

FOREWORD

I have had the honor to coach for the past 37 years at the junior college and Division I levels. The past 28 years I have been at the University of Arizona and have had the opportunity to watch our game grow in leaps and bounds. As I began my career, the game was dominated by pitching. We pitched from 40 feet and used a white ball with white seams and an aluminum bat. Since then, we have moved the mound back to 43 feet, used an optic yellow ball with red seams, and a composite bat that has heightened the performance of hitters today. The one constant in the game is the ability of our greatest performers to have a quiet mind and strong mental skills. Back in the day, these skills were severely overlooked and the knowledge and resources to help build them were hard to find. We all agreed that we played a game of relaxed skills, but how often did we give our athletes the tools and knowledge to play the game without distractions and to deal effectively with a game built around failure? I have constantly seen the greatest physically skilled athletes unable to perform at a high level and average players excel in our game due to their mental skill set.

I had the honor of coaching our 2004 and 2008 Olympic softball teams and probably witnessed one of the greatest performances by any team in Olympic history in Athens in 2004. This was a team of our very best softball players in the world and the common thread that I found in these players was their emotional stability and quiet minds. This team full of leaders had outstanding physical skills, but their ability to perform consistently under pressure was directly related to their ability to play the game one pitch at a time, embracing the opportunity to perform on the biggest stage. There are many distractions that come with the game, but these girls knew how to block them out. In today's athletic arena, it is a must for any coach to have an understanding of the distractions that enter our athlete's performance on a daily basis. We would all agree that everyone has potential to perform, but to actually do it, we must eliminate the interference – tension and distractions!

Aaron Weintraub has done a remarkable job in this book to give coaches and athletes a wealth of knowledge and tools to both discover and help others discover their mental skills. This book will improve your ability to lead and perform without distractions, once again having fun working at and playing this game with your teammates. I have found that the most important step is being aware of those negative thoughts, tension, and the fears that performing can bring, and then finding simple solutions to overcome the negative chatter in our mind that keeps

us from a fluid performance motion. In the pages that follow, Aaron provides the details and tools to develop this awareness and proven strategies that work for the greatest athletes in the world. His style is impressive because it is in-depth and sophisticated while remaining easy to read and understand.

This book will not only help you perform in softball, but more importantly it will guide you to tap into your leadership skills that will help you reach your full potential in life! I love it when I have a team full of leaders and I am looking forward to giving each member of my team a copy of this book!

Mike Candrea

