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Enlightenment Through the Art of Basketball: How to Play Basketball Better & Winning by Beating Yourself

Hirohide Ogawa

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Yanagi enquired: What did the apprentice say to you? Ogawa answered: He said, "May I play?" Yanagi said: And what did you reply? Ogawa whispered: I asked him politely if he could be the post.

Many great sportsmen of the present day find that sport is a perfect technique for generating ecstatic states astonishingly similar to those reported by religious mystics. Tennis stars, Olympic hurdlers, cricketers and racing drivers are among the leading athletes who have found enlightenment through their own particular art; The joyous virtuosity of teams like the Harlem Globetrotters has demonstrated the same potential in basketball, but the theory behind the inner game of basketball comes from Japan.

Enlightenment Through the Art of Basketball offers a striking insight into a fundamental Oriental attitude towards sport. Kendo, karate, jiu-jitsu, swordsmanship in Samurai traditions, and archery: all have texts on sudden enlightenment through practice of the sport. Hirohide Ogawa's dicta and aphorisms on the art of basketball, edited here by his pupil S. Yanagi, constitutes the first book on the relationship of basketball with ultimate reality yet published in the West. Just as Eugen Herrigel's Zen in the Art of Archery and the numerous works on self-defence have reached an enthusiastic public, we believe that Enlightenment Through the Art of Basketball can offer players and spectators of basketball in the West certain insights which will prove valuable not only in their sport, but also in their daily lives.

Ogawa, a prominent Osaka basketball player, was on the verge of international honours when he abandoned the competitive sport to devote himself to the practice of private basketball. Among his most promising pupils is S. Yanagi (Sapporo). who has, with the master's permission, selected certain basic texts and dialogues which he believes most closely represent the Ogawa approach to the art of basketball. The translations are by H. Taniguchi, James N. Delavaye, and Otis McCrail.

Ogawa, seen taking his basketball post along the street one day, was asked what he was doing. He said: The monk carries his belongings in an empty rice-bowl: I carry mine in an empty net.

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