



Train Your Weaknesses; Compete Your Strengths

Presented by
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2013 Contest Academy

In a Nutshell



- If you want to improve you have to train
- You need to train skills you are weak on
- What contests do you want to win?
- Other contests are for training those weak skills (while maintaining your strengths).
- Plan your season so you peak at the event(s) you want to win.



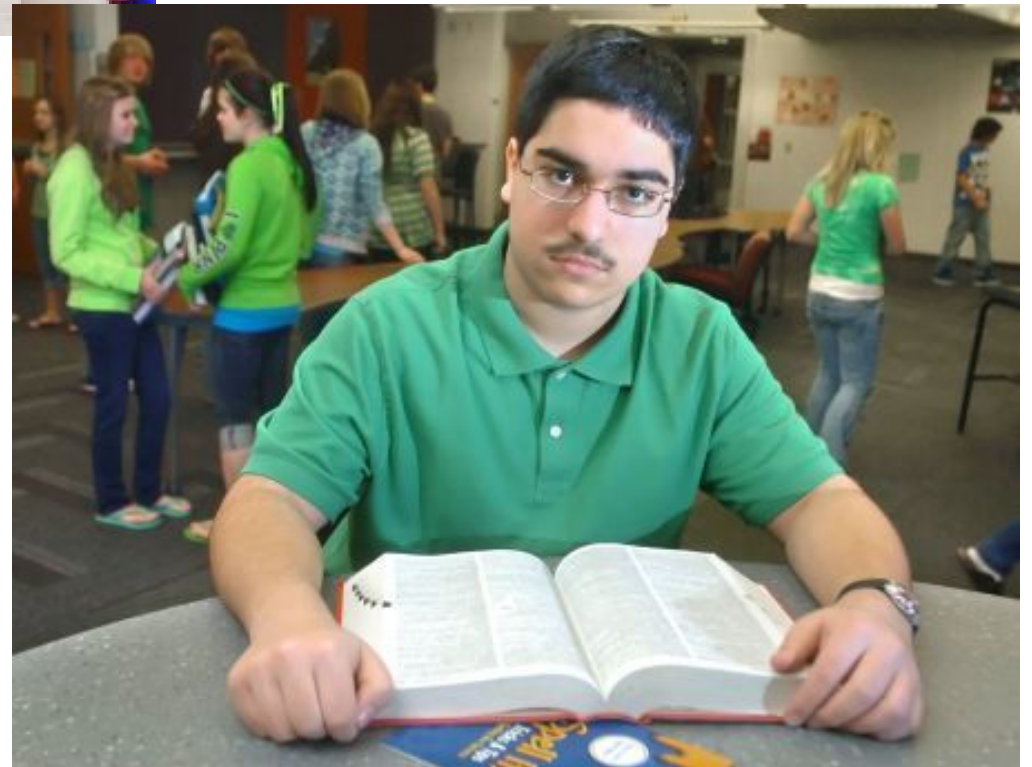










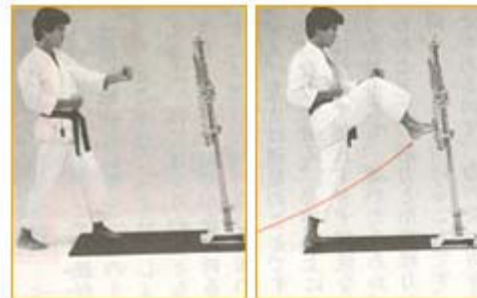




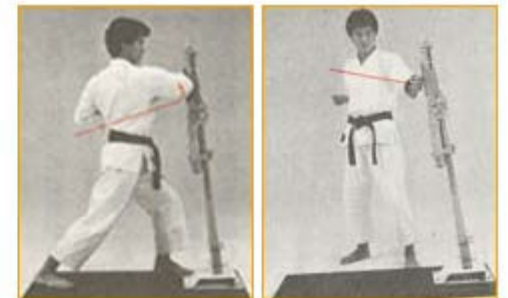
Zuki



Shuto Uchi



Mae Geri



Hiji Ate



Uraken





The Only Way to Make Progress Is to Work on What Is Weak

- If you're always working your strengths nothing ever improves
- The chain is only as strong as the weakest link
- Irrational people prefer to not train
- Or to train their strengths, which is fun
- Winners work on their weaknesses, which is not fun
- But it is effective

