

[Motivation: Some Thoughts from an Olympic Champion](#)

By [Cordell Parvin](#) on February 10th, 2014

I recently saw a Wall Street Journal article: [Eric Heiden: Life After the Olympics The speed skater turned Olympic doctor on life after sports stardom](#). You might also enjoy reading this ESPN piece: [Eric Heiden was a reluctant hero](#). As you will see, in the 1980 Lake Placid Olympics, Eric Heiden won five gold medals. Many believe he was the greatest speed skater ever.



Let me digress for a moment-A little nostalgia

I grew up speed skating. I skated with the Lilacia Speed Skating Club. I can't find a current link, so I think the Lilacia Speed Skating Club may be long gone. Our home skating place was the pond at Lombard Lagoon Park. As shown below, Kids were skating there this past weekend.

Cordell Parvin Blog

DEVELOPING THE NEXT GENERATION OF LAW FIRM RAINMAKERS



The small building where we got out of the cold is also still there.



(Thanks to my Glenbard East High School friend Rick Degnan for taking these photos in the cold, snowy weather in Lombard.)

I was, at best, an average skater and our team was only average also. We had only one skater who was a national champion.

In those days, the world class skaters came from the [Madison Speed Skating Club](#), where Eric Heiden and his sister, Beth later skated, the [West Allis Speed Skating Club](#), and the [Northbrook Speed Skating Club](#).

I recently saw: [Remembering old-time speed skating](#) that featured some of the world class Northbrook speed skaters. It is hard to describe, just how dominant the Northbrook skaters were. Here is a quote from the article:

Our skaters dominated the outdoor skating competitions from Northbrook to Glen Ellyn to West Allis to St. Paul and Lake Placid (and Saratoga Springs).

I learned many things from my speed skating, including,:

- I was not going to excel at everything I attempted.
- Not to compare myself to others.
- I would need to pick those things I believed I could excel at doing and enjoyed enough to have the discipline to focus and stick with it.
- Peak Performing Organizations (skating clubs or law firms) do not happen by accident.
- Star athletes (and others) always feel like there is more they can learn, do and perfect.

Eric Heiden on Motivation

Well, enough of my walk down memory lane, let's get to the point of this post.

I especially appreciated Dr. Heiden's discussion of motivation:

What's really important to achieving success in sports is **innate motivation**, says Dr. Heiden. Motivation "is a very hard thing to teach an athlete." Working with so many athletes over the years, he has come to believe that **most are driven by a need to explore their personal limits.**

“They’re not so concerned about the outcome, whether it’s a win or a loss, but just want to know they have challenged themselves and performed up to what they consider acceptable,” he explains. **“Most feel they have never reached a perfect competition or had a perfect game, and they’re always challenging themselves and can always find fault in what they’ve done despite being victorious.”** (My emphasis)

I hope you read my recent post: Success: [Triple Package-Believe, Strive, Stick With It](#). I believe the points I referenced there from the Triple Package book are very similar.

Eric Heiden is right about motivation. It is very difficult to teach an athlete, or a lawyer. I frequently say that I cannot motivate the unmotivated.

Are you motivated? If so, I would love to coach you. Just last week we launched two new group telephone coaching groups. We would love to start a new group of law firm associates.

Want to get started now? Let’s start here: What are you doing to stretch yourself? What are you doing to challenge yourself? What is the one most important non-billable activity you can focus on in 2014?

Cordell M. Parvin built a national construction practice during his 35 years practicing law. At Jenkins & Gilchrist, Mr. Parvin was the Construction Law Practice Group Leader and was also responsible for the firm’s attorney development practice. While there he taught client development and created a coaching program for junior partners. In 2005, Mr. Parvin left the firm and started Cordell Parvin LLC. He now works with lawyers and law firms on career development and planning and client development. He is the co-author of *Say Ciao to Chow Mein: Conquering Career Burnout* and other books for lawyers. To learn more visit his Web site, www.cordellparvin.com or contact him at cparvin@cordellparvin.com.