

Leadership Training for Softball

Using Mental Skills to Discover Your Potential

Aaron Weintraub

Cover and Text Illustrations by Josh Manges



Josh Manges prefers "illustrator" or "picture drawer" to "artist," which he says is far too pretentious. "Dad" is his favorite title. Between his house full of children and the corresponding hi-jinx, shenanigans, and tomfoolery, he claims it a wonder that anything gets done. He has a passion for both cartoons and comedy and since his household is chock-full of cartoon characters, he never has to go far for inspiration.

Note from the author: "Josh is an absolute joy to work with and is brilliant in his ability to take any and every idea, understand it, get the information he needs, and draw it beautifully."

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DEDICATION

to Ariel and Carissa

As you grow, I hope you like the information in this book because I know you will need superb leadership skills to overcome some genetic flaws.

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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

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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

PREFACE

Whatever you can do, or dream you can, begin it. Boldness has genius,
power, and magic in it. Begin it now.
—Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, Poet

Success is the peace of mind that comes from knowing you did your best.
—John Wooden, Basketball Hall of Famer as both a Player and Coach

Leadership is simultaneously common and elusive. Everyone talks about it. The need for it is omnipresent. The desire to be a leader is almost universal, yet effective leaders are rare. In short, leadership is easy to talk about and difficult to achieve.

At the risk of giving away the golden ticket before this book officially begins, leadership is a simple four-step process:

1. Have a clear vision
2. Lead by example
3. Connect with empathy, and
4. Have the resources left in the tank to help others to give their best effort, too.

This is not a step-by-step process, but rather a constant pursuit of all four elements. It cannot be achieved without interminable, subtle adjustments. Deficiency at any step in the process terminates the potential leader's effectiveness, sometimes permanently. The most common misstep is leading by example. The others are not easy, but they do not require as much courage and relentlessness as giving your best effort one step at a time, accepting whatever happens, and then doing it again.

Many athletes today want to lead and are willing to work, but they lack the mental toughness that equals the consistency of a leader. When you achieve consistent excellence, others will want to follow. This book provides the details for how to discover and display your potential, setting you up to be the ultimate competitor and leader. It is about leading others by first leading yourself effectively through the inevitable trials and tribulations of elite level sports. In the course of clarifying how to achieve this, it also provides the means to develop a clear vision, empathize with others, and have the positive energy and courage required to support others, too.

Many smart athletes believe that all it takes to win is talent and hard work, but experience teaches us that:

Talent + Hard Work \neq Performance.

Why do athletes perform well at certain times but poorly at others? Why do many work hard and have talent, but still fail to consistently get the results that they expect and deserve? Are they practicing efficiently? Do they know exactly what to do to guarantee a successful performance in “clutch” situations? The solutions exist not in athletes’ physical skills or abilities, but in their mental skills. This book will guide an athlete or coach who wants to learn how to bridge the gap between potential and performance and consistently give best effort performances. Athletes must be clear about what they want to do, develop their self-awareness, and anchor successful thoughts, feelings, and behaviors. This book discusses leadership in fastpitch softball, though mental skills training breeds leaders in any performance situation.

Mental skills training significantly improves both rate of learning and performance under pressure. As the level of play increases, the impact of the mental side of the game increases, in large part because the differences in athletes’ physical skills diminish. The physical mechanics of sports are often taught with impressive skill, but softball is typically a sink-or-swim world when it comes to mental skills. This is odd since mental toughness is the mark of every great leader. However, it is also good news because it means that you can get an edge over your competition by practicing mental toughness skills.

Most coaches know that attitude, focus, teamwork, self-control, confidence, courage, and other mental skills are the keys to great leadership, great execution, and great times on the diamond. Still, many do not dedicate much time to teaching these skills. Some coaches teach them haphazardly and some figure that the cream naturally rises to the top. It is not uncommon to hear a coach request (or demand) confidence and focus, but it is unusual for them to tell their athletes how to achieve these skills.

