

THE PSYCHOLOGY OF ANY GIVEN SUNDAY

Discussion Guide

Performance, Identity, Injury, and the Cost of the Game

Use this guide to reflect on performance, pressure, belonging, injury, and what it costs to build an identity around the game.

1

BEFORE WATCHING

Set the stage and notice the pressure built into the game.

- What kinds of pressure do athletes carry before they ever step onto the field?
- When does competition build character, and when does it start to consume identity?

2

WHILE WATCHING

Pay attention to power, injury, loyalty, and performance.

- How do players get treated when they are useful versus when they are vulnerable?
- What messages do the leaders send about pain, toughness, and what it means to matter?
- When does the team feel like a family, and when does it feel like a machine?

3

AFTER WATCHING

Reflect on the emotional and psychological cost.

- What happens when a person's worth becomes tied to winning, fame, or physical dominance?
- How do injury, aging, or being replaced threaten a player's sense of self?
- What forms of loyalty in the story are genuine, and which ones are conditional?

4

PERSONAL / FAMILY REFLECTION

Connect the themes to your own life.

- Where in life do people perform strength while privately falling apart?
- Have you ever felt valued mainly for what you can do, rather than who you are?
- What helps a person build an identity that is larger than achievement?



DR. Z TAKEAWAY:

Performance can organize a life, but it cannot hold a whole self together forever.

When identity is built only on winning, power, or usefulness, injury and loss become psychological crises.

Real strength comes from becoming more than the role.



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Understanding minds.



Strengthening connections.