

The Icing on the Cake

One of the favorite expressions of highly successful and/or competitive people is the phrase, “If such and such a thing happens, that will just be the icing on the cake.”

And since I am speaking to highly successful *and* competitive people, no doubt you have used this expression as well.

A sprinter, for example, might say, “I’m going to try awfully hard to win the race and – if in the process – I break the record, then that will be the ‘icing on the cake.’”

A salesperson might say, “My objective is to meet my quota this quarter, and if I win the trip, that will be the ‘icing on the cake.’”



Hakeem Olajuwon was an all-pro center for the Houston Rockets from 1984 to 2001. He led the Rockets to back-to-back NBA championships in 1994 and 1995. In 2008, he was inducted into the Basketball Hall of Fame, and in 2016, he was inducted into the International Basketball Federation Hall of Fame. He is considered one of the greatest centers ever to play the game.

Olajuwon gave a new dimension and thought to the phrase, *icing on the cake*, just before the final game in the 1994 championship series with the New York Knicks. The teams were tied at three games each, and each game – with one exception – had been decided in the last few seconds of the contest. It was truly one of the great championship series of all time.

Just before the championship game, a reporter asked Olajuwon if his life would be ruined if the Rockets did not win the championship. His answer is an indication of Olajuwon’s sincerity and humility.

“I’ve seen some guys who did win a championship, but at the end of their careers they weren’t happy. To me, that’s not a successful career. If you feel joy about what you’ve accomplished, no matter what profession it is, you’ve had a successful career.”

Then Olajuwon added: “For me, the championship would be the icing on the cake, but I’ll still have the cake, no matter what. You can look at how far you’ve come and be happy or you can dwell on where you haven’t been and spend your lifetime believing you have been deprived of something. I can’t.”

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There is wisdom in Olajuwon's words. And it has special application to the associates of Life Care and Century Park. We have been called to a mission, and we are investing our God-given talents to make the lives of others better. And that produces joy.

Incidentally, *Hakeem* literally means "doctor," or "wise one," and *Olajuwon* means "at the top." His name is reflected in his approach to life.

For you sports fans who may not remember, after that interview, the Rockets went on to beat the Knicks 90 to 84 and win the championship. Olajuwon scored a game-high 25 points and 10 rebounds.

– Beecher Hunter