The top coaches in the country get their leadership edge through the four steps of leadership listed above. They have a clear vision about where their team is headed and how they will get there. They lead by example, because confidence, poise, focus, courage, and tenacity are required of them every bit as much as they are required of great athletes. They connect with empathy because they know that the majority of players do not care how much they know until they know how much they care. Finally, they have the resources to help their players give their best

effort. They are not overwhelmed by the busy-ness of their jobs; they make time for what is important, including guidance for improving mental skills. When athletes are well trained in mental skills, they are able to coach themselves effectively and get better, faster.

Many coachable, hard-working athletes consistently perform far below their potential because they are unaware of their deficient mental skills. They hear comments like, “If we could just turn her brain off, she would be one heck of a player,” but they have no strategies for keeping thoughts out of the way. They know that focus is desirable, but they have no clue about how to get locked in. Professional and Olympic athletes have formal mental skills training readily available. Now you do, too.

The lucky athletes are the ones who have parents and coaches who teach leadership skills effectively, usually without using labels like “sport psychology” and “mental skills training.” (John Wooden is a great example.) Some universities now have a sport psychologist on staff or an undergraduate course related to coaching the mental game. This is progress, but there is still a long way to go. Poor coaching suggestions such as “RELAX,” “We need...,” or “Don’t... [make this mistake]” are commonplace. Many coaches’ personalities make it harder rather than easier for athletes to maintain an ideal attitude and focus.

I wrote this book because I want to help coaches and athletes increase the enjoyment they get from their investment in athletics. I want to accelerate the process of approaching potential for those with the courage and motivation to be uncomfortable, honest (synonym: aware), and persistent. I want to help athletes give their best efforts! You are an impressive person if you are really trying to approach your potential; most people prefer a safety net for their ego. I am honored if you find that my words aid your journey.

Sport psychology and leadership training may seem confusing and complex. They should not. This book will open up the world of mental skills training to you in an easy-to-understand manner. The principles are straightforward and logical, so if athletes can combine desire with discipline, acquiring these skills is inevitable. This book will guide that quest with clear definitions, common examples, relevant quotes, challenging ideas, intriguing stories, clarifying figures, action steps, and written exercises.

I began thinking of this book while in college in the early 1990s and began to actually write it in graduate school in the late 1990s. Many revisions followed. I love the question “Why?” “Why did that individual or team win?” Focusing on what is controllable, these questions follow:

- Why did that team or individual perform at that level in that situation?
- Why does one person break down under pressure while another breaks through?
- Why does the athlete who played so well one day play so poorly on another?

After a good deal of research, thought, trial-and-error with student-athletes, discussions with experts, and participation as an athlete or coach in well over 1,000 varsity contests, I have a fairly good understanding of how the combination of an athlete's mental and physical skills leads to her performances, which in turn leads to outcomes such as scoring and winning. This book is designed to share that understanding with you. It will also provide strategies to develop leadership skills so that an athlete's outcomes can most likely be the ones that she has always dreamed of.

The course of study herein is a progressive one divided into five parts. Part 1 (Top Jocks are Scientists) discusses the foundation skills of control, awareness, and discipline. Part 2 (Attitude, Meet Altitude) discusses how to optimize attitude, including confidence, for performance. Part 3 (Get Ready, Get Set) discusses the skills needed to have the best approach possible. Part 4 (Go!) looks at what to do when it is time to perform (preview: focus and trust your stuff). Finally, Part 5 (Now What?) addresses responses, thus completing the performance cycle. Responses include responding effectively to both situations and other people. Effective responses lead to effective approaches, and then a quality approach and a "locked-in" focus lead to superior performances. These behaviors combined with a proper attitude throughout will guarantee success as it is defined in these pages. They will *also* ensure the best possible chance of achieving all the positive outcomes that typically define success.

Sport psychology has been called the study of what successful athletes do. I am a quote fan, and I have included many sport psychology quotes that relate to the topic being discussed. These quotes demonstrate that many famous athletes have superb mental skills. Any athlete can own these skills if she has enough desire, patience, and persistence. Be pleased with small steps; developing mental skills is a process like any other. It takes time and effort. Athletes must take it one step at a time, for if they continuously make appropriate adjustments, they will continually improve. Occasional leaps forward in performance are likely, but no shortcuts exist. Continual improvement, itself, is the essence of success.

