

# How To Turn Failure To Learn Into Flow That Works For Mike Trout

A HittingPerformanceLab.com Interview with Daniel Robertson

**Daniel Robertson** Hey, what's going on brotha?

**Daniel Robertson** ...one of my one of our players called, I had reached out to him. Now we're just...

**Joey Myers** Oregon player?

**Daniel Robertson** Yeah. Yeah. One of our Oregon State players here. He's got all the tools in the world, man, but he sometimes stands in his own way. I just wanted to start some sort of program with him. That aided his ability to get out of his own way a little bit.

**Joey Myers** Yeah. Is that more school or is it just life? Just like decisions and stuff?

## How to Get Out of Your own Way & Make Adjustments

**Daniel Robertson** No, no, no. But just how you how he deals with failure. Just one of those things. I don't know how you can know how to practice. You know. I see. Just. I don't think kids understand those things. They don't understand how to practice. They don't understand how to focus. They don't understand how to commit. They don't understand how to learn. They don't know how to do those things, because I think there's so much time and energy. People are spending things telling them that this is how it's done. When you and I both know the only way to figure out how to do something is through trial and error.

**Daniel Robertson** Now, you've got to do that to teach yourself how to do it. You got to teach yourself. What ways I can do things at a high level. Well, what ways, how much success am I having? So that way, internally and subconsciously, I already know that I'm better than the next guy because my success rates are more frequent than his are. And then you take that confidence in the game where believing, if I'm facing a pitcher, I get hit more than I get outs or I know I get hits on these pitches much more than the next guy.

**Daniel Robertson** And this guy is breaking stuff for this guy. Whatever his pitch is, whatever he has, isn't good enough to get me out. And then you start to believe those things and then confidence can arise from that. But kids these days aren't learning those sides of it. They're learning swing mechanics, learning mechanics, mechanics, mechanics. And then when those mechanics stop working, they're looking for the next mechanic to come along and fix their mechanics.

**Daniel Robertson** Just like a normal mechanic, if something goes wrong in the car, you change parts. You get going. Or you make an adjustment. You know, you got to adjust. Maybe you need a new part. Maybe that one broke down. Your mechanics break down some times. And if you don't know the how to. If you don't know how or the why, then you're never going to know. And I think those are the principles that I think our kids need to start learning is because they don't ask questions. They don't ask why they don't ask how.

**Daniel Robertson** They just say, show me, show me. I don't know if it's the information boom or, you can get information at your fingertips. I don't know what the problem is. You

know what I mean? I'm not. I don't have all the answers. But what I do know is kids these days don't know how to fail. They don't know. They don't know how to learn. They don't know how to focus. They don't know how to commit. They don't know how to do things that ultimately create something later.

**Joey Myers** Right now. Let me ask you this. So give an example in this guy's case. You don't have to say his name or anything, but give like an example of how he doesn't. And maybe that's what you're saying right now or you're kind of giving examples of that. He just goes to mechanics when something's wrong. But I'm thinking failure wise. But is there a time in your mind of what he kind of does or maybe the tipping point that made you say, you know what, I'm going to pick up the phone. Just give him a call?

## **When to Intervene with a Player About Focus, Commitment, & Learning**

**Daniel Robertson** I don't think it was that it was a tipping point. I think it was. You know, I'm dealing with my first time being an educator. You know, I've been a player my whole life, and I think when I finally came to grips with, gosh, I guess I'm not good enough to play anymore, which couldn't be further from the truth where no one just wants me. That's much easier. It's not that I'm not good anymore. I can go out and play at high levels. I could go be the best player in the league. That was just the best player in my league last year.

**Daniel Robertson** But if nobody wants you, you can't do anything about it. So it's out of your own control. So I think for me, moving into this next stage of my life. I think some of my insecurities as a player where what other people thought of me, whether I thought I was good enough or whether it was my job to prove to them that I was good enough and if I couldn't prove them right, then I was a failure.

**Daniel Robertson** So dealing with failure in my own way. But what I felt as an educator is, I don't really give a shit what anybody thinks. I have knowledge in this game from a first person's perspective. Through tons and tons and tons of hours that nobody will ever be able to compare with trial and error. And I spent that time trying to learn and trying to master myself through the process. And so, I think as an educator, I don't care what people think.