Training v. Competition

- Training (or Practice)
 - Focus on your weak points
 - Give marginal amount of time to your strengths to keep them from going backwards
- Competition
 - Play up your strengths

The More You Sweat in Training the Less You Bleed in Battle

- Practice should be hard and tough
 - It exposes and uses your weaknesses
- Competition should be fun and easy
 - It showcases your strengths
- That's the whole thing of training your weaknesses; competing your strengths

How To Identify Weaknesses

- Referee reports
- Peer-grade
- Self-grade
- Whatever you hate to do is weak
 - No one hates to do something they are really good at
- We use our weaknesses as excuses

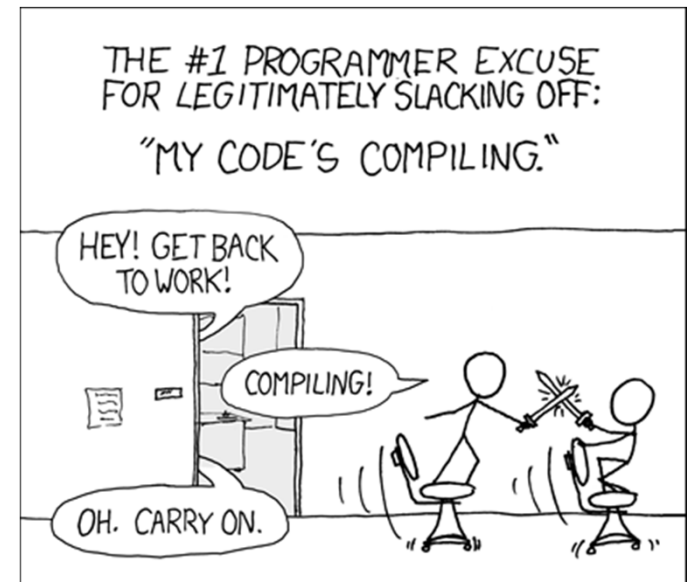
Typical Excuses

- If only I could touch type
- I couldn't find a run frequency
- I couldn't hold my frequency
- I couldn't copy through the noise
- I was falling asleep at the keyboard



Actual Excuses – NAQP CW

- I'm new to CW
- I received RFI
- Head cold and rain brought edict from XYL
- I'm not really a CW contester
- Got on after 49er game
- Having serious latency issues
- 80 seemed noisy
- I missed having a second radio
- I need to get quicker in my S&P rate
- I need to hunt for more multipliers
- I deleted all three copies of my log
- We found we were receiving on a wrong antenna



Actual Excuses – NAQP Phone

- And then I lost my voice again
- Limited participation due to guests
- Started getting stomach flu
- Ugh!
- Too many other responsibilities today
- My dipole isn't good enough to hold a frequency
- Very high noise levels
- I miscalculated times off
- All of my time was spent in S&P
- This station doesn't play as well with SSB as it does with CW
- N1MM bit me in the ass
- A dismal slog through noise and QRM
- I'm not doing domestic contests these days
- Had ergonomic problems with the keyboard
- heavily congested (**understatement and ugh!**) SSB band segments
- The relay in the breakout box was stuck closed
- I encountered a wall of white noise
- Essentially all S&P
- Couldn't get a run going at all
- Frequency "owners" did piss me off
- Had a bug this weekend

Actual Excuses – RTTY RU

- A POS Chinese power supply stopped regulating
- I took many breaks.
- When I tried to run, I usually got nothing...
- Did not get much time for radio this weekend
- Problem with N1MM
- My immune system slacks off
- Didn't have much success running with the dipole
- Missed about 5 hours due to family obligations
- Couldn't stay awake
- My antenna doesn't DX well
- I'm going to need a second monitor
- Water heater blew out on Saturday night
- I have a relay problem in the amplifier
- Started to feel awful around dinner time Saturday night
- Tough to get motivated with a head cold
- Slow start due to software issues
- Something is wrong on the coax
- I needed to recalibrate my filters
- RTTY irritates me, so took many breaks
- I had a major distraction during the contest
- I need to budget for a much better antenna
- I was still troubleshooting Friday night
- I caught a cold
- My brain wasn't ready for SO2R

