

**campus**

Turn  
challenges  
into the air  
you breathe!

# Wladimir Klitschko

Stefanie Bilen

# Challenge Management

What  
managers  
can learn  
from the  
top athlete

# Challenge Management

*Dr. Wladimir Klitschko* is a former boxer who achieved worldwide fame as world heavyweight champion, having gained the IBF, IBO, WBO and WBA titles. Having earned a degree in Philosophy and a PhD in sports science, he is a lecturer at the University of St. Gallen as well as a successful entrepreneur.

*Stefanie Bilen* is a journalist and author. She has worked for magazines and newspapers such as *Handelsblatt*, *Harvard Business Manager* and the *Wall Street Journal*. She holds a degree in Business Studies and studied Business Journalism at the Georg-von-Holtzbrinck School for Business Journalists. She enjoys sailing and running but is yet to try boxing.

Wladimir Klitschko, Stefanie Bilen

# **Challenge Management**

What managers can learn from the top athlete

Translated from German by Maren Barton

Campus Verlag  
Frankfurt/New York

The original edition was published in 2017 by Campus Verlag with the title *Challenge Management. Was Sie als Manager vom Spitzensportler lernen können*. All rights reserved.

ISBN 978-3-593-50905-1 Print  
ISBN 978-3-593-43899-3 E-Book (PDF)  
ISBN 978-3-593-43900-6 E-Book (EPUB)

Copyright © 2018 Campus Verlag GmbH, Frankfurt am Main. All rights reserved.  
Cover design: Campus Verlag GmbH, Frankfurt am Main  
Cover illustration: © Marc Schäfer  
Typesetting: Fotosatz L. Huhn, Linsengericht  
Printing: Beltz Grafische Betriebe GmbH, Bad Langensalza  
Printed in Germany

[www.campus.de](http://www.campus.de)

# Content

Welcome, <i>Tatjana Kiel</i> . . . . .	7
Foreword, <i>Bill McDermott: Fight, Fall, and Rise</i> . . . . .	9
What a Fight! . . . . .	13

## Part I

### Challenges Are the Air that We Breathe

1. How It All Began . . . . .	17
2. Ergo sum: I Know Who I Am . . . . .	31
3. I Am not a Dummy, I Can Walk by Myself . . . . .	61
4. Knowledge Grows if We Share It . . . . .	78

## Part II

### My Twelve Ways to Respond to Challenges

Way 1: Enabling and Using Coopetition . . . . .	95
Way 2: Thinking Progressively and Acting Courageously . . . . .	97
Way 3: Learning from Defeats to Create New Potential . . . . .	99
Way 4: Making Use of Your Successes and Letting Others Partake in Them . . . . .	101
Way 5: Planning Long-Term and Continuously Demonstrating Performance . . . . .	103
Way 6: Using Rest Periods to Reflect . . . . .	105
Way 7: Focusing on the Essentials . . . . .	107

Way 8: Trusting Your Own Competences . . . . .	109
Way 9: Identifying Potential and Harnessing It . . . . .	111
Way 10: Explosively Releasing Top Performance . . . . .	113
Way 11: Creating Organizational Structures . . . . .	115
Way 12: Knowing and Using Your Opponent's Strengths and Weaknesses . . . . .	117

### Part III

#### How Experts Use Challenge Management Practically

Way 1: Coopetition, <i>Frank Dopheide</i> . . . . .	121
Way 2: Progressivity, <i>Alyssa Jade McDonald-Bärtl</i> . . . . .	127
Way 3: Defeats, <i>Rolf Schumann</i> . . . . .	134
Way 4: Successes, <i>Ibrahim Eusan</i> . . . . .	141
Way 5: Planning and Performance, <i>Christian Seifert</i> . . . . .	147
Way 6: Reflection, <i>Miriam Goos</i> . . . . .	154
Way 7: Essentials, <i>Jens Schmelzle</i> . . . . .	160
Way 8: Competences, <i>Jean-Remy von Matt</i> . . . . .	166
Way 9: Potential, <i>Leopold Hoesch</i> . . . . .	172
Way 10: Top Performance, <i>Mathias Ulmann</i> . . . . .	179
Way 11: Organizational Structures, <i>Astrid Schulte</i> . . . . .	185
Way 12: Strengths and Weaknesses, <i>Torsten Bittlingmaier</i> . . . . .	192

#### Epilogue, *Arnold Schwarzenegger*:

Don't Listen to the Naysayers! . . . . .	199
Acknowledgments . . . . .	203
Index . . . . .	205

# Welcome

“If we make willpower an integral part of our attitude, then we can master any challenge!” That is the experience and the maxim that influenced me the most in my long-standing collaboration with Dr. Wladimir Klitschko.

