

Hidden Ball Trick

Ready:

"I press on toward the goal to win the prize for which God has called me heavenward in Christ Jesus." Philippians 3:14

Set

Sporting matches are a constant flow of opposites. On one side, the offense is concerned with execution. On the opposite side, the defense is concerned with discipline. If execution falters, the offense rarely scores. If discipline breaks down, the defense basically becomes a spectator as the offense racks up points. The hidden ball trick has always been a fan favorite. It can create a huge momentum shift, and if orchestrated properly, provide an easy score or out. Think of the excitement of the "fumblerooski" that leads to a touchdown, the fake ball exchange that leads to a goal or the easy out at first base. When executed properly, fans are left bewildered, hoping for an instant replay to see exactly what just transpired. Execution is the key, and to accomplish this, the team hiding the ball has to trigger a lack of discipline in the defense by mastering the following 3 factors:

1. **Misdirection:** A good hidden ball trick will never work if the team in possession merely goes through the motions. There must be adequate theater involved to get the other team to take their eyes off the prize. Often times, the elaborate schemes will go way beyond just the players on the field. The defense must be convinced to focus in a direction away from the real threat--the player with the ball.
2. **Confusion:** The slightest lack of focus by the defense can escalate into full-blown confusion. Once the first defender is fooled, adjacent team members can be unwittingly drawn into the same scheme. If no defender sees through the sham and speaks up, they hand the offense an easy score. Imagine in a game that a center hikes the football and subsequently places it back on the ground between his feet without the other team noticing it happened. With the home team trailing by one run in the bottom of the ninth, the runner on first base fails to notice that the first baseman still has the ball in his glove as he takes a lead--easy out, game over. Two attackmen crisscross behind the lacrosse goal executing a fake flip and the new perceived threat drives hard to goal right forcing the defense and goalie to react only to leave the left side completely open for an easy slam dunk goal. When the defense, whether in whole or in part, becomes confused as to the real threat versus the perceived threat, confusion, and chaos ensue.
3. **Distraction:** Distraction occurs when something prevents us from giving full attention to something else. Often, the hardest things to see are directly in front of us, especially when commotion around us demands our attention. The more elaborate the ruse, the greater chance of distraction. Once distracted, discipline disappears, and the scheme's chance of success increases dramatically.

Can you imagine Jesus as a coach? His pregame speeches are epic, and in one particular speech He includes the “Parable of the Hidden Ball.” In it, He warns of the enemy’s use of misdirection, confusion, and distraction to keep you from achieving your ultimate goal. Too often we allow our relationship with God to resemble a hidden ball trick--misdirected, confused, or distracted. Through all of the noise, I can hear His exaltation clearly, “Keep your eye on the prize. Remain focused and don’t succumb to temptation. Discipline over distraction.”

Go

1. Why is it easier to see a hidden ball trick from a distance? How can incorporating an accountability person help you avoid Satan’s ruse?
2. Are you disciplined or distracted? What can you do to avoid distractions?
3. Instead of going through the motions, what if you had given everything?

Workout

Jeremiah 9:6; Colossians 2:8

Overtime

“Lord God, grant us today the peace, wisdom, and vision to see Your holy plans for us. Grant us discernment to uncover Satan’s deceit and discipline to hold true to Your promises. Let us not sacrifice another day content with going through the motions when giving You everything creates the best version of us. Amen.”

Bible Reference:

Philippians 3:14

Jeremiah 9:6

Colossians 2:8



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8701 Leeds Road | Kansas City, MO 64129 | 800.289.0909
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