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Context to the nugget

Vishy talks about the various elements that matter to perform at the highest level in addition to IQ. He specifically discusses the criticality of collaborating with a range of coaches and players. He also shares how he manages to stay present during a game (a trait that Anatoly Karpov used to be a master at with his ruthless Boa-Constrictor style play he says). He also shares how he has managed to stay simple and grounded despite the towering heights he has reached as a Chess player.

Transcription

Deepak Jayaraman (DJ): At the highest level today what's your take on capabilities and disciplines that separates the best from the rest, are there broader disciplines and capabilities that typically differentiate the top few from the rest?

Viswanathan Anand (VA): Generally best players in the world make fewer mistakes they tend not to make the last mistake, and that often is psychological, they think they are not going to make the last mistake so they don't make it, at that last moment after a six and half hour of struggle they suddenly able to sum and up the energy and concentrate 100% the opponent is not able to. Chess was always down to this little factor. And in fact it will never change because in any game between two humans these will be the decisive factors, so as long as both sides are willing to adapt the way of learning to the most successful methods, these tend to an differentiate factors till so the best player in the world is someone who outlasts.

DJ: I want to talk about the role of team work even seemingly solo sport like chess, I mean clearly the role of IQ in being a chess champion is often well understood but talk to us about the role of EQ in being a great player at the top how does it show up?

VA: I think EQ is being able to understand what are the circumstances that cause you to fail and what are the that cause you to succeed and very often it turns out to be related to your mood your attitude your spirit of ability to take risks, these things are strongly co related to the emotion and as you get, when I was young I tend it to dismiss, good move is a good move it's a good move, but as I got older I realize that good move may be a good move but for me to make one there these circumstances that had to right, and I think with the experience you become more self-aware, you have seen this movie before and you are not going to be able to predict it completely but you can tell when, what's the good day what's not, I think you just understand yourself better, you also know how to control your unhealthy habits, how to learn from the other people?

DJ: Is there anything to be said about an approach to collaboration with fellow players that you have consciously adopted in your journey as a chess player?

VA: Yes overtime I have learnt that the first rule is think is actually well known, that you don't get into your first opinion first don't off over because once you off on and opinion you often spend a lot of energy defending your opinion rather than even when you think it's wrong you don't want to lose phase and so that when my team would show me stuff my first skill was to keep my mouth shut, because if what they say is turned out to be better, then this better not to have opposed in the beginning, in the sense I am more open to contradictory opinions of people who disagree with me violently because I realize well that's kind of the path to better understanding, over long periods of time you learned how the moody people are, you see their real side and you need a certain kind of tolerance with that you need a sense of how good or bad, pleasant or annoying you can be, what people may like in you in day 1 may not be what they in you at day 7 and you have to be aware of that I think you perceive these things much better, so over a long camp now a days I am able to tell if I am greeting on my trainer, he is greeting on me it's not perfect still but you know you get better at those things and in the end if you create the most, conquerable atmosphere your will produce the best ideas.

DJ: If you had to be really modest with yourself and talk about what has helped you this far, and sustain your performance at the highest level for this long what would you attribute it to?

VA: When I was young because of the way chess I was very flexible and I was not very dogmatic or rigid in my views so I would say my biggest skill is flexibility, I am generally open to changing my approaches, I am a hard worker I think I work hard because chess interests me so I am not sure I will work hard and something bothers me but I am a hard worker at least chess and that includes you know learning to keep maintaining my fitness and things like that, I think chess is partly helped in this regard but I am quite open to learning new skills learning from other people, I mean when I observe to the other people and you think that's impressive then I try to see how I can apply that in some way, I am conscious of what I think will able to apply and what I don't so my faith is maybe I am fairly realistic, many people who have made suggestions one of the suggestions was I think a psychologist will be good for you and I rejected it to the out of my hand because I felt that it wouldn't work for me it's a good idea that the people who will benefit from it but I felt it wouldn't work for me and I said I don't want to do this and I think that was an good example, so I have a good sense of how to learn and willing to work hard and I think I am flexible in my approach fairly pragmatic if you like.