It has been a great honor to work side by side with this exceptional sportsman. Every day with him allows us the chance to grow. He does not lecture; he does not instruct. Instead, he shares his know-how and his ideas with those around him as a matter of course and in a likeable, believable, and empathetic way.

With this book he is aiming to show you how a boxer’s attitude can be applied to the challenges of everyday (business) life. He shares solutions that got him to where he is today: Dr. Wladimir Klitschko is one of the most respected sporting icons in the world as well as a successful businessman in charge of an international network of companies.

I hope you enjoy reading this book and wish you lots of willpower in accepting and mastering your challenges.

*Tatjana Kiel*

*Managing Director of KLITSCHKO Ventures GmbH*

*t.kiel@klitschko-ventures.com*





# Fight, Fall, and Rise

There are some people in this world who simply are fantastic role models. They are people who are consistent and have great power of persuasion; people who are persistent and become successful because of this.

This is the kind of person I consider Wladimir Klitschko to be. I have to say I am very proud to know him. This is a man who is characterized by a big heart, extraordinary passion, and strong integrity. He is also a wonderful friend.

In our lives so far there have been a number of similarities that connect us.

We are both modest and know our roots. Both our lives were strongly shaped by our parents. He grew up in the former Soviet Union, whereas I lived in the working-class town of Amityville in New York State.

Both of us are hungry for success. Already during our teenage years we knew that we wanted more from life. Wladimir was demonstrating his talent in the boxing ring early on in Ukraine. I was working three part-time jobs in parallel in order to be able eventually to buy my own small shop in Amityville. That was the beginning of my career as an entrepreneur.

We both owe our success to particular values that matter to us. Wladimir's persistence, flexibility, focus, and coordination have always been an inspiration to me. I have always been convinced that trust is the most important asset for us as humans. Especially in times like these the world needs more empathy, more trust and more love.

Lastly, we are also connected by our view that real leaders are characterized by what they give to the world and not by what is given to them.

In this sense, let me tell you about myself and introduce you to this fascinating book by Wladimir, in which he shares his worldview with us.

I remember my childhood in Long Island in New York State. The people I knew were honest, hard-working people. I delivered newspapers, packed bags at grocery shops, and worked as a waiter. I learnt a lot. Some things I learnt fast, others more slowly.

One night our family was standing in the street. We could only watch helplessly as our house was burning down. I was still small, so there would have been no shame in it if I had been scared or upset about our loss. But at that moment my mother gave me a piece of her wisdom that I often think about: “Bill, there is nothing in that house that is more important than what is out here.”

Moments like that laid the foundation for my life-long optimism. I internalized that no-one and nothing can take away a person’s dreams. No matter what happens. I learnt that it is dreams that are the hallmark of a winner.

Decades later—after all my youthful dreams had come true and I had built a successful career—I was taking part in a book club event in Walldorf in Germany. During the conversation a colleague got up and said something that humbled me:

“Bill, I read your autobiography *Winners Dream*. *The advice your mother gave you impressed me very much: ‘The best thing about you is you.’ I pinned this quote to my fridge and show it to my children every day. It really means a lot to us all. Many, many thanks.*”

Her words moved me deeply. This colleague reminded me that a person who is aware of their uniqueness cannot be stopped by anyone—not by competitors or by obstacles.

She also made me aware that in our lives there are more things that unite us than that separate us. We all have one dream in life. We know how closely the scope of the dream, our imagination and our courage are linked to how much we actually achieve.

We have all forged our own paths, were often successful, yet we frequently failed, too. Because no dream becomes a reality if we don’t keep an eye on the details and their significance for the whole.

The world is full of surprises, as we know all too well. And nothing changes our way of thinking faster than the awareness that our world is constantly changing and that nothing stays as it was.

