

## Wilderness House Literary Review 19/2

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### If You're Not Winning, You're losing

Professor Tim Fab-Eme

The term *first loser* has stuck with me as I've gone through the competitive games that are swimming and social lives. When you think about it, there's as many second place finishes as firsts, as any meaningful game requires at least two players and for one of those players to lose. Second place is no small feat. The second place people in the world garner almost as many accolades as the spot above them. They are respected and acknowledged for their extreme feats. But they still lost. They lost and there's no denying it. As someone who has finished on the podium and elevated to the second highest position my only thought was I can't believe I lost. For in that moment I was nothing but a *loser*. While you can master the skill of gratitude for your current position it is impossible to remove the feeling that you are not the best. Inadequacy.

Definition: Winner

What does it take to be a winner? If you look at the best humans in a certain field, they are unlike anyone else they are competing with. You have people born with physical gifts like Caeleb Dressel, Usain Bolt, and Nikola Jokic. If these people weren't devoting time to athletics they would spend all their physical energy maintaining the dominant spot at the top of their social hierarchy and the activities associated with such a status. Some are able to do both. In the NFL the average amount of children a player has is double the loser/normal population. Maybe they aren't physically gifted, but mentally. These are the Stephan Hawking's, Jeff Bezos's, Bobby Fisher's, even someone like Tom Brady. Mentally gifted individuals are not playing the same game as everyone else. Winner's are either breaking the rules (companies being fined for malpractice), seeing the game differently (Hannibal of Carthage crossing the Alps), or are psychopaths (Kobe Bryant or Michael Jordan mentality). Someone like Shohei Ohtani or Dennis Rodman would be declared insane if their attitude towards sports was translated into the business world. We already refer to the winners in business as crazy like Mark Zuckerberg and Elon Musk being called aliens. These are not normal people and we as a society can't expect them to act like the rest of us. It takes something different to be great.

Definition: Loser

That's everybody else, including probably you. However, not all loser's are made equal. First place, second place, and third place. You can accurately measure how much of a loser you are in most games depending on what you are competing in. Salary, happiness, weight, laughs. Plus, being a winner is a transitory state. Most winners are only specialized in one skill or trade and lose other games in life. Allen Iverson, John Daily, Sam Bankman Fried. You put yourself in a much better position for longevity if you remain seen as a loser. The toppling of kings. As a loser you're hungrier than whoever the winner is. You can use your lower position to your advantage and for great spectacle. The underdog, hero, and savior.

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### **Acknowledgement:** Winning isn't everything

It's important to me that the reader is able to understand that being a loser is the normal condition of any game (including life). You come out of the womb already lost, already at a disadvantage compared to everyone else.

Being a newcomer to life or any game means you will not have the skills, strength, flexibility, endurance, or mental fortitude to win immediately. These skills must be learned.

It is false that you must always be in competition with the world. You can enjoy moments of existence as the universe experiencing itself. You may put down the sword or the facade to be at peace and be with your current state.

Everyone receives the participation trophy, but that's not a given. Be grateful for it.

### **Counter:** Winning is everything

What are you progressing through life for? Why do you seek to improve yourself at all? Perhaps it is to garner a better mate. Maybe it's to get an increase in pay. It could even be that you're bored with nothing to do and pick up a hobby. Any of these improvements puts you on the path to win whatever you're doing. You may be hindered, but any type of self improvement puts you ahead of someone that was previously in front of you.

At the very least you are in a competition with your immediate friends and family about who is at the top of your social hierarchy. When you look at work or sports teams this distinction is made clear, we just don't call CEO's winners of the company.

**Personal Bias:** There's a terrible online quote, "winning isn't everything, but the effort to win is" and that's probably true. As a competitive D1 swimmer I've actually won most of the races I've swam until I got to college where I have now won 1 or 2. I've gotten much better at swimming, but because I lose so much I think of myself as a worse swimmer as I compare myself to my peers. I'm very competitive and to me winning was the only thing that mattered during a race. Now as I'm older and realize that I will never be able to achieve the level that Olympians might, I have to accept my place as a loser while still keeping my "effort to win".