

## [Success: It's Not How Well You Start, It's How Well You Finish](#)

By [Cordell Parvin](#) on October 10th, 2013

Have you had a profound disappointment in your career yet? I had more than one in my career and I can tell you from experience it was really hard to get back up and try again. My father once told me:

It's not how well you start, it's how well you finish.

At the time he told me this, I thought I was at the finish and had not finished well.

I could have written this post about the Dallas Cowboys loss to Denver, reported here: [Tony Romo throws late interception; Dallas Cowboys lose 51-48 to Denver Broncos on last-second FG](#). I don't think any sportswriters or TV analysts believed the Cowboys had a chance to beat the Broncos. The Cowboys came so very close, but did not pull off the upset. How will the team respond to the disappointing loss?

I decided to write about an even more poignant recent sports example. In this story it was the US team coming back to defeat the underdog New Zealand team.

If you are not aware of the story, make sure and read: [Oracle Team USA wins America's Cup](#). It is an interesting human interest sports story. I like:

For a team which had stared into the abyss, trailing 8-1 at one stage, Oracle did what nobody outside of its catamaran believed it could do...

But despite a good start from Team New Zealand, it was the reigning champion which dominated.

It must have been exhilarating for the US Oracle team and a devastating loss for the [Team New Zealand](#). I was impressed by a letter written to the Team New Zealand by former teammate Dr. Mark Grams : [Former teammate's open letter to Team NZ](#). Among other things, Grams writes:

I see a great team from a great country comprised of incredible people all of whom have given their absolute all in pursuing their dream. What you have done, and the way you have done it, I have the greatest admiration for. Well done mate, you have my respect, my appreciation and my continued support.



I read this interesting New York Times article: [In New Zealand, Jitters Yield to Cheers, Then Sighs](#). I liked this analysis:

Those guys on the New Zealand boat were sailing the boat,” said Yortt, an account manager who, like most of the crowd, headed to work after the race. “They were grinding everything up. They were doing everything manually with the foils and everything. Whereas Oracle just pressed a button and it automatically did it. So how much actual sailing were they doing? It’s kind of all about technology.

## To view, click on picture.

I read that most people in New Zealand got up to watch the races. It is ever so devastating to be the underdog, to have your entire nation behind you, to be so close to victory and not be able to close the deal.



America's Cup 2013: 'Flying Machines' in Action

There is more than one way to look at this great comeback in the context of ...it's how well you finish. I think both ways I look at it apply to our careers as lawyers.

The first way to look at the context of how well you finish is to point out that when you are the underdog in a trial or getting a deal closed, it really does not matter how well you do at the beginning. It only matters if you are able to close the deal. No one remembers, or even cares about underdogs that almost won.

The second way to look at the context of how well you finish is to say until you retire, your career is never finished. For many of us, including me, the question of how we finish is how well we respond to profound disappointment in a result that we gave our all to achieve.

I wonder how the Cowboys will respond to their disappointing defeat to what is likely the best team in the NFL.

**Cordell M. Parvin** built a national construction practice during his 35 years practicing law. At Jenkins & Gilchrist, Mr. Parvin was the Construction Law Practice Group Leader and was also responsible for the firm's attorney development practice. While there he taught client development and created a coaching program for junior partners. In 2005, Mr. Parvin left the firm and started Cordell Parvin LLC. He now works with lawyers and law firms on career development and planning and client development. He is the co-author of *Say Ciao to Chow Mein: Conquering Career Burnout* and other books for lawyers. To learn more visit his Web site, [www.cordellparvin.com](http://www.cordellparvin.com) or contact him at [cparvin@cordellparvin.com](mailto:cparvin@cordellparvin.com).