**Daniel Robertson** So if I have to spend time with a kid who might be a mental midget, maybe we work together for a couple of weeks or maybe I help him for a couple weeks. And then it clicked for him because his ability he can do everything. He can play pepper with the hitter's eye. He could drag bunt if he wants. When you start talking about the analytical side, like this guy's k-motion or whatever, the k-motion sequence, there's like two people in all of baseball that are equivalent to him and it's Mike Trout and someone else. I forget who the other person is.

**Daniel Robertson** But it's like this kid's 21 years old. He's doing it. He can move the way that arguably the best player in the game moves. So what's standing in his way? And I think I wouldn't be doing myself justice, calling myself an educator if I knew that this kid had a mental block where he was standing in his own way, where he didn't know how to get out of his own way. And I didn't try to help. Then I couldn't call myself a baseball coach. You know, I couldn't.

**Daniel Robertson** Just like I couldn't call myself a player baseball player, if I didn't know how to bunt. Or I didn't move a runner. I didn't know how to field a ground ball. I didn't

know how to throw it the right base. I didn't know how to get signs. All those things. It goes so hand-in-hand. And now burning myself as an educator and as a coach of a game that I love the most. For me, you can see it in him when he gets to 2-0, or when he gets to 1-2. That was the biggest glaring tell to me.

**Daniel Robertson** If he was 2-0, what he had the inability to do... When he was locked in, which is, you know, when you're in flow and you're rolling. Yeah, that's optimal. I get all that. How to stay in the green. All these great innuendos that teach you and tell you. Not so much teach you, but tell you how to be in flow and how important it is. But all those things are achieved over hours and hours and hours and swings and swings and swings. Thousands of swings that when the game comes, those allow that proper learning that takes place, the proper focus gives way to flow.

**Daniel Robertson** But if you don't know how to properly practice and you don't know how to properly focus and you don't know how to commit to learning. You can't get into flow. So for me, seeing him, if he gets to 2-0, he's probably swinging at the next pitch. He's already made the choice that if this is a fastball, I'm swinging. Rather than letting the pitch come out of the hand, anticipating it in a certain area. And then just trying to hit the baseball, just trying to hit the inside part with authority and get into the middle of the field.

**Daniel Robertson** And then whatever timing, rhythm, whatever thing breaks down or whatever success you have in it, that's what's going to happen 2-0. But he's already swinging. So if it's like a pitch that's up, you know, 2-0 or 3-1. Probably one out of every five times, he'll hit one on the nose back to the middle, or he'll be a little on top and he'll be a little frustrated that he hit it on the ground. He doesn't let his ability... It isn't just let his swing be his swing. Because he hasn't learned it. He hasn't committed to it. He hasn't understood that those thousands of swings that you take, if you don't learn from them, then they're just wasted swings and you're just going into the game hoping...

**Daniel Robertson** That your eyes and your great hand-eye coordination that you've been developing over the course of your entire life, you hope all those things show up, you hope that they all take care of themselves. But hitting with hope and hitting with confidence and conviction or two drastically different beasts.

**Daniel Robertson** So he does that. That's what he does. And then when he gets to 1-2, if he takes a hanging slider and then goes to 1-1 where it's already 1-1 and he takes a slider and doesn't swing, he'll swing at the next slider even if it bounces, or he might take a slider because he's still thinking about the previous pitch. He's either thinking about the previous pitch or the next pitch. He even very rarely is he locked in when he's locked in and he's in flow...

**Daniel Robertson** He's on this pitch, but very rarely is he able to be on this pitch because he's always on the previous pitch or the next pitch. So that was one of the things as I was going through our entire group of position players of what I think they could be better at from an offensive standpoint, defensive, base running standpoint. I got to his name and, out of all the guys that I was writing down, things that could be better at things if they did well. The only thing that I can find that he could be better at because he knows how to stay inside the ball. He does it arguably better than anybody else.

**Daniel Robertson** He stays in the big part of the field better than anybody else on our team. He does so many things so well. But the one thing he's terrible at, is his neck up. And that was all I wrote down and when I wrote it down, I just in that moment I felt

obligated to send him a text. Because I feel like all these kids, they now reflect me. So they have some success. Good for them if they have some failure. With my experience, I could help. So if they still fail months or days, I wouldn't say days. But if they're still failing at something months later, then it directly reflects me because I didn't get to where I was able to get to because I failed for months at a time.