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Before you begin, I am tempted to wish you luck in your pursuit of excellence. But since one point of all that follows is to take luck out of the equation as much as possible, I will resist. Instead, I wish you personal excellence and growth as you figure out more and more details about how to coach yourself and others towards peak performances. And I trust that because you are sincere in your motivations, disciplined in your approach, and courageous enough to know that your best effort is always good enough, the outcomes will work out for you just fine.

IT ALL COMES DOWN TO ONE PITCH (PART 1)

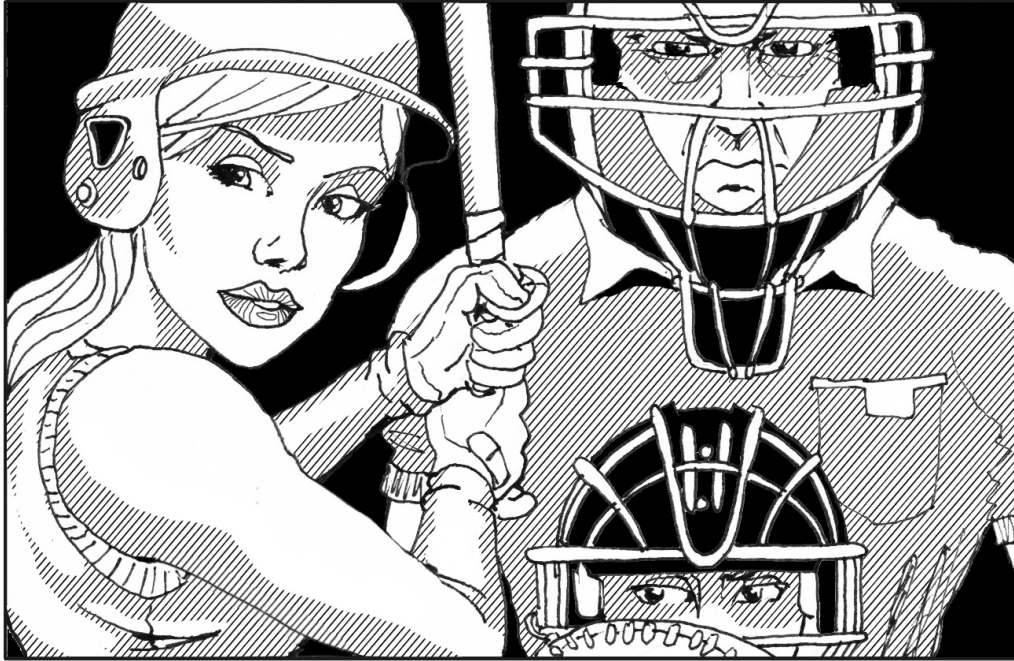
Nobody who ever gave their best effort regretted it.
—George Halas, Athlete, Coach, and Owner

It is the bottom of the seventh inning in the last game of the Super Regionals. A record crowd is on hand and fired up to watch two powerhouse teams duke it out in pure championship competition. It is “put up” or “shut up” time, because this will be the final game of the year for the loser, but the catapult to the College World Series for the winner. The first two games have been close, but this final game is the best one yet. In the bottom of the second inning, Ashley’s team opened the scoring with a single run on a beautiful triple off the center field wall, but the visitors answered with a two-run home run in the top of the fifth. Since then, the pitching has dominated, keeping the score at 2-1. Now it is the bottom of the seventh, there are runners on first and third, two outs, and one of the best hitters in the country is up to bat. It is “Do or Die” time. Ashley is on deck.

Ashley truly loves softball; her life has revolved around the game for the past 15 years. She is a senior who has had a solid collegiate career. She will probably not get a chance to play professional softball, however, because she stands only 5’2” tall and there are so few available jobs. The possibility that this will be her last game playing organized ball briefly crosses her mind as the count on the current batter goes to 3-2. In the stands, the fans love this excitement. Despite their confidence in the home team, which has already won 45 games this year, many hearts are pounding as though they are trying to escape from their cages. In the dugout and in the stands, palms are sweaty and stomach butterflies are jumping. Through the incredible tension of this moment, the pitcher throws a nasty rise ball... and the batter lays off of it. It is too high... ball four.

Now, Ashley must step into the batter’s box.