Yet there is something that distinguishes the individual from the masses.

How do we get through a tough fight? What drives us to get up again after we fall? How do we create a balance between our mind and our unyielding will? My experiences have taught me that this is the toughest test of all.

It feels as if it was yesterday: It was a perfectly normal summer's day and we were celebrating my father's birthday. My brother was there; we played golf and then enjoyed a cozy dinner at his home. It was a perfect day. I remember how glad I was about this time spent with my family because in this globalized and digitalized world these moments with our loved ones unfortunately are becoming few and far between.

During the night I left the guest room at my brother's house to refill my water glass. It was dark and I slipped on the stairs; the glass broke and I fell into the shards. My face was severely injured, especially my left eye. It was one of those crazy accidents that we think only ever happen to others.

In the moments after my fall I could feel two forces fight for control over my behavior: mind versus will.

I realized that the mind was trying to evade the pain.

My mind was therefore telling me: "It's okay. Just lie here. Go to sleep. Because if you stand up, everything will get a whole lot harder." Very rational.

Yet, although the mind controls us almost completely, it does not manage to break our will.

It was my will that gave me clarity. "You have the most wonderful family, the greatest colleagues and friends in the world. They are all counting on you. Now get up and carry on!" I was badly injured and knew that getting better was going to take a long time. And yet, I pulled myself up that night. I obeyed my will. Some of the best medical experts in the world started looking after me and I got the best care imaginable. My wife Julie, my family, my friends and colleagues were always at my side, which was a real blessing.

I especially remember Hasso Plattner, the co-founder and chairman of the supervisory board of my company, SAP. He told me: "Bill, you always

think about how you can support others. Now it's our turn to help you. Whatever you need, you can count on us.”

I was fighting for my health and gave it everything I had as anyone would. Unfortunately, however, my left eye was beyond saving. Nonetheless, I had the feeling that I could see more than before. I had become aware that seeing is more than just observing with our eyes. It is also about what we feel and what emotions we create in others. This creates totally new forces.

I know now that this fight between mind and will not only shapes our character but actually reveals it. It is in moments like these that the full force of our personal life experiences breaks through to the surface and makes us scream our passion. It is our will that makes us get up, start running and carry on. Winners always get up and winners rise!

Wladimir is one of the greatest boxing champions in history. But that is not what is special about him, nor is it the driving force behind his ascent. At the bottom of his heart he is and always will be a challenger.

A champion receives trophies and honors—usually well deserved. But a challenger invests every last fiber of his heart and his soul.

In this book we find out in person from the ultimate challenger how we can master the challenges life throws at us. Or as he likes to put it: “If you know how to control your mind, then you can control anything.”

We all fight. We all fall. And we all have within us the ability to get up again and to rise.

In Wladimir we have a role model that we can trust.

*Bill McDermott*

SAP SE CEO and Executive Board Member

March 2017

# What a Fight!

“Failure is not an option!” This is a conviction I have held since my first defeat. For me as a professional athlete there has only been one option ever since: to get in the ring to win. Otherwise there would be no point in taking part, even less in taking on an opponent.

When I lost against Tyson Fury in the winter of 2015 after years of successes and with the arrangements for the rematch dragging on, a new dimension developed. My main objective in the preparations was no longer just to preclude a defeat in the next fight. Instead, I wanted that victory with my whole heart and everything else got subordinated to that goal. That Fury cancelled the rematch in the end and that in Anthony Joshua I found an opponent who offered me the greatest stage of all as well as the greatest of all challenges, just strengthened this conviction. After all, a professional boxer does not often get the chance to fight against the best of the best, despite a previous defeat, in front of 90,000 spectators in a fight televised in more than 150 countries. I was obsessed with the idea of winning. Anything I and my team were doing from then on, we were doing obsessively.

Obsession—isn't it strange that this term has negative connotations? If people talk about obsession, they mean stubbornness and even a bit of madness and delusion. Yet I see this term as entirely positive. In my understanding obsession means one thing and one thing only: complete and unconditional love.

