

## What 43-8 Can Teach Us About Winning

I didn't want to mention the Super Bowl because I know my friends from Europe or Latin America or Canada or Asia or Africa will tune out.

But stick with me. Read on.

When it comes to 43 to 8, we are not talking only about an American football score. We are talking about your market share reaching 43% against your competitors' 8%; your profit margin versus theirs; your growth in 2014 versus the industry average.

What would it be worth to you if you could produce a 43 to 8 outcome this year?

For those outside of the US or the Americans who tuned out after half-time a few Sundays ago, 43 to 8 was the final score of the year's biggest American sports event, the Super Bowl. What most experts believed would be an even bout between the best football offense and defense resulted instead in an outcome so unpredicted, so lopsided, so contrary to what the mathematics and calculus of the game would suggest, that we must try to understand it, with the hope we can replicate it in whatever games we are playing.

So I spent the day talking to sporting experts, reviewing the coverage, and reading a book written by Pete Carroll, coach of the winning team, the Seattle Seahawks. I believe there are four key strategic principles at work here that we should consider putting toward our success:

1. Defense is (usually) easier than offense
2. Social power is real
3. Fight yourself, not your competitor
4. The law of the first quarter

### ***Defense is (usually) easier than offense***

An ancient military principle holds that defense is easier than offense. Sun Tzu advises that to attack a walled city, you need 10 times the troops as the defenders. Seattle's team was statistically the strongest defense in the country and on Sunday they had to prove it. As linebacker Bobby Wagner said, "The only way we could say we were the best defense was to take down the best offense" ([source](#)). It's cheaper to defend customers than steal them, to protect positions than grow them, so when you must make choices, choose to defend your strengths rather than attack others'. *What are your strengths? How are you defending them?*

### ***Social power is real***

Whether you call it soft power or moral force, the ancient strategic principle holds: the more people rooting for you, the greater your chances of success. The Seahawks called this "12th Man," meaning at any given time their team has 11 men on the field, but their fans, notoriously loud, have the effect of putting a 12th man on their side. The crowd gives them an unfair advantage. There were reportedly more Seahawks fans in the stadium and when they began chanting "L-O-B!" ("Legion of Boom"), their opponents could feel their power.

But the momentum was being built months before with inspiring stories like that of [Derrick Coleman](#), the first

legally deaf defensive player in NFL history. When his friends started bullying him for being different, he started trying harder. "It changed my life because I had to really go the extra step, to listen, to focus," [he explained](#). When people told him he couldn't play football, he says, "I've been deaf since I was three, so I didn't listen." When every professional football team passed him up in the draft, he joined as a free agent and worked harder. "If someone tells me I can't do it ... it just makes me want to do it even more." He became an inspiration for the handicapped nation-wide.

Click [here](#) and [here](#) for some inspiring videos.

One of my friends told me that when she heard his story she became a Seahawks fan, even though she had no prior relationship to the team. She was not alone.

*What purpose is truly worth fighting for?*

### ***Fight yourself, not your competitor***

Carroll follows an uncommon philosophy shared by a handful of other outstanding coaches and strategists. He doesn't care about the competition. He doesn't focus his team on the opponent. Instead, he wants his players to focus on beating their perfect selves. He wants them to strive to reach their full potential and every season, every game, every play, every movement, to seek to close the gap between levels at which we are playing and what we are capable of. The Seattle team played like this all season, calling it "a championship day every day." *If you forget the competition and focus instead on reaching the ideal of which you/your team are capable, what would you do differently?*

### ***The law of the first quarter***

The first quarter of a game can be definitive. Across innumerable games we see a similar pattern - whoever is ahead at the close of the first quarter is more likely to win the game. If you establish your dominance early, your opponent starts questioning itself. You ignite a narrative of winner and loser, which becomes self-fulfilling. By the close of the first quarter, Seattle had control of this narrative. Only 12 seconds into the game, Seattle was ahead by 2 points (the quickest Super Bowl score in history) and they closed the quarter with a score of 22 to nothing. They had run 61 yards, their opponents only one. They had six first downs, their opponent none.

My favorite quote from Carroll's book is this: "When you know you are going to win ... you can actually perform with a quieted mind in absence of fear." The Seahawks knew they were going to win. Their opponent was not so sure.

*Are you sure you are winning this quarter? If not, how can you make sure that happens?*

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