DJ: What's been your approach to staying level headed, is there something to be said about a mindset with which you look at a situation for you to stay level headed through a game?

VA: For some people, it comes very naturally I remember they would always say about the Karpov that for him the game always began in the current position and what that means that Karpov could be lost in the whole game and in some people if you lost the whole game then they are already dreaming of a draws that if the position turns violently and they suddenly have chance to win, they are not able to adapt they still try to give the draw, rather than take the extra points that's been given the phase when they were threatened with the defeat was is so strong that they are not able to completely forget it, Karpov which switch on a dime he would be lost this move he would be winning at the next move, so he was able to forget his again these things are exaggerate of course Karpov couldn't always do this and the rest of us, if the winning opportunity was easy enough you would have taken it and so on, within limits that requires almost a certain kind of cold bloodedness I am not very good at this I am aware that I am not very good at it and I thing being aware of what you should be looking out for in a game is one healthy method for staying calm in the game I find that the healthiest is just like I mention in the earlier move 40 the same example is to break the link which means you have to getup give your brain to a few minutes to get used to the new situation and then they has a kind of cleansing feeling when you says ok what happened, happened now my

job is to fight for a draw no ego over the fact that I was winning before but now my job is to fight for a draw. You do whatever it is have to do you try to think of how happy opponent will be if he beats you or how miserable you will be or how happy you will be if you deprive him of this free point that he is getting or what someone else. You will find some hook which allows you to think and then you go with that maintaining your calm during a tournament is one of the great skills in chess and it's a very much work in progress.

DJ: Your ability to stay incredibly grounded despite your towering successes, how have you manage to stay that way, and the second thing in a way when you think about your son Akhil growing up he is growing up in a very different context given your successes how do you ensure that he grows up with the same set of values?

VA: I have found that a quite a lot of people that are famous or successful remain in some fundamental way the way they are, I think its connected up bringing my parents brought me up in a certain way there were certain things that they did at the certain things at the obvious they wouldn't do and you kind of approach it like that and essentially with your family with your classmates you can suddenly act differently because they will immediately will say what's wrong with you? So you have to act normal, with fans and so on, this is not like a huge effort but I make an effort to be friendly and nice because at some level I am aware that I have a job because of them it's not obvious to me what exactly I should do differently? There are times I feel that I am trying hard to be nice then people are invading my space and then sometimes or the next time I will impose it a bit more but generally I do what I am comfortable with and I am a fairly relaxed person as such and I don't like getting in conflicts with people and so I gravitate to that approach as for Akhil I hope we will up bring him like that and the idea is I think we will try to show him that first of all by example also try to make him value what we think are the most important things in life, what's really important and once it important then that's what you aim for, for the moment he is a very innocent kid just very curious and its quite easy to do so far.

Reflections from Deepak Jayaraman

DJ: The notion of speaking last when you have a team around you is an interesting switch that a lot of leaders struggle to make especially when they transition from a CXO role to a CEO role. High IQ and expertise often gets people to the top of a function where you are celebrated for your content spike and structurally, you are often the most informed person on a topic in the room. But when you become the CEO or a GM of a division with multiple functions reporting in, you often need to lead people who often know a lot more than you in their domain. That requires a completely different leadership style with a heavy dose of listening and collaborative problem solving. This is all the more relevant in today's world there are so many unknown unknowns that CEOs are often doing themselves a huge dis-service if they don't listen enough to the people around them.

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End of nugget transcription

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Viswanathan Anand - Nuggets

- 21.00 Viswanathan Anand - The Full Conversation
- 21.01 Viswanathan Anand - Committing to Chess as a career
- 21.02 Viswanathan Anand - Early formative years
- 21.03 Viswanathan Anand - Growing as a player and inflection points
- 21.04 Viswanathan Anand - What it takes to compete at the top
- 21.05 Viswanathan Anand - Understanding the Processor inside
- 21.06 Viswanathan Anand - Staying relevant in the world of machines
- 21.07 Viswanathan Anand - Performing at the top and staying grounded
- 21.08 Viswanathan Anand - Dealing with losses
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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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