My aim was to win the fight against 27-year-old Anthony Joshua on 29 April 2017. I was obsessed with this idea and 100 per cent convinced that I was going to reach this goal. Despite my conviction that I was going

to win, the result of the fight showed that I had lost the competition. Yet in the ring I succeeded in getting back up several times after being knocked down and I even managed to knock my opponent to the ground. It may sound strange: I didn't win the fight, but left the ring a winner nonetheless. I had triumphed over my biggest enemy: myself.

The feedback I got after this fight was overwhelming. Reporters were united in saying that I had fought with my heart and my brains and had demonstrated greatness despite being defeated. "Wladimir Klitschko has shown that even as a loser you can leave the ring a hero", one of the commentators said. My number of fans increased and the positivity and encouragement from all over the world was huge.

If I had defeated Anthony Joshua in the first round, this would surely have been different. There seems to be truth in what one journalist wrote: "Klitschko appeared greater in his defeat than he ever managed in his victories."

As a consequence I have reconsidered my guiding principle because now I know: "Failure is an option"—and in this case a very good option. I did not achieve my goal of winning the fight, but I did reach another, much bigger goal: worldwide recognition and respect, for me as well as for boxing as a sport. By "failing" I achieved a much greater success than I would have done by winning.

However, being obsessive remains important to me. I have to love what I am doing. I have to be able to give it my everything. One can lose a fight, but one cannot lose an obsession.

Since 29 April 2017 I have come to see: Success does not necessarily mean reaching a predetermined goal. Rather, it means achieving the best possible result—and sometimes we just cannot even envisage beforehand what result might be the best one possible.

Following that night I redefined the meaning of being successful.

Failure with obsession—that is an option!

Yours,  30<sup>th</sup> April 2017

Part I

# **Challenges Are the Air that We Breathe**





# 1. How It All Began

The man was twice my height. At least. I was standing in front of him with my head tipped back to look up at him, and my mother was standing a little behind me. I was incredibly proud and quite excited. The head teacher of the elementary school had taken the time to meet me because there was something I needed to talk to him about. It was about my future.

I was six years old and fed up with being in kindergarten. I was supposed to go to school aged seven as was normal in the USSR, but I did not want to wait that long. I had been going to kindergarten for years; my mother was working there teaching the preschool class. Every morning we walked there together. I played the same games, met the same children, sang similar songs year after year. I had had enough and wanted something new. Time and again I had complained to my mother and every time she said the same thing: “All children only go to school when they are seven. There are no exceptions and all the top classes are full.”

Eventually, when I was moaning at her again—and I was very persistent in my nagging, almost mind-numbingly so, as my mother assured me later on—she had had enough: “If you really are so determined and you definitely want to go, then you have to prove it”, she told me. “We are going to go to the head teacher and then you can ask him yourself.”

If my mother had hoped that her announcement would frighten me and deter me from my wish, she was wrong. I was jubilant. I was still only a little boy, yet my fighting spirit had been awakened. I wanted to be allowed to go to school as soon as possible and become one of the big boys. I imagined how wonderful it would be to be taken seriously: to be able to learn important things and be given tasks. I visualized myself

sitting in my classroom on my own chair and at a proper desk, a bigger one than the kindergarten ones.

My mother made an appointment and thus I was now standing in front of an old gentleman to ask him to make an exception to the rule. “You do know that all children are only allowed to go to school aged seven, don’t you?”, he asked me. I nodded and replied that I was not afraid of the older children. After all Vitali, my brother, was five years older than me. “Do you also know that we have a totally different program here than in kindergarten?”, he continued. “Here children have to complete tasks and do what the teachers tell them”. “I know”, I answered joyfully. “Are you prepared to follow these rules?”, he asked. I nodded eagerly. That was exactly what I wanted.

The head teacher exchanged looks with my mother and then talked to her in hushed tones for a while. Eventually he bent down to me and shook my hand. “Wladimir, in that case you will go to school aged six. I hope you won’t disappoint us”, he said earnestly. “I have to admit that I have never had a six-year-old stand in front of me with such courage and such a strong will and argue his wish so self-confidently.”

I was happy. I threw my arms around my mother’s neck and at home I told my father and my grandmother that I was going to school soon. I felt content and incredibly satisfied. I had accomplished my dream. The next few years were going to show my family and the teachers that it had been the right decision.

