



"From Athlete To Entrepreneur: 5 Work Ethic Lessons We Can Learn From Athletes", with Steve Jones of Allied Universal



Overcoming Adversity: Failure will be a part of your life. So will adversity. I don't care what your goal is, whether that's on the playing field



or in the boardroom. If your goal is big enough to sustain you for a lifetime, then there will certainly be times when you fall short. It's unavoidable. Don't blame others about your circumstances. Just get back to work.

AS *a part of our series about the work ethic lessons we can learn from professional athletes, I had the pleasure of interviewing Steve Jones. Steve achieved the American Dream through perseverance, hard work, and adaptability. A tenacious businessman, Steve is the current CEO of [Allied Universal](#), one of the world's top security and facility services companies. Under his leadership, Allied Universal grew from \$12 million to over \$8.2 billion in revenue in 20 years. Steve Jones is the author of [No Off Season: The Constant Pursuit of More](#) which follows Steve's journey from an aspirin NFL playe*



and earning the prestigious Ernst & Young Entrepreneur of the Year Award. Additionally, he is a member of the Young Presidents' Organization and serves on various boards, including that of Allied Universal. Steve holds a Bachelor of Arts degree in Political Science from California Polytechnic University, San Luis Obispo, and an MBA from the University of Redlands.



Football has played an enormous role in shaping my life and I feel the need to thank all of my friends and teammates, my brothers-in-arms, who have put on pads and helmets and taken the field with me from elementary school right through college ball. In that same way, I am grateful to all of the coaches who led me out onto those fields and taught me the life lessons that the game offers.

I have had the great fortune of finding mentorship in a number of



Can you share the funniest or most interesting mistake that occurred to you in the course of your sports career? What lesson or take away did you learn from that?

It was 110 degrees, high sun, and a strong Santa Ana blowing. We were playing football versus Mount San Antonio College and they featured a running back named Leonard Russell, who would later go in the first round of the 1991 NFL Draft to the New England Patriots and would then run straight through pro defense after pro defense until he was named Offensive Rookie of the Year.

On that day, however, he ran straight into me. Over and over again. I'd no sooner get done with my defensive duties of trying to contain Leonard, then I was out on special teams. And then right back out on the offensive line. Then special teams. And then back to trying to stop the unstoppable Leonard Russell.

At the end of the first quarter, I was tired. During the half, I was exhausted. And by the time the clock had run on the third quarter, I was more like the walking dead ... with a full quarter still left to play.

Somewhere on that dizzying day, I missed a tackle on Russell. My coach was furious. He hollered at me to come to him at the sidelines, grabbed my face mask, and proceeded to chew me out for having let Russell get past me. I was beyond exhausted. Dehydrated and completely depleted. My head spun. The ground beneath me spun, too. And then I vomited. All over the coach's shoes.

When I was done retching, I just turned right around and went back out to my position as outside linebacker and doubled-down on my efforts to stop Russell.



What I didn't do was complain or offer excuses. The fact of the matter was that I had missed the tackle. There were reasons for it — excellent reasons and plenty of them — but I never offered one of them. Not to the coach. My teammates. Or myself.

There may have been excellent reasons, but not one of them mattered. The end result was the same. I had given up yards. End of story. Period.

In this world, you're going to face difficulties. Everyoq s co e





Ok. Here is the main question of our interview. Entrepreneurs and professional athletes share a common "hustle culture". Can you share your "5 Work Ethic Lessons That Entrepreneurs Can Learn From Athletes"? Please share a story or an example for each.

1. **Hard Work is Key:** The fundamental principle behind developing any skill is simply to put in the work, over and over again until it's perfect. Stay at it until you're absolutely certain you can't do anymore. And then work some more. Just like in sports, you have to put forth the effort, practice and prepare and then continue that cycle each and every day. As an athlete and now as a business leader, I came to every game and negotiation as a guy who worked the hardest to get himself ready for the action to begin.
2. **Persistence:** Do not give up on your vision and goals. Stay focused and determined. Hardship is no excuse to give up. Success is no reason to let up. Every day, you have to make the most of what you got and then use that as a foundation to build on whether or not you arrived at this specific goal, you should always be working to better yourself. You should always be taking advantage of all the opportunities around you.
3. **Setting Goals:** As an entrepreneur or a professional athlete, you should always set personal and business goals every year. Looking back now, I can see everything that I learned from my time playing football. It ingrained in me a certain work ethic and a determination to just keep grinding until I achieve my goals. It also taught me that you can pivot and change





the only thing you can do is put your head down and keep working. Never give up on your dreams.



You are by all accounts a very successful person. How have you used your success to bring goodness to the world?



Even though I have always been keenly focused on the success of my company, I have been equally committed to pushing every employee I have to realize their true potential as individuals. And rewards for this have been tremendous for all involved. At the end of the day, there is absolutely no question in my mind what a



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