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Game 7 Shows Us What is Really Needed to Win

Mike Zuidema of The Grand Rapids Press wrote, "This wasn't supposed to happen" after the Penguins beat the Red Wings Friday night to win the Stanley Cup. His statement summarizes what I had been hearing in the papers, on the radio and from the fans throughout the series.

There were lots of reasons to believe the Wings would repeat as champions:

- They have championship experience, winning 4 titles in the last 12 years
- These are the types of games the Red wings win
- The home team won each game of the finals and the Wings were playing Game 7 at The Joe.
- All season, the Wings overcame the adversity (periods of poor play and injuries) – they know how to respond to pressure
- They beat the Penguins last year, they can do it again
- The Wings have home-ice advantage
- The support of fans will be the difference
- The Wings had "more talent", "more depth", and "more experience"
- The Penguins were without their star Sidney Crosby for much of the game

... You get the idea. Lots of reasons why they should win, but they didn't.

When it comes to performing your best in any sport, at any level, there are only a few things that matter:

- Thorough preparation physically, mentally, and strategically
- Consistent intensity and effort throughout the game
- Focus on the task at hand and playing in the present moment.

For athletes, all the other things are distractions that can interfere with performance. They can build false confidence and cause you to underestimate the skills of your opponent.

Debate the reasons why their team should win or lose can be fun for the fans and media. But if you are an athlete, keep you focus on preparation, effort, and on your job in the present moment of the game. The other things don't matter as much. The Penguins showed us that.

Until next time, have fun!

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