Back then I did not think much about it, but I had learnt something: No matter how old or young I was—it is always worthwhile fighting for goals that matter, irrespective of the obstacles along the way. The most important thing is that I believe in myself, persist and do not give up.

As I found out later, this was a pattern that repeated itself throughout my childhood and youth: If I got an idea in my head I turned to my mother. She was the person I talked to about my plans, my desires and visions. She never just put them into action for me, though, nor did she give me the solutions on a silver platter. Instead, she helped me find my own way. That is how I learnt to champion my wishes and push them through. When I was still a child this required me to be sure of what I wanted and to argue it well in order to reach my goals.

This was especially necessary to stand my ground against my older

brother Vitali. It was not just him who thought he was superior to me; my mother shared this view of us. “Vova”, she often told me, “there are those who lead and those who are being led. Your brother Vitali belongs in the first group, you probably more in the second.”

How I hated it when she said that! Yes, my brother is five years older than me and my parents had given him the responsibility for me. As they both worked, it was often my brother who looked after me or who I went along with. But did that by necessity mean that he had to be the leader—and I his subordinate? After all, I was just as courageous and determined as he was.

Possibly this is the reason why I persistently got on my mother’s nerves with a view to winning her over to my plans when I was still a young boy. I was lucky that she realized that I was the kind of child who needed to be stimulated and challenged; a child who needed to be given tasks and challenges to thrive and develop. She usually indulged my demands, but without making it too easy for me. She wanted to make sure that I really wanted it.

I remember another story: I was eleven at the time and it was just before the long summer vacation. I had three months without school ahead of me. My mother told me that there was a vacation job going at her company. We were by then living in Kiev and my mother was working at a company that manufactured elevators. I wanted to earn some extra pocket money and enthusiastically said yes.

On my first day at work I became the proud owner of a grey company overall, which was going to be my uniform for the next few months. My responsibilities were clearly outlined: sweeping the grounds, painting the curbs white, and disassembling the electrical contacts of malfunctioning elevators.

That the work was boring did not concern me. I was glad to have secured this job. There was work that needed to be done, and I was getting paid for it. Consequently, every morning I looked forward to what lay ahead and went about my work dutifully day after day.

When I got my first wages after a month, my mother wanted to collect them for me. But I was much too proud of it to let her do it. I queued up for my pay with all the other workers and felt incredibly grown up. My first hard-earned wages!

What I did not know at the time was that I did not have an official job and therefore there were no wages. My mother had invented the vacation job for me and had let her colleagues in on the secret, including the lady at the pay office. She wanted me to have something worthwhile to do during the holidays and for me to learn that if I wanted money I had to earn it. It was her way of having trust in my abilities and strengthening my self-confidence.

Her plan ran into trouble when another boy also started doing a holiday job. His name was Andrey and he was given the same tasks as me: sweeping, painting, unscrewing. The unfair thing about it was that he was paid 50 kopeks an hour, but I only got 25. I could not get my head around that and tried talking to my mum about it. The fact that I was supposed to show him the ropes, that he was unreliable and did not even turn up for work every day, just made matters worse.

My mother just shrugged. She should have come to an agreement with Andrey's mother beforehand. His holiday job, of course, had also just been made up by his mum, but she could not tell me that back then. There was nothing I could do but put up with the difference in pay.

By the end of the holidays I had earned 10 rubles. I used that money to fulfill a long-held wish and bought myself some white summer shoes. The warm part of the year was almost over, but I did not care. It was the first money I had earned myself and I had spent exhausting, monotonous weeks saving it up. I wore the shoes with pride and dignity—even in autumn.

Discipline and a sense of duty were virtues that had been instilled in my brother and me from the moment we were born. Just like honesty and respect. All of our male ancestors had been soldiers in the army and our father was living these values at all times and insisting that we did, too.

If a task was assigned to us, then it was to be done and to be reported back on. It did not matter whether this took days, weeks or months, whether we wanted to or not. That was not what it was about and we were taught this from the start. Nonetheless, that did not mean I never tried to test the limits and to disregard the values for a little while from time to time.

When I was ten, I was searching for a regular leisure-time activity. My brother Vitali was 15 and had already started kickboxing training.