Is she ready? Is she sufficiently prepared to not just try hard, but to actually give her best effort?



(At the book's conclusion, you will find out more about Ashley and what happened next in "It All Comes Down to One Pitch: Part 2.")

INTRODUCTION

DON'T TELL ME "NICE TRY"

"Mental toughness is many things and rather difficult to explain. Its qualities are sacrifice and self-denial. Also, most importantly, it is combined with a perfectly disciplined will that refuses to give in. It's a state of mind – you could call it character in action."

—Vince Lombardi, Football Coach

Developing and refining my mental game has played a critical role in my success. For years, players have had to develop these skills on their own.

—Dave Winfield, Baseball Hall of Famer

Solid training in the mental game allows us to meet obstacles head-on and play with every ounce of our ability.

—Jim Abbott, (one-handed) Baseball Player

"Leaders are made, they are not born. They are made by hard effort, which is the price which all of us must pay to achieve any goal that is worthwhile."

—Vince Lombardi, Football Coach

"Nice try."

It sounds like a compliment, but is it? Close only counts in horseshoes. No one says "nice try" after a best effort performance. They say, "Wow!" "Awesome!" or "You did it!"

After the game, if someone asks if a player or team tried hard, the answer would consistently be "yes." But was it truly their best effort? Probably not, because tapping into the personal power necessary to perform the best they are capable of at that moment in time requires a lot more than trying hard. Trying is a huge part of it, and the motivation to compete with consistent intensity is not something to take for granted. However, to give a best effort performance, athletes also have to create an ideal performance state, commit to their plan, and focus completely on the task at hand.

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Implementing the leadership skills discussed in this book will literally guarantee that an athlete knows how -- and is able -- to give her best effort for each and every performance. It is a lofty goal... and achieving it is completely within every athlete's control. Unfortunately, most athletes will fall far short of this goal because doing so will require patterns of thoughts and actions that are neither normal nor natural. On second thought, perhaps this is not so unfortunate because a willingness to understand and do what it takes to give best performances will give leaders an edge over their competition.

A common misconception in the sports world is that if a person practices and trains hard enough physically, everything else will magically fall into place. Reality frequently teaches otherwise. Mountains of both anecdotal and academic evidence exist that support the idea that mental skills are critical for an athlete to perform up to her potential. A web search for the keywords "sport psychology" will reveal millions of links. Over 95 percent of American Olympians in the past 45 years have received formal mental skills training. Today, sport psychologists or mental skills coaches are employed by almost every NFL, MLB, NBA, and NHL team, by most of the world's top professional golfers and tennis players, by IMG Academies, and even by some of the more progressive sports agents.

Mental toughness is the ability to do what needs to be done right now. Mentally tough competitors get more satisfaction from their time at practice and in competition than others because they know how to enjoy the game and its challenges. They have faith in the process that leads to great outcomes, so they do not worry about outcomes as much as most competitors do. Their consistency makes them a coach's favorite and somebody their teammates can rely on. They are leaders who always find a way to give their team a chance to win.

Leaders have the courage to do what is difficult and the confidence to be comfortable in a situation that would make others uncomfortable. They do not allow themselves to get frustrated because they will not accept the major ups and downs that most (overly emotional) athletes have. They find a way to keep their mind and body close to their ideal performance state. They find a way to do their job!

So how does an athlete acquire mental toughness? Can a leader be built? Athletes must know their job to do their job and no one is born with all the details. They must look for answers from many sources, then also be willing to guess so they can find out what works for themselves. Every time an athlete takes action with positive expectations (even through the inevitable adversities) and gives her best effort, she is practicing her mental skills and improving her mental toughness.

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There are no shortcuts. However, there are many tools to help athletes accelerate the process of reaching their goals. The word “opportunity” is one example. Listen to the top professional athletes in interviews after they did well and you will find this theme: they were grateful for and thriving on the opportunities they had.

How mentally tough is each athlete? Does she know how to imitate the thought patterns of the greatest athletes in the world? Does she know how to move beyond normal, move beyond trying hard, to consistently giving her best effort? If she is going to get rewards from softball that most others will not get, she will have to do things that most others are simply not willing to do! (For example, most will not read this book and even fewer will do what it suggests, even though they will not doubt the efficacy of what follows.)

