

Wimbledon

Is work all strawberries and cream?

As part of our occasional series which teases work insights from big events, Thomas International turns its floodlight on Wimbledon: two weeks of unseasonable weather, snoozing spectators, the optimism of Henman Hill - and a group of highly trained professionals going about their work.

People Don't Develop at the Same Rate in a Job

Roger Federer is the greatest male player in the world, maybe of all time. But he wasn't the greatest junior. You need natural skill and interest to excel at something but that's not enough; you also need application and practice.

Some people are slow starters. Some race ahead but don't develop any further. Don't judge everyone by the same standards. It's sometimes better to propose a candidate who's going to grow into a job rather than someone who's going to get bored after six months

Stars May Not be Good Team Players

Martina Navratilova and John McEnroe were great doubles players as well as singles champions. But they're the exceptions. Most great double teams are made up of two second rank players who complement each other, understand each others' differences and know how to make the best of what they've got. Stars too often try to dominate a team.

Bear this in mind when you're recruiting into a strong team.

I'm Really Pumped Up...

...people who pump themselves up for everything risk disaster. This often happens when a tennis player underperforms badly in a final or semi-final. Too much adrenaline makes you sloppy and clumsy – whether you're returning a forehand or thinking through a strategy. Look for the people who are over-excited at an interview to the extent that they might be trembling.

The Mental Game

Pete Sampras, Steffi Graf and Bjorn Borg won their many Wimbledon Championships "in their heads". They weren't necessarily the fittest or the most skilful players. In fact many of the most flamboyant stylists rarely won a championship (France seems to specialise in these sorts of competitors). They were too busy entertaining or showing off to win.

The greats have incredible concentration and focus. They're consistent – a quality which is essential to managers. They don't let set backs set them back!!!!

Look for concentration, focus and consistency when you're recruiting managers.

...and the Physical Game...

But obviously physical fitness is as important as mental focus in tennis. Andy Murray was patently not fit enough at the beginning of his career. Intensive fitness work seems to have paid off. What's less obvious is that it can be important when you're sitting behind a desk. Tiredness reduces productivity. It can hamper problem-solving and creativity. The brain needs oxygen and if you're not fit less oxygen passes through to feed those thoughts...

The Gender Gap

The world treats male and female tennis players very differently. Some women players seem to get by on their looks without ever winning anything. The great female athletes have struggle to get recognised for the athletic ability...and are still struggling for pay parity.

Maybe this is unavoidable in the way the media treats sports stars. But it has to be avoided in recruitment. Make sure you're keeping within the law in the way you judge the candidates in front of you.

As we've said before (about the World Cup and Big Brother) you can read too much into these sorts of parallels. Playing a five setter against Nadal is not the same as presenting your plans to a major client. But even a sunny day on Centre Court can set you thinking.