

# Sports, Self-Improvement, and Soul

As a youngster, best-selling author, entrepreneur, and motivational mentor Darrin Donnelly knew that he wanted to be either a writer or a football coach. Combining his love of sports and writing, he now motivates millions with his “Sports for the Soul” book series and other ‘sports fables’ designed to empower.

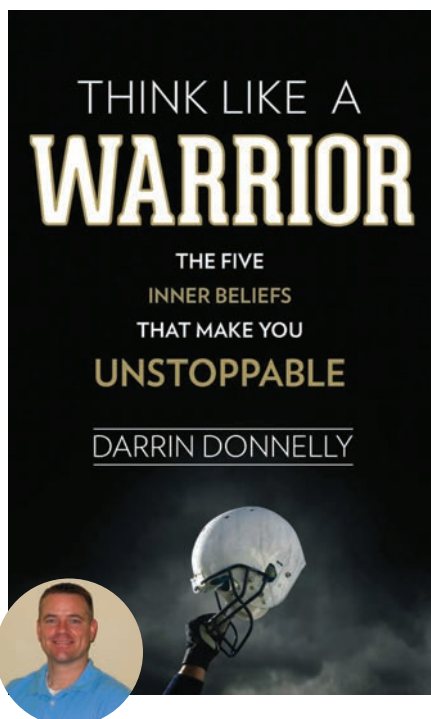
Reflecting on his earliest inspirations, the scribe cites a somewhat surprising source that set the pace for both his career and his life path.

“I remember wanting to emulate Sylvester Stallone,” he shares via email. “I was just a kid, probably six or seven, but my brother and I were obsessed with Rocky movies. We’d watch them repeatedly. I remember my dad telling me that Stallone, the guy who played Rocky Balboa in the movie, also wrote the stories that became the movies. I recall thinking, that’s what I want to do.”

Admiration for the tenacious fictional pugilist is understandable; born into a big Irish Catholic family that remains tight-knit to this day, Donnelly may have called upon some ancestral determination that saw his forebears flee from Ireland to Scotland during the Great Irish Famine of the 1840s. Like them, he remained true to his own nature while developing newly found skills along the way.

“In college, I went into journalism and planned to become a sportswriter. Then, I caught the entrepreneurial bug and spent the next twenty-five years starting and running several different businesses, mostly online publications. Each startup involved a great deal of writing and editing, which I’m sure helped me become a better writer.”

Ironically, honing his literary skill set was born of his dedication to becoming a better businessman, and his near-constant consumption of motivational materials and books. Over time, Donnelly realized that the personal development principles he was reading about were also readily available in sports training - and, ultimately, much more accessible.



“As an entrepreneur, I have always been a big fan of motivational and self-improvement books. About fifteen years ago I noticed that a lot of popular self-help books were making big promises that sounded too good to be true and I didn’t see any data backing up some of their claims. The business guru has a brand to protect, and the self-help guru could be tempted to offer unproven advice. It hit me that the principles and techniques we learn from sports, especially from successful coaches, are much more reliable.”

In true entrepreneurial spirit, Donnelly managed to integrate his experience and success in the business world with his knowledge of sports and coaching techniques and set out to write his own motivational books based on more than mere pie-in-the-sky sales pitches or illusory theories.

**“I started writing these types of books because I believe the sports world can teach us self-improvement principles that help us in all areas of life...”**

“The scoreboard never lies. You can’t fudge or inherit your results. It’s one thing to talk about the power of your mind and things like that; but in sports, specific mental techniques and leadership principles can be tested and proven out on the field of play.”

According to Donnelly, the rules of that ‘field of play’ can provide a solid framework to even the odds in the often-uncertain game of life.

“The leadership techniques of great coaches work well in business and life. From the great achievers in sports, we learn how to be more disciplined, how to accomplish big dreams, how to manage our thoughts, and how to overcome adversity. I love how sports psychology is called “the science of success.”

Although Donnelly writes about the principles within sports psychology, readers of his best-selling books span a wide and impressive point margin.

“My readers are from all walks of life. I hear from a lot of coaches and athletes, and a lot of teachers, parents, business owners, and salespeople. I also hear from parents who tell me they read these books with their kids to hammer home the life lessons taught in the books.”

True to his Irish heritage, Donnelly is skilled at telling a tale and writes his motivational material in story form.

“Lessons are learned best when told within a story that resonates with us. My books may be about an athlete or coach, but even if most of us weren’t great athletes, we can all relate to the fears and stresses they deal with. In sports, people must take risks to get a shot at greatness. The way coaches and athletes handle those journeys teaches us all how to do the same, even if our personal goals have nothing to do with sports.”

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