Performance comes from the combination of physical skills and mental skills. Physical skills include speed, strength, genetics, and mechanics. Mental skills is an umbrella term that includes everything else that affects performance such as attitude, focus, courage, teamwork, strategy, imagery, and confidence. How important is the mental side of the game? Most professional athletes say it is at least 80% of the equation. Whatever the number, athletes all recognize that the ability to deal with “failure,” be in the moment, and trust their stuff is a difference maker. An important question follows: how much time do most athletes spend... how much of their attention in training is dedicated to improving their mental skills?

**"You can either find a way or you can find an excuse,
but you can't do both."**

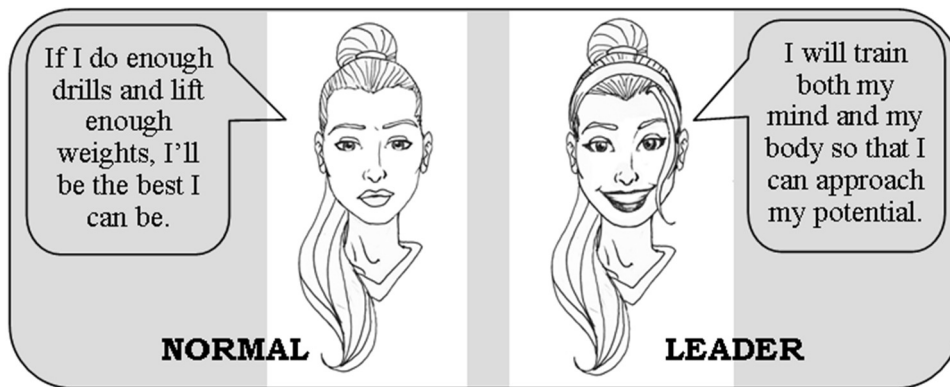
Normal athletes spend most of their time thinking about mechanics and training physically. They miss out on many opportunities to train their mental game. Perhaps this is because they have not been exposed to the details about how to do it. Leaders recognize that mental skills is important and often under-coached, so they take the bull by the horns to find out how to get what they want. After all, they invest lots into softball and it is superb mental skills that will enable them to maximize their return on that investment. They know that by looking hard enough for the answers, they will find them. Quite a few are included in the pages that follow, but potential leaders be forewarned: knowing what to do is much easier than doing it.

Athletes improve their mental skills when they work smart. Many girls practice their drills, run their sprints, and lift weights. Very few people are willing to pay

attention to the details so they can figure out more about themselves and more about the game. Even fewer will do what it takes to apply everything they learn. Doing so is tough, but this is great news for leaders, because this allows them to get an edge by being willing to do what others will not do! This book will help illuminate the path that leaders are already on, putting the wind at their backs. The primary goal herein is to approach potential by getting better, faster.

Even though it is obvious, an important principle to remember is that, “All you can do is all you can do” or “All you can control is all you can control.” Athletes cannot control other people, the weather, or the past. Getting upset about a mistake by self, teammate, or umpire is normal, but it is not useful. Athletes can control themselves, including how they respond to challenges, what attitude they practice and perform with, and how fast they learn. Are they learning to be relaxed, confident, ready to go, committed to the plan, and focused one play at a time? They can be if they will think like a scientist does by experimenting for answers and making learning more important than today’s results. They can leave normal far in the distance behind by making it a habit to give their best effort one step at a time.

Figure I-1



Rate of learning is critical. Every opportunity on the diamond can teach an athlete more about what works and what does not. Because a leader is mentally tough, she is not merely going through the required motions, she is practicing her physical and mental skills, testing her hypotheses, and paying attention to the results. Obviously learning more means that over time, she will win more than others. Her consistent hard and smart work through all the adversities of life (er... softball) is her edge. She stays relentless in her pursuit of excellence by doing common things like hitting, running, catching, and throwing in uncommon ways. She knows how to enjoy her job and do her job!

Leadership Training for Softball Preview ~ 7 ~

Both physical skills training and mental skills training are necessary to approach potential in any performance situation, and a clear understanding about how to train both is a large part of the battle. This book will help athletes to effectively coach themselves and