Some Weaknesses Are Station or Equipment Limitations

- There it is not so much a matter of training as of investment (of time or money) in removing or remediating those limitations
- To diagnose those things try to guest op at better stations than your own to discover whether the weakness is yours or your station's
- You can also plan your strategy to sidestep your weaknesses, whether they are yours or your station's

Sidestep Example: 160m at ND2T

- I have a poor 160m antenna
- I am not planning to compete in any 160m contest
- I am certainly weak in my 160m skills
- If I would never compete there then why practice? A:
- You need to decide whether an investment of time (or money) is worth the outcome
- There is only so much of each

Some (Potentially) Weak Skills

- Developing a contest strategy
- Copying (CW or SSB)
- Operating the equipment
- Operating the logging program
 - Typing
- Search & Pounce
 - Tuning
 - Timing
 - Asking for fills
 - Rate
- Running
 - Finding a run frequency
 - Hold a run frequency
 - Handle a pileup
- Moving a mult
 - Recognize that you could benefit
 - Choose a band that will work
 - Choose an "empty" frequency
 - Ask the mult to move
 - Getting there and back
- Endurance
 - Good start
 - Energetic middle third
 - Strong finish
- Others (speak up)?



Set Your Goals

- Decide what contest(s) are you training for
- What it's going to look like for you to "win"?
- Beat those guys or to beat some objective?
- It could be both
- Try to BE those guys
 - Who are best at what you are interested in?
 - Study what they do

Training Budget

- You have only limited training time, and want to use it effectively
- Put your time into things that are going to pay off the best for you w.r.t. your goal
- Things you decide to invest in you also decide what kind of contests you are going to be competitive in, and vv.
- Weaknesses start to fall off immediately and are hard to bring back up
- Strengths fall off slowly, and come back easily

How to Train



- You can only have so many priorities
- Choose one thing at a time and focus on it
- Train your weaknesses early and often
 - When you are fresh
 - Easy to get motivated
- A little goes a long way
- Leave time for your strengths too

Do I Feel Like Training My Weakness?

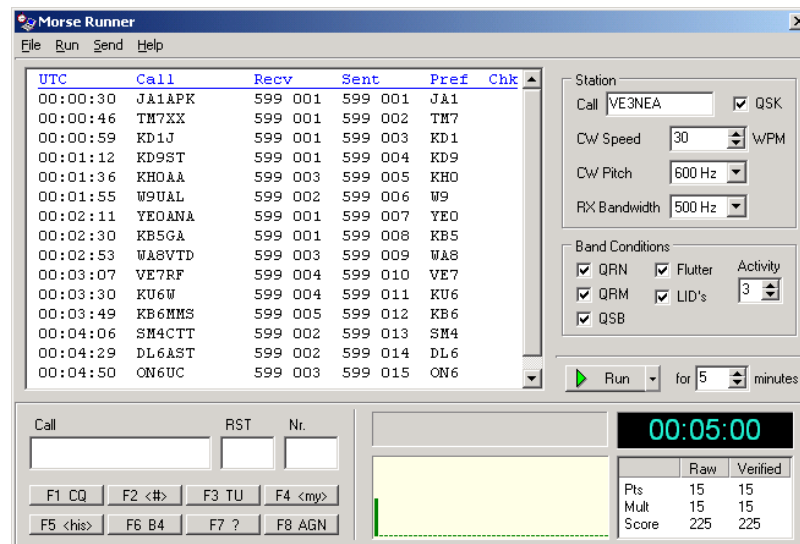
- Of course you don't. Never ask this.
- If it is on your schedule, just do it
- The more you quit the easier it is to quit
- Soon you're down at the bottom
- Don't even give yourself the option
- As soon as you ask yourself that question you're over

Strength Is Mental

- It's no fun to work what's weak
- It's fun to work what's strong
- Your strength is from your mind
- When you get used to training your weaknesses it makes you mentally strong
- And that carries over to everything you do

