got better. I got noticed. When I was just fourteen, I was invited to train with a junior national team developmental program all the way across the country in Lake Placid, New York. I didn't want to go. In fact, I didn't go. And then I did. Because my dad showed me what trust, what courage, and what love are all about. Here, he understood, was an extraordinary opportunity, and when opportunity like that comes around, you have to go for it.

Otherwise, what are you left looking at? Regret.

In Lake Placid, I got good—really good. It seemed like I was a lock for the 1998 Olympics. Except I bombed out. And then my dad showed me what it's like to have faith in someone. Genuine, profound, life-changing faith. Through one risky, extraordinary act, he gave me—and then I seized—a second chance.

This is how and where my journey really took off. From there, I have lived so much that has played out on the public stage—in three different Olympic Games, the chaotic silver and the gold that sparked so much controversy in Salt Lake City in 2002, the seemingly “perfect” race in Torino in 2006, the four-for-four medals count in Vancouver in 2010 that became three-for-four when I was disqualified in the 500-meter sprint just moments after it appeared I had won what would have been an eighth medal.

I have eight. That's short-track. No regrets.

In Salt Lake, for instance, coming around the final turn of the 1000 meters, it looked like the race was mine. I was ahead, sprinting for the finish line; here was my first Olympic medal, and it was going to be gold. But in a flash, that gold was gone, four of the five of us in the race down on the ice in what might be the most freakish short-track accident that has ever occurred or ever will occur. There was only one guy left upright, Steve Bradbury of Australia, who had been at least 30 meters behind the rest of the pack; while the rest of us were trying to pick ourselves up, he sailed through and across the line to win the gold medal.

Not for one second—not then, not now, and not ever—have I ever been anything but satisfied, completely satisfied, with that race and how it all turned out.

How is that possible? Because this race turned out just the way it obviously was supposed to happen. It didn't matter then and doesn't matter now that I might have been the fastest guy, the strongest guy, the best guy in that race. It didn't matter and doesn't matter that I got tripped up and that I went crashing into the pads on the side of the rink through no fault of my own. It wouldn't have solved anything to look around and wonder who had caused the crash and start playing the blame game.

The first thing to do was to get myself together and get across the line—to win silver.

I did that, got my blade ac...

From [AudioFile](#)

The most decorated Winter Olympian, speed skater Apolo Anton Ohno, recounts his life, starting as a rebellious teen with a supportive single father. After a period of introspection Ohno decides to train seriously, and the rest is history still being made. The prolific Olympian (he has eight medals) talks about competition, training (fascinating), controversies, and his experience on "Dancing With the Stars." Ohno's narration parallels his life: He starts rough, then smoothes into an enjoyable pace. He imitates voices well, including a curt British accent for a "Dancing" judge and a clipped voice for his dancing partner. A trainer has a deep-voiced tone, and his father's Japanese accent and humor come across. The book breezes along like a short-track speed-skating race. M.B. © AudioFile 2010, Portland, Maine

Users Review

From reader reviews:

Mary Redus:

Have you spare time for the day? What do you do when you have much more or little spare time? Yep, you can choose the suitable activity with regard to spend your time. Any person spent all their spare time to take a move, shopping, or went to typically the Mall. How about open or perhaps read a book allowed Zero Regrets: Be Greater Than Yesterday? Maybe it is to get best activity for you. You already know beside you can spend your time with the favorite's book, you can cleverer than before. Do you agree with its opinion or you have additional opinion?

Joshua Castillo:

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Michael Emery:

Why? Because this Zero Regrets: Be Greater Than Yesterday is an unordinary book that the inside of the publication waiting for you to snap that but latter it will shock you with the secret the idea inside. Reading this book next to it was fantastic author who all write the book in such wonderful way makes the content inside of easier to understand, entertaining means but still convey the meaning entirely. So , it is good for you because of not hesitating having this ever again or you going to regret it. This amazing book will give you a lot of positive aspects than the other book have such as help improving your expertise and your critical thinking method. So , still want to hesitate having that book? If I were you I will go to the guide store hurriedly.

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