

How to do impossible things

 By [Damon Stapleton](#)

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It has been an interesting week. The world may run out of Guinness. As I write this Ireland have just beaten the All Blacks 40 - 29 in Chicago. It is the first time they have done this in 111 years. To continue the surreal sporting theme, Andy Murray, has become the number one tennis player in the world.

And if you want one more, the Chicago Cubs have won the world series for the first time in 108 years. Chicago has had quite a week.

By any measure, all of these feats would be seen as almost impossible things to do. Nobody in the world apart from the most fanatical Irish fan would have given Ireland a chance of beating the All Blacks. They are the World Champions, the best team in the world by some margin and had been on an 18-match winning streak. Andy Murray at 29 is the second-oldest player in the world to reach number one and it has taken him just over seven years to go from number two to number one. For most of his career Murray didn't look like he would ever surpass Nadal, Federer and the almost invincible Djokovic. If you watched Djokovic take Murray apart at the French Open a couple of months ago, you would have said there was no way Murray would overtake him in the very same year.



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While all this was happening globally, I also got to see something that echoed these unlikely events at work on a somewhat smaller scale. A junior team got to see a seemingly impossible idea of theirs happen with the help of many selfless people. It was a very stressful, beautiful couple of days for them. As it all ended I could see in their eyes how much they had learnt in a single, crazy week. They had learnt that impossible is possible.

What they had learnt differed greatly from the strange belief about creativity that all you need is a little inspiration, some talent, you have an idea and off you go.

They had learnt that doing impossible things is almost always about grit rather than just talent. And what is grit? Desire, determination, resilience, persistence and maybe some madness and naivety all mixed in. I have seen creatives obsess about the same idea for years. Everybody will tell them they are mad; it will never happen. They don't listen, they keep trying and then it does. It then seems like a miracle but actually it happened simply because somebody wouldn't give up. Ninety-nine times out of a hundred it's because of the qualities I have already stated. You cannot just have talent.

Impossible ideas are bloody hard to make. Talent might give you the gift but grit will get it to happen. Grit and desire will make the idea real. Grit will help you deal with rejection and that pesky thing called reality. And desire, will help you deal with the time it takes to overcome all those endless obstacles.

I have seen lots of creatives with talent, but the greatest creatives for me have talent mixed with grit. In fact, some of the best creatives I have ever met were not always blessed with huge amounts of talent but had unbelievable amounts of determination and desire. They have taught me that to do the impossible you have to keep showing up, take the knocks and keep trying. It might sound obvious but very few have the ability to do it. It is a strange phenomenon that I have seen over and over. Doing, creates its own rewards. Action finds a way. And, not always in the way you thought.

Andy Murray might not be as naturally talented as Djokovic but he kept fighting. He kept working and showing up. He did not give up. All that grit, energy and doing created the reward that perhaps talent couldn't give on its own.

Ireland are not a better side than the All Blacks but they were that day at Soldiers Field in Chicago. Their desire, passion and determination overwhelmed the All Blacks talent.

In a week of very improbable events, the lesson for me was talent can show you impossible things, but only grit can get you to impossible things.

"In order to attain the impossible, one must attempt the absurd." - Miguel de Cervantes

ABOUT DAMON STAPLETON

Damon is regional chief creative officer for DDB in New Zealand and Australia. Before that, ECD at Saatchi and Saatchi Australia, before that, group ECD of TBWA Hunt Lascaris and global ECD of Standard Bank. He has won over 500 awards internationally, including a D&AD Black Pencil, Cannes Grand Prix, Grand Olios, ADC Black Cube and most effective ad in the world by Warc 100. Damon is now regional chief creative officer for DDB in New Zealand and Australia...

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