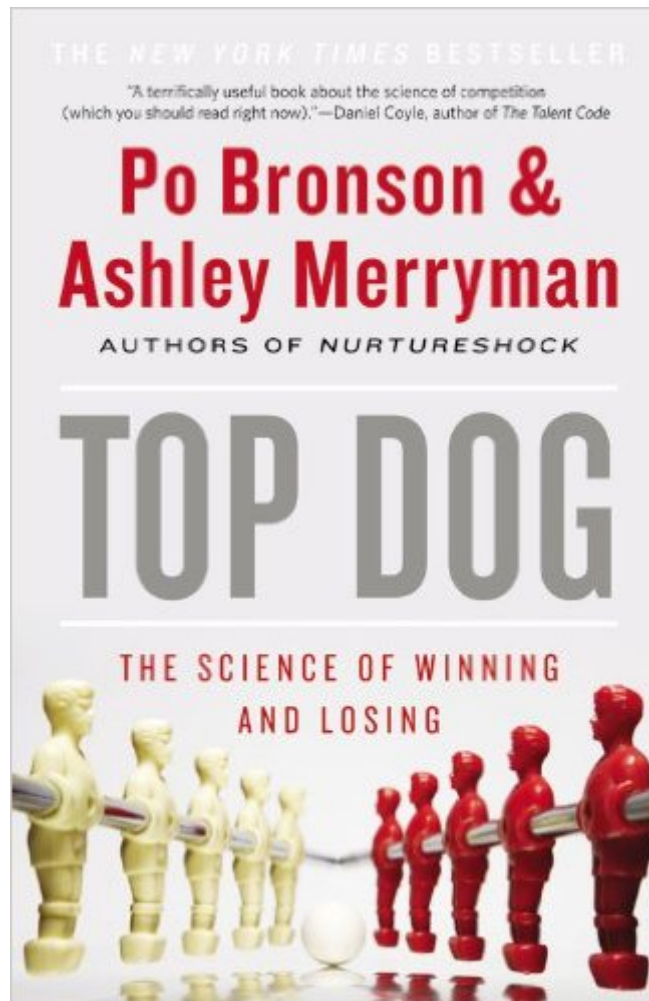


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# Top Dog: The Science Of Winning And Losing



## Synopsis

New York Times Bestseller Po Bronson and Ashley Merryman's work changes the national dialogue. Beyond their bestselling books, you know them from commentary and features in the New York Times, CNN, NPR, Time, Newsweek, Wired, New York, and more. E-mail, Facebook, and Twitter accounts are filled with demands to read their reporting (such as "How Not to Talk to Your Kids," "Creativity Crisis," and "Losing Is Good for You"). In TOP DOG, Bronson and Merryman again use their astonishing blend of science and storytelling to reveal what's truly in the heart of a champion. The joy of victory and the character-building agony of defeat. Testosterone and the neuroscience of mistakes. Why rivals motivate. How home field advantage gets you a raise. What teamwork really requires. It's baseball, the SAT, sales contests, and Linux. How before da Vinci and FedEx were innovators, first, they were great competitors. Olympians carry TOP DOG in their gym bags. It's in briefcases of Wall Street traders and Madison Avenue madmen. Risk takers from Silicon Valley to Vegas race to implement its ideas, as educators debate it in halls of academia. Now see for yourself what this game-changing talk is all about.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

Po Bronson refers to a huge reservoir of social sciences in analyzing how we compete. And, he uncovers many counterintuitive findings. Most everything we were told or we intuitively believe is wrong when it comes to competing. I'll share just some of those insights below. The book has obviously many more. Forget about the power of positive thinking. When it comes to competing you

need focus, intensity, and readiness to face expected obstacles and adversity. A bit of insecurity and self-doubt motivates you to try harder. Instead, positive thinking makes you mellow and take success for granted without being aware of the needed effort to actually succeed. Many studies have confirmed that positive thinking is not associated with superior performance. "What matters is not Positive vs Negative Thinking, it's Additive vs Subtractive Thinking" states Bronson on pg. 163. Additive thinking is reviewing your performance and uncovering opportunities for improvement. Subtractive thinking is regretting you did not do this or that without thinking of the necessary skill improvement needed to move forward. Teamwork is way overrated. People underestimate how much time is wasted in teamwork. 62% of software projects are delivered late. 49% are over budget. Productivity per person can drop 40% even within a small team. Forget about team spirit. Some of the most productive teams had a hostile environment. Think of Abraham Lincoln's "Team of Rivals" and the fractious geniuses of the Manhattan Project. Some of the best orchestras are the ones associated with the most discord among musicians during practice. They are perfectionists who push each other to superior collective performance.

Po Bronson and Ashley Merryman (authors of *NurtureShock*) have written a book whose large message (kind of) bucks the trend of the self-esteem movement: while some people do worse under the pressure of competition, competitive situations (whether against oneself or others) seem to bring out many people's best. The book is devoted to 'filling in' that basic thesis with scientific data from a vast array of fields from behavioral economics to neuroscience. First, the basics of how stress and our reaction to it work. Dopamine is a neurotransmitter that produces adrenaline, the body's way of confronting on stressful situations. COMT is an enzyme that degrades dopamine. People's bodies produce varying levels of dopamine, low dopamine levels leading to an overall competition-avoiding personality, etc. These two 'work together' to determine how a person will react to stress and competition. If your body produces a lot of dopamine naturally, but also produces a high level of COMT (to degrade the dopamine), you may handle stress and competition quite well. If you produce the same high level of dopamine but have a low level of COMT (meaning less dopamine is degraded), you may end up being the type who gets stressed very easily, "overreacting" to mildly stressful situations. Low dopamine levels and high COMT may produce someone who doesn't react strongly enough in stressful or competitive situations. Etc. But the book also talks about the differences in how men and women generally compete. Conventional wisdom tends to say that women aren't very competitive naturally (and those who are have simply learned to get on in a man's competitive world. But like much common wisdom, there is only a grain of truth to this.

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