**Daniel Robertson** I failed for little spurts at a time. And then I had to learn. And then I had to adjust. And then I rode that adjustment all the way until my next adjustment. And that's what being a big leaguer is, you're just riding your adjustments as long as you can. You know, until you're fortunate enough to be Mike Trout or Joey Votto or Miguel Cabrera, where their adjustments happen so fast. And they have so many swings under their belt that they've learned from and have mastered like I think Barry Bonds said it best when they asked him why he was starting to come back and try to help these hitters...

**Daniel Robertson** And he just said, well, because I have a masters in this shit, like I have a doctorate. He goes, everyone goes, and you do these clinicals and you do all the things that you do and you become doctors and you become masters. Well, I have a doctorate in baseball. I know how to hit; I have a doctorate in this shit. And then that kind of flipped the way that I think about baseball, because I think, you know, the war of the haves and the have nots, the people who've played before, the people who haven't.

**Daniel Robertson** There are just levels to it. There are just levels of hierarchy. Just because the information that you get exposed to, the real-life experience you get exposed to. But then there's also another separator. There are people who have that real-life experience. And then there's people that have the real-life experience and truly love it and want to give it back and want to teach. And that's like every other educator or professor at an elite university or that's at an Ivy League school.

**Daniel Robertson** And then you get those people that have all this great information and are just assholes and want to tell you that you don't know anything. Oh, you don't know because you've never done it. Well, okay. Yeah. That person never done it. It doesn't take away their love for it. And that they want to teach that they want to help the next generation, not their fault that they couldn't play past college. But. They're trying to take advantage. They're humbly trying to learn as much information as they can and apply it to their own experience.

**Daniel Robertson** And that's why I think that people who haven't played at a high level or haven't done it and are still great educators of the game. Because they preach. They reach the people that they're meant to reach. That's just what it is. And I think that's where the influx where we're at now is there's like this ultimate battle. Who's going to find the holy grail of whatever this case may be? But there is no holy grail. This game is going to go on for another... Well, I don't know how long it's going to go on. ...have viruses and stuff like this. We aren't going to have shit.

**Joey Myers** That's what I agree with you on all that and the war between the haves and the have nots. And everybody wants to be the guy or the gal most of the guys, you know. But what I really love on you. And we've had a few pretty good lengthy phone calls before I'm hitting and share some pretty good not minds on hitting. But one thing that you have that's very unique, like you've been kind of letting in on in the call is this perspective on failure.

**Joey Myers** So what I'd like you to do is talk about the difference in your perspective on failure, how you look at failure, how you deal with it, how it affects you either positively or negatively versus say, like a high school player or, people who will be listened to this are going to be high school coaches, going to be dads that are coaching Little League, going to be along those lines and they're going to see failure as is the end all be all, you know, when failure happens, it's like, oh, man, into the world type thing. So what is your perspective? How do you see it differently? Failure.

## **What's Your Perspective on Dealing with Failure? What Does that Look like to You?**

**Daniel Robertson** I don't think I see it differently than anyone else. I just see my own wants and desires differently than everyone else. So when I say I want to play baseball and when I wanted to be a big leaguer and when I said I wanted to be the best, what I saw was everything else now, I became sure of what I wanted. So the failure that I was going... I actually read this in a book a little while ago about how to learn. And it talked about being unsure. If at any moment you're unsure of something, then when you start to fail, you're going to have a victim's mentality and you're going to go to a place that you can never get over because you never really wanted it in the first place.

**Daniel Robertson** So the high school kid, the high school dad, the high school parent, whoever the case may be, if you are unsure if you want baseball to be your thing or not, when you experience failure, you're automatically going to go to a dark place because you don't know if you want to do it or not. And you're allowing success and failure to dictate how far you want to go or how much you want to experience, because at the end of day, that's really what it's all about. If you want to play in the big leagues, then you want to experience more than the person that just wants to get drafted or the person that just wants to play college baseball.

**Daniel Robertson** You're trying to have a better experience. That's all that it is. So Mike Trout, right now, he wants to be the best player ever. So he wants to have a different experience. He wants to have a different experience than, you know, the twenty-six guy that's going up and down who just gets fired up at a big paycheck or gets fired up at being a big leaguer. He doesn't want to be just fired up at being in the big leagues. He doesn't want to be just fired up when he gets a hit in the big leagues. He wants to get fired up when he's the MVP. He wants to get fired up when he raises the trophy. He wants to get fired up when he puts the gold jacket on, when he gets into Cooperstown. He wants to get fired up when the Hall of Fame calls.

