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Context to the nugget

Getting into professional sport can be a “low odds” decision often. If one doesn’t have the financial buffer, it is often tempting to go towards the safer option to pursue education and get a job. Viren talks candidly about how he comes from a family with no prior sports background and how he navigated some of these questions during the points of inflection when he had to take a call.

Transcription

Deepak Jayaraman (DJ): To rewind the clock, I want to talk about your journey. A lot of people, especially with income challenges, might end up picking the safe option and going to academics to ensure at least they have the base case covered. What’s been your journey through that phase and what’s the advice you give to people who are at those crossroads where they have to make a choice between committing to sport versus playing it safe?

Viren Rasquinha (VR): In India, traditionally, when you come to tenth standard or twelfth standard, you always have to make a choice in life. And I came from a background where exactly you had to make that choice, because my mom was a doctor and dad was an engineer. Two elder brothers were computer engineers. I didn’t come from a background of my family playing sport. My family was sports loving, but they didn’t play sport competitively. In fact, I, myself, also was on the Mumbai merit list in SSC. At that point of time, in all honesty, I didn’t understand a single scientific equation. I saw my mother’s big medical books and I saw my brothers’ even bigger engineering books, and I thought, you know, that’s not for me. So, when I was in tenth standard, while the world and its uncle wanted me to study and become a doctor or an engineer, all I wanted to do was play hockey. Coincidentally, when I was 27 years old and I retired and I eventually retired from the sport very early, possibly, before my time the world and its uncle wanted me to play for another four years, while I wanted to study. So, things reversed 12 years later.

It’s just something about me following my heart always. And I have to admit here that I was very lucky, because like all parents, my parents were very strict with my eldest brother, so he had to do engineering. Second guy, OK, but he went into that line as well. And, I think, they were just not bothered about me, so I was lucky enough that I could do whatever I wanted. Having said that, I think, for some reason, I don’t know why, but I just always backed myself and I just made one decision that since playing hockey was my choice, I wouldn’t take a single penny from my parents to play the game. When I was out of tenth standard, I was taken by Tata Sports Club hockey team on a contract, when I was in eleventh standard. I used to get a princely sum of 2,000 rupees which was a huge amount at that point of time. And when I was going to junior college, I was the only one from all my friends who was earning 2,000 rupees, big sum of money back then as pocket money. So, one thing just lead to the other and I ended up here.

I can say that I have never been someone who has thought long term and I never thought that I would go on to play for India or I would captain. I dreamt of that, but with young kids, you want to dream about something but you don't actually believe at that point of time that it will happen, it will actually happen. So, I never looked at it as a career then. I just love playing hockey. I love playing sport. And now, I know that I just want to be in sport. Sport is what I know best. Sport is what I love best. I mean, here at OGQ, every single day that I'm at work, I love what I do. And there's not been a single morning that I can remember where I say, oh god, I don't want to go to work and I am not enjoying this and it's painful. So, for me, as long as I am dealing with sport, I am really very happy.

Reflections from Deepak Jayaraman

DJ: The key takeaway for me was the notion of listening to heart at crucial junctures and letting that guide the way. Clearly, there are other considerations that come into play but this is an important piece that I see people not paying inadequate attention to. What do you love, what gives you energy, what are you passionate about, when are you in FLOW there are different phrases used to describe it but often leaders transition based on what I call a skills based view which is saying here is a portfolio of skills and capabilities I have built and where all can I deploy them. That is one way of doing it but if you can marry that thinking with some inputs around what gives you energy, it just makes the journey more fun and sustainable over the medium to long term.

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End of nugget transcription

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About Deepak Jayaraman

Deepak seeks to unlock human potential of senior executive’s / leadership teams by working with them as an Executive Coach / Sounding Board / Transition Advisor. You can know more about his work [here](#).

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