Ways to Train

- **Simulators**
 - Typing
 - CW
 - CW pileups
- **Training contests**
 - Other events which require your focus skill
- **NS – NCCC Sprint**



A Training Session

- Keep focused on the goal
- It's not supposed to be fun
- Try to do what the best guy would do
- He's going to do it because he wants to win
- Focus on wanting to be that best guy
- Keep your eye on the prize



Working Up to a Competition

- When do you want to peak?
- Start there and work backwards
- Make a calendar of relevant contests
 - They require your focus skill
- E.g., you want NAQP CW, you're weak at moving mults. Train during other NAQPs, SQPs, almost anything but SS and WPX

Training Contests

- We have lots of contests
- Use training contests to practice weak skills
- It's all about mindset and intent
- What's your intent for this training contest?
- What skill are you working on in this contest?
- What are you trying to bring up? What is the weak point?

Training Contests - 2

- Roll through them
- Seriously train rather than seriously compete
- Also, use them to diagnose and experiment
 - When do you fade? Lose focus? Why?
 - Nutrition? Sleep? Fitness? Pace?
- Play with solutions and learn to use them

-- Nutrition

- Management of blood sugar
 - Ability to think and to last
- Sugar or simple carbs -> 30 minute then crash
- That could be a weak point
- Training: figure out what diet, food substances, allow you to maintain optimal mental focus for the longest period of time.
- The brain uses nothing but sugar for energy. But you have to be fit enough to be able to maintain that.
- Some people may do better with less food. Some with more





-- Sleep

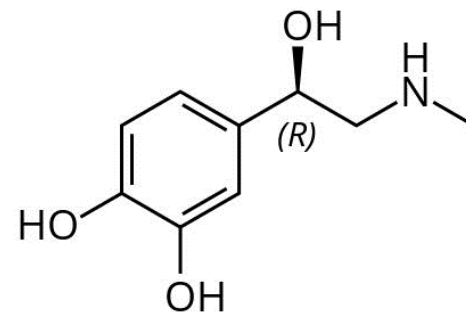
- Sleep deprivation is a real hard thing
- Would be part of training for long contests
- Learn how to nap effectively
- Practice taking a nap, getting up, and jumping back into the event.
 - *E.g.* when I wake up from my nap I need caffeine
 - Or I need fruit instead of protein because protein doesn't wake me up.
 - So I need fruit, but then I need to follow it up with some protein and fats to sustain it.
- These things are going to be individual

-- Fitness

- Do you stretch out?
- Do you sit straight through?
- How to you reset when you start getting uncomfortable?
- Are you hydrated? How do you take bio breaks?
- All will contribute to ability to focus and be strong



-- Pace



- Contests start out fast, then settle down
- Everybody is fresh and adrenalized
- The only thing that counts is who has the highest score at the end
- Stay calm. Conserve your energy for the long haul
- Mental focus and strength in middle third
- Finish strong