**Daniel Robertson** There are different experiences that different people want to have. And for me, once you become sure of what you want to do, that's when you can begin to deal with failure, because you need the failure to get to where you want to go. You need that because it's going to teach you how to overcome. It's just like, there's an age old saying in spring training when a big-league hitter is ready for the season. He needs to go through a slump. So, yes, awesome to go to Spring Training and rake. But every big-league hitter needs to go through a slump, because once he goes through a slump and once he pulls himself out of it, he's ready for the season.

**Daniel Robertson** Because when I'm sitting for six months and playing baseball for six months, I'm going to go through ups and then I go through downs. But the biggest thing that you have to learn is how to get through failure. So the sooner you go through failure, the better. If you're sure about what you want to do.

**Joey Myers** But you've got to have that. That's kind of like your beacon. You got to have that beacon. And it's going to be super bright. And I think even Tony Robbins talks about the idea of purpose, right? Purpose. Without purpose, people perish, in the Bible. He talks about and it's if you're there's a difference between motivation and inspiration. Right. You know, motivation. He says like a warm bath. The warm bath turns cold in the matter of five, ten minutes where inspiration instead of motivation where you're like pushing yourself. I just got to do this. I got to do this. Inspiration is like you're talking about where Mike Trout. And you can see that. You can see that in him. You can see that in Miguel Cabrera, you can see that in Joey Votto.

**Joey Myers** You can see that they don't, like you said, don't want to just be a big leaguer or don't want to just have that big old fat contract. You can actually see the drive and the inspiration in them when they play every day where they want, like you said, raise the trophy. They want to put on the gold jacket, all that kind of stuff. So having that inspiration, it's almost like inspiration pulls you to the finish line versus motivation. It's like you having to push yourself.

### **To You, What Does Motivation and Inspiration Look Like? What's the Difference?**

**Daniel Robertson** Yeah. Yeah. It's like the best way to describe it would be, motivation is you sprinting to the finish line with a speed sled on the back, and inspiration is running to the finish line with the feeling like you just unhooked the speed sled. There's like a lightness to it because you're just running through the wind.

**Daniel Robertson** But that's what I try to explain to any and every one when they ask me what it was like to play with Mike and creating a friendship with him in a kinship of respect. That was the one thing that I tried to explain to everyone. But they just don't understand. They can't quite conceptualize. Well, what do you mean when Mike Trout walked into a room? That room that he just walked into is the exact room that he wants to be in. When Mike Trout showed up to the locker room, that was exactly where he wanted to be. When he was in the cage? That was exactly where he wanted to be.

**Daniel Robertson** When he was out on the field during, at three o'clock playing long toss with Cole Calhoun, because the knock on him was OK, his arm was so-so, getting his arm stronger was the only thing he wanted to do. And telling people that, in getting them to understand that without them thinking that he was some psychotic psychopath, that, you know, was obsessed with baseball no. That's not what I'm talking about. I'm talking when you want to be somewhere and you don't have a memory of what's going on while you're where you want to be because you're so enthralled in the moment and you're so locked in to the present.

**Daniel Robertson** The present stretches for hours upon hours upon hours. So Mike Trout is not in flow, just after we hear calling all angels and he's sitting on the top step of the, iconic picture of him just sitting there. And they take a picture just before he run down on the field. He's not in flow there, he's not in flow in his first at bat. He's in flow and he's in his car driving over because he's going to where he wants to go. He can't wait to get to the field. I mean, that's probably why he drives as fast as he drives the time in his Mercedes, V12.

**Daniel Robertson** But he's going to where he wants to go. And it's so hard to get people to understand that because we don't do that and we don't practice it in our own lives. We don't know what that's like in our own lives, because so many people in our world today don't want to be doing the things that they want to be doing. So those days are monotonous. Those days stretch long. Those days they go for ever. And they seem to last forever. But only the good die young. Right. The famous song, they might be thirty-five, but that feels young to them because they've been doing what they want to do their whole life. And they don't answer to anyone. And it's not a rebellious thing.

**Daniel Robertson** Mike Trout doesn't answer to anyone, because Mike knows that through his work ethic and through his learning of his own personal gain and through his desire to make adjustments, he's giving more effort than anyone else can possibly match. So when you talk about confidence, when you talk about and knowing that he's the best player in the game, it's not fake bravado, it's not a fake confidence. It's because he's front and center in the driver's seat for all the work that he's putting in and he wants to do it. So that breeds more confidence than anybody can ever fathom...

Stay tuned for Part-2 to this interview with Daniel Robertson.