An inspirational classic, Coach Wooden is above all a teacher, and the lessons he imparts here are derived from a lifetime of learning and achievement.

Reviews of the Wooden: A Lifetime of Observations and Reflections On and Off the Court by John Wooden

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Recently I was reminded of the birthday (October 14th) of one of my personal/professional influencers John Wooden. It caused me to pause and reflect on him, his life, and the legacy he left behind through his teachings. For those of you asking, “who is John Wooden”, here is a brief bio.

John Robert Wooden (October 14, 1910 – June 4, 2010) also known as the "Wizard of Westwood," was the men’s basketball coach during UCLA’s dynasty years. Over his career he won ten NCAA
national championships in a 12-year period, including a record seven in a row, and his team won a record 88 consecutive games. In 1960 he was the first to be enshrined as both a player and a coach in the Basketball Hall of Fame. ESPN named Coach Wooden the Coach of the Century.

But at his core, Coach Wooden was a teacher. The life lessons he taught and his quotes, known as "Woodenisms", have become legend. Fortunately, he shared his philosophy, credo, witticisms, and his pyramid for success with us all and with generations to come through lectures and books.

I was introduced to Coach Wooden’s teachings years ago and then reintroduced to them again when a manager of mine gave me a copy of the book, “Wooden, A Lifetime of Observations and Reflections On and Off the Court”. I devoured it and once again I was hooked. In it, he lays out his philosophy on life, leadership, success, and personal fulfillment. He teaches through short simple inspirational messages that strike you as both common sense and deeply profound at the same time.

So I pulled out my copy of “Observations and Reflections” full of post-it’s marking key pages and re-read it. My objective being to honor him, but as usual I ended up once again learning from him.

Coach Wooden credits his father (as I do mine) with giving him the foundation for his life. In “Observations and Reflections” he refers to the two sets of threes – direct and simple rules from his father about how you should live your life that his father gave to him on a card.

Set 1:
• Never lie.
• Never cheat.
• Never steal.

Set 2:
• Don’t whine.
• Don’t complain.
• Don’t make excuses.

On the back of the card was his father’s creed, titled “Seven Things to Do”. I’ll let you do some research or read the book to learn them.

I am always struck by how similar his basic life lessons are to those I learned from my own father.

My father a man of few words (or who as my oldest son referred to in the eulogy he gave at his funeral - “a man of few words who somehow could give a one-sentence answer to any question about life no matter how complex”) had his own “rules” or as my children came to know them as “Poppa-isms”. He had many of them, some serious and some funny – but in each one there was a lesson.

Like Coach Wooden my father seemed to have an innate understanding of life that he could express in the simplest of terms. My Father passed away this past year, so I guess when I was reminded of Coach Wooden’s birthday I somehow subconsciously connected the two men in my mind.

Over the years I have gifted Coach Wooden’s “Observations and Reflections” book to friends, to young people graduating from High School and College, and to managers that I have coached (using it as a developmental tool) in my career - - and yes, it was required reading for all three of my children.

Take a moment to acquaint yourself with Coach Wooden and allow the teacher to teach. You might
be surprised how familiar some of it sounds. In today’s complex world where at times overthinking things tends to happen, sometimes simplicity is the best medicine. Happy Belated Birthday Coach, and thanks Dad.

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If you’ve been present in the twenty-first century you know days have vanished for when coaches were respected as much for their off-court performances as for their success on the court. However, in, A Lifetime of Observations and Reflections on and off the Court brings to light the timeless wisdom of the extraordinary UCLA basketball coach, John Wooden. In honest and telling passages, Coach brings to light his Reflections and Observations about virtually every aspect of his life. Wooden shares his personal philosophy on family, achievement, success, and excellence. Raised on a small farm in Halls, Indiana, he offers the lessons and wisdom he’s learned over the course of his journey through life, being a coach for UCLA, and what he’s as a husband, and being the father of two kids. These lessons, along with personal letters from Denny Crum, and Kareem Abdul-Jabber, have made Wooden: A Lifetime of Observations and Reflections on and off the Court, a book for the ages. One of my very favorite parts of this book is the quote, “Always try to be the very best you can be. Learn from others, yes. But don’t try to be better than they are” (Wooden 92). My gymnastics coach uses this idea from the quote a lot during practice. He tells us not to compare ourselves to others but to focus on our success. When you waste all your energy trying to become someone else, you won’t become what you could be. This is what Wooden expressed in the quote, and it struck out to me because of how raw and true it was. If your into books that help create a new sense of confidence or books that can help get you out of something tough, this book is for you! Wooden’s book, A Lifetime of Observations and Reflections on and off the Court, plays more into mental survival rather than physical. He expresses the lessons he’s learned while coaching, and raising a family. He takes what anybody could be struggling with and shares how he handled it and what he learned from it from his personal experience. It has helped others to get through there rough patches. Wooden’s book is full of different lessons he has learned, but in a style where each excerpt is only 3-4 pages long. So if you’re like me, and don’t like to read long passages, this book is for you! Wooden was a very influential person, and that was shown very clearly in this book! So if you are struggling with anything, he may just be your solution.

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