

# The Competitive Edge: Getting It, Keeping It

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## FACTORS AFFECTING SPORT PERFORMANCE

### CONTINUUM OF PERFORMANCE SUCCESS

#### WHAT IS THE COMPETITIVE EDGE?

- Mental Toughness
- Mental Skills Training (MST)
- In-born or Learned?
- Can YOU Learn/Teach This????

#### MENTAL TOUGHNESS

- Self-motivated & self-directed
- Positive but realistic
- Calm & relaxed under fire
- Mentally alert & focused
- Fully responsible
- Able to manage own emotions
- Determined
- Highly energetic & ready for action
- Doggedly self-confident

#### MENTAL SKILLS TRAINING

- Goal Setting
- Focus & Concentration
- Motivation
- Imagery & Visualization
- Relaxation & Stress Management
- Confidence

#### HOW TO IMPLEMENT MENTAL TRAINING

- Discuss your approach – You & Athlete
- Decide which skills to include
- Evaluate program and delivery
- Assess current status of mental skills
- Design a schedule (time–line)
- Add Mental Training Everywhere!

#### THREE PHASES TO MST PROGRAMS:

- Education Phase
- Acquisition Phase
- Practice Phase

#### WHEN TO IMPLEMENT MST

- Off–Season & Pre–Season
- Why not Mid–Season?
- Why not after a 'crisis'?

#### COMMON PROBLEMS IN MST

- Lack of conviction
- Lack of sport knowledge
- Lack of time
- Lack of follow-up

#### MYTHS ABOUT MST PROGRAMS

- Its difficult to implement
- Takes too much time (away from physical practice)
- Only for 'problem' athletes'
- Provides a 'Quick Fix' solution
- Mental skills are unchangeable
- Only for 'elites'
- MST is not useful

#### GOAL SETTING GUIDELINES:

- Performance vs. Outcome
- Realistic vs. Unrealistic
- Challenging vs. Easy
- Specific vs. General

#### GOAL SETTING II: HOW YOU CAN HELP

- Be realistic – but considerate
- Use combination of short, intermediate, long-term goals
- Provide accurate positive feedback!!

- Gain athlete's 'acceptance'
- Reassess strategy if necessary

#### IMAGERY & VISUALIZATION

- Mental Practice – Skill Acquisition
- Success Imagery
- Precompetition Rehearsal
- Coping Strategy Images

#### GUIDELINES FOR USING IMAGERY

- Practice Imagery on a regular basis
- Develop Imagery control
- Facilitate Imagery through relaxation
- Use Imagery in practice as well as for competition
- Use all senses to enhance image vividness
- Use both internal and external perspectives
- Develop coping strategies through Imagery

#### GUIDELINES FOR USING IMAGERY II

- Use video or audio tapes to enhance Imagery skills
- Use triggers or cues to facilitate Imagery quality
- Emphasize dynamic kinesthetic Imagery
- Imagine in real time
- Use Imagery logs

#### RELAXATION & STRESS MANAGEMENT

- Release stress through physical activity
- Stop self-focusing
- Avoid discussing the team's record
- Respond to an injury
- Build self-confidence
- Avoid using the 'relax' command
- Promote task familiarity
- Simulate competition in practice
- Individualize mental strategies
- Keep errors in perspective

#### ATHLETE ANXIETY MANAGEMENT

- Focus on what you can control
- Remember the worst-case scenario
- Use cognitive strategies
- Think practice
- Keep active
- Learn & practice breathing control

### **Guidelines for further reading:**

The Mental Athlete (2003), Kay Porter. Human Kinetics Publishers  
ISBN: 0736046542

In Pursuit of Excellence: How to Win in Sport and Life Through Mental Training (4th Edition) (2008), Terry Orlick, Human Kinetics Publishers  
ISBN: 0736067574

Inner Strength: The Mental Dynamics of Athletic Performance (2003), Ralph Vernacchia, Warde Publishers  
ISBN: 1886346089

Coaching Mental Excellence: It Does Matter Whether You Win or Lose... (1995), Ralph Vernacchia, Rick McGuire, & David Cook. Warde Publishers  
ISBN: 188634602X

The Psychology of High-Performance Track & Field (2005), Ralph Vernacchia & Traci Statler (Eds.). TAFNews Press  
ISBN: 0911521720

Positive Coaching (1995), Jim Thompson. Warde Publishers  
ISBN: 1886346003