



**DON'T
STOP
ME
NOW**

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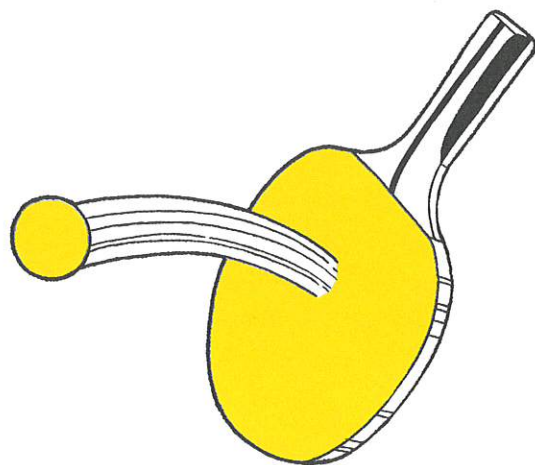
*So, as **Kid Awesome** I'd spent a lot of time in the garage. I was getting pretty good. One of the best in Europe at table tennis. But I needed to stretch myself. Make the practice harder. Mr Charters arranged for a top coach in **Bergen, Norway** to spend some time with me.*

My mum booked the ticket. She went round to the local travel agent (there was no internet back then, and no mobiles) and paid for a 20-hour coach trip.

**I DID THE BLOCK (2 MIN 49 SINCE YOU ASK)
AND THEN PACKED MY BAT, SOME THERMALS
(IT WAS GOING TO BE REALLY COLD) AND SOME
NORWEGIAN KRONER.**

*I got on the bus. Kicked back. Listened to Michael Jackson on loop (it was the 80s, OK?). Read a bit of *The Lord of The Rings* trilogy and made friends with a few of the German kids in the rows in front. It didn't occur to me until much later that there were an awful lot of Germans going to Norway. And no Norwegians.*

After about 18 hours we were on the German autobahn. I had a passing thought that Germany wasn't really on the way to Norway but I didn't think too much about it. I was too busy showing Klaus and Jürgen how to do a forehand smash against the bus window.



And then the bus began to slow down. Klaus and Jürgen started picking up their bags. High-fiving each other that the journey was over. What? On? Earth? And all of a sudden we're in a layby in **Bergen, Germany** and it dawns on me, my mum's bought a ticket ...

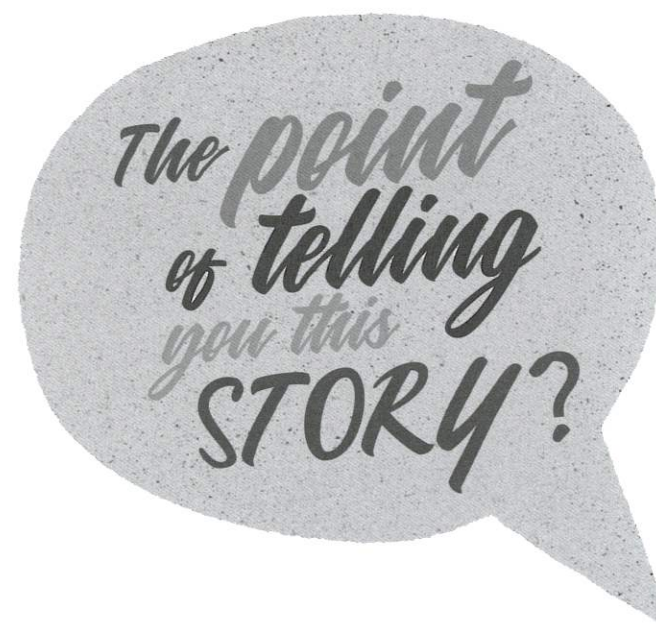
TO THE **WRONG** **BERGEN.**

How many **Bergens** are there? As it turns out, there are two.

I was 15. There were no smartphones with satnav (or even the ability to call parents!), no internet and I didn't have a credit card. The sensible thing might have been to see if the bus driver was going back to Reading anytime soon. But I didn't do that. Instead, I decided to hitchhike to Norway[★].

★ NEVER EVER DO THIS. IT'S
DANGEROUS AND **NOT** AT ALL FUN

Now, on one level, it's a tale about a silly mix up with tickets, and not paying enough attention, but as it happened to me I like to think it's really a story of grit, determination and a refusal to give up even when the odds of success were slim ...



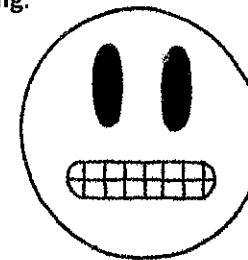
Well, sometimes life throws you ...



There can be some real 'what on earth am I going to do now?' kind of moments. They'll happen to you. They happen to everyone. Probably not in **Bergen, Germany** and probably not with Klaus and Jürgen. But they'll happen. So be ready. Be set to face anything difficult. And face it with a Growth Mindset (and ideally a fresh pair of pants).

I made it to Norway. Four days late and with Interpol looking for me after Peter the Norwegian table-tennis coach called my mum to let her know that he'd lost me. I made it via a train station in Denmark where I fell asleep on a bench and someone stole everything I owned. I had no passport, the Norwegian kroner were long gone, as were the thermal vests. And although it was darn cold when I got there, I got there in the end. And the training was **amazing**.

Whatever journey you pick, it doesn't matter how you get there. Just make a start. Grit your teeth if things go wrong. And you'll get there in the end.



It'll be hard but worth it.

**'ANYONE
WHO HAS NEVER MADE
A MISTAKE HAS
NEVER TRIED
ANYTHING NEW.'**

ALBERT EINSTEIN, MISTAKE MAKER AND AWESOME SCIENTIST

The same is true of my writing. I was pretty clunky when I started (my editor would say, **VERY** clunky!). But I really wanted to be great at it. I work really hard on it. Even now. Even after 20 years. Every article, every book. I want to make it my best yet. I never give up too easily, and I'm never happy unless I have given it my all.

TAKE A RISK,
DARE TO FAIL
and give it...
YOUR ALL.

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A stylized illustration of a person's head and shoulders. The person is wearing a black beret with a yellow band. They have blonde hair styled in a voluminous, wavy manner. They are wearing white-rimmed sunglasses with black lenses. The background is solid yellow.