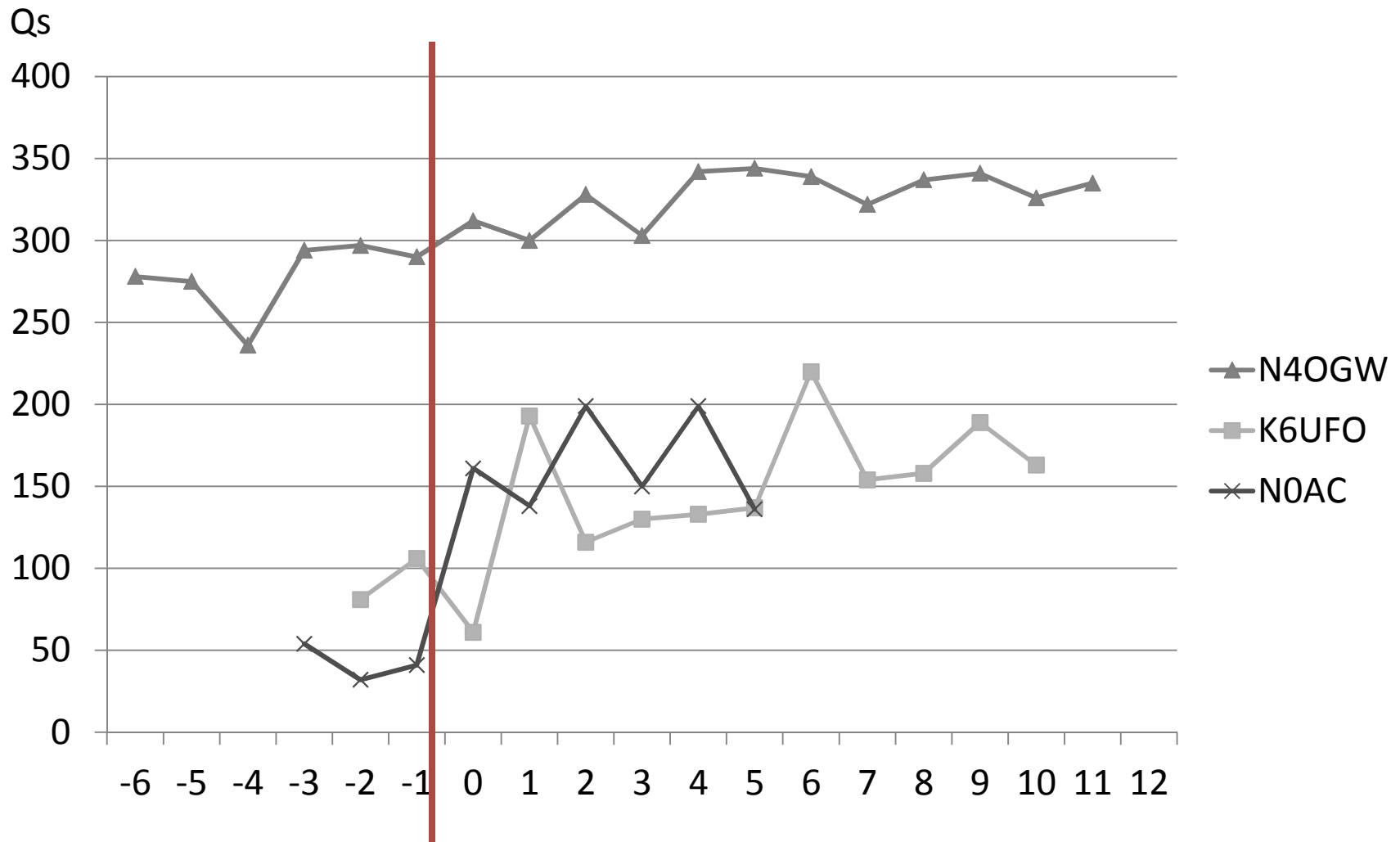
Multiops

- There are individual strengths and weaknesses and team strengths and weaknesses.
- Do a separate analysis of each
- Training event: Assign ops to train their weaknesses
- Competitive event: Assign ops to use their strengths

NS – The Contester's Edge

- A contest in itself (with prizes!), and a training event.
- Every Thursday night, 30 minutes.
- www.ncccsprint.com for details.
- NSL: N6ZFO is a runner. He wanted NSL to be analogous to a runner's ladder.
- Interval training is a proven method of enhancing runners' performance even in a marathon. So it may be that NS has this effect in radiosport.
- Does it work?

NS Lifts Sprint Scores



NS Anecdotes

- NS is where I figured out how to do SO2R in the Sprint. Maybe a 30-50 Q increase.
- I used to consider myself a "poor" CW operator. Now I'm probably faster and more on the ball than 90% of the operators.
- I can't say enough about the benefits of the weekly practice
- My CW skills have improved beyond my expectations.
- This practice has helped me immensely.
- For longer events I just began to feel more relaxed and more confident.
- Weekly NS has given me the "intestinal fortitude" to deal with many kinds of contesting with confidence and high expectations.
- In NAS the name of the game is to pull a mult out of a pileup. Weekly practice imprints many call/mult combinations (including my own).
- Doing CW actually helps me do SSB better because I had to learn how to type and keep the calls in my mind as I put them in the log.
- Practice, Practice, Practice is what it take for a slow learner like myself.

