

Waiting for the Prize Patrol

By [Harrison Barnes](#)

Several years ago I realized that there was something horribly wrong with my life during the Super Bowl. I was watching the game on television with my fiancé at the time and noticed that there was a van parked far off in the distance. I could not concentrate on the game because I was under the impression that the van was going to start up, drive towards my house and out would pop the Publisher's Clearing House Prize Patrol to award me a prize of millions of dollars.

And I deserved the prize, didn't I? I had dutifully filled out the sweepstakes entry and made sure that I returned it promptly when I received it. And, on top of all that, I had worked pretty hard most of my life.

"Is that a brown van?" I asked her. We lived in the country on a dirt road and the van was around 300 yards away. So far away that we could hardly make out the color.

She peered out the window, squinting her eyes. "I think it is a brown van!" she told me.

Throughout the next 60 minutes or so I could barely concentrate on the game. I was convinced that I was about to be the next winner of the sweepstakes. For the past several years I had watched every year as the Prize Patrol pulled up to unsuspecting peoples' homes during the Super Bowl and awarded them multimillion dollar prizes.

I wanted to be the next.

Convinced that the brown van was going to be arriving with a live news crew any moment, my fiancé stopped making guacamole and enjoying the game with me and tidied up. We were both quite excited for this big win and were convinced our lives were about to undergo a huge fundamental change.

I am sure you know what happened. The Prize Patrol never came.

When I realized that I had not enjoyed the Super Bowl because I was waiting for the Prize Patrol, I understood right then and there that I had made a huge fundamental mistake that most people make with their lives: I was basing my future on a "big win" outside of my control.

Some people do this with inheritances. They wait most of their lives for someone to die so they can get that "big win"—instead of investing in their lives now to make something of their future. Everyone does this sort of thing to some extent and I think it needs to stop. After that Publisher's Clearinghouse event I realized right then and there that something needed to change.

Many people are continually basing their future on "a big break" or some sort of "breakthrough" happening in their careers and lives. In fact, I cannot think of the number of people I have met throughout the years who believe that they are going to "hit a home run" and everything is going to change in their lives. I have seen this more times than I can count.

Do people hit home runs and change their lives overnight? *Of course.*

Is counting on the home run a good strategy for your career and life? *Absolutely not.*

The home run and/or "jackpot" strategy is the worst possible thing you can do. If you base your life and career on a home run you are going to wait a long, long time. This is what most people do. They continue waiting for a long, long time. This is what I was doing with the Prize Patrol. We all have our Prize Patrols we are waiting for. It could be a Prince Charming coming along, the Lotto, a better job, a raise ... who knows what we are waiting for. Unless we take action none of these things are ever going to appear in our lives.

Last year I rented an apartment in Las Vegas and spent a lot of time there. I did this because I was interested in the "energy" of the city and in learning more about it. I find Las Vegas absolutely fascinating on so many levels. Las Vegas is a lot like Los Angeles where people go there hoping for "a big break" and that overnight everything will change for them. Las Vegas casinos are more than happy to nurture this dream for people.

The nice casinos on the strip are not really where the dream of "hitting it big" is playing out. Where it really plays itself out is when you go to casinos like the Sahara, Stratosphere, Binions and so forth — older casinos that have been established in the city for a long time. People actually go into these casinos quite serious about hitting the jackpot or winning it big. Some of these casinos will cash welfare or social security checks. These casinos market themselves as having better odds for locals and "experienced" gamblers.

Inside these casinos you will see people who sit at slot machines and card tables all day long — running down, smoking and hoping for a big win. On the walls there are posters of people just like them who won it big — \$10,000, \$50,000—or whatever. Many of the posters are faded. This is what these people are aspiring to. To win it big, be a big shot and to achieve something ... instantly.

Nevertheless, this rarely happens.

Some time ago I was on vacation for a few weeks and spent about an hour per day on the treadmill in the gym. Since I was on a resort that did not sell magazines, I had to read what was in the gym every day. The only magazines in the entire gym were "Mens Fitness" and a few men and women related fitness magazines. I had never read magazines like these before.

Most of the magazines have a star on the cover of them (or someone well known) and then inside of the magazine a long, in-depth discussion of their fitness and diet regimen. I could not believe it. Most of the stars you see in magazines (the ones who look really good) have some of the most demanding fitness and diet regimens you can imagine. Stuff like 4 hours a day workouts and calorie restriction and so forth. They did not wake up incredibly fit, or good looking. Most of these stars earn it and it takes them a long, long time.

It is like this with everything. You are not going to get it "overnight" or quickly. You have to earn it and it takes a long, long

time.

Several years ago I was at a lunch with a man in downtown Los Angeles who was trying to sell me some advertising in a publication that was floundering. Since the business was losing subscribers (and readers) at the time, I did not have a lot of motivation to purchase advertising from him.

"I'm pursuing a couple of deals right now that could really 'turn things around'," he told me. "If this one thing works out then everything will be just fine and I will get increased circulation. If that happens I will still charge you the same for advertising."

He was proposing I take a risk that things would turn around. They never did.

In sales it is not uncommon for people to put all of their efforts into trying to close "one big deal" and exclude other small deals. When people put their effort into this sort of thing they get lucky sometimes ... but most of the time they do not. I have seen this more times than I can count. Slow and steady generally wins the race. You need to invest in what you are doing over time. In most cases, the Prize Patrol is never going to come.

<https://www.harrisonbarnes.com/>