Build your weaknesses
until they
become your
STRENGTHS.

- Knute Rockne

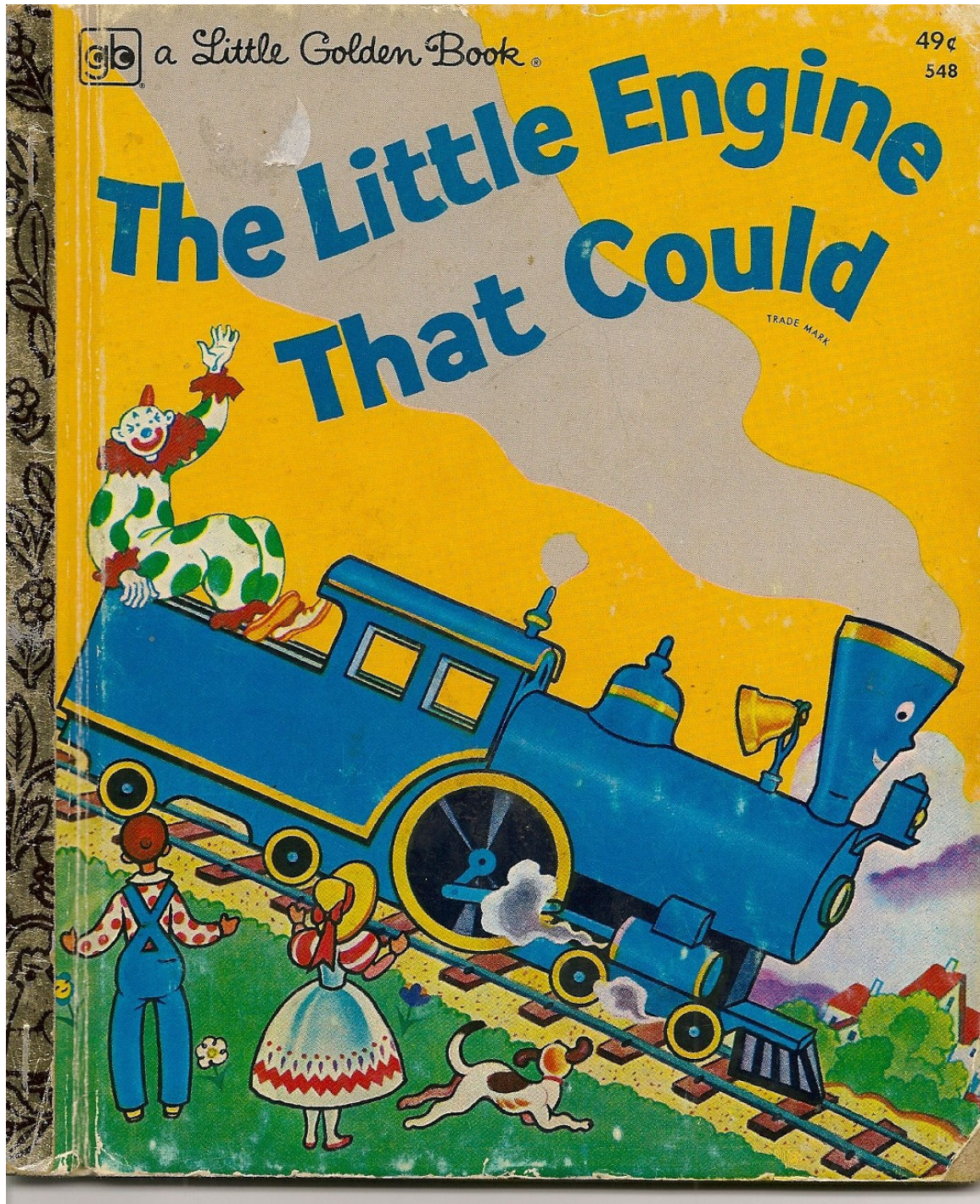


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TRADE MARK



Shoutout

- Mark Reifkind
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- N6ZFO, N4OGW, K6UFO, N0AC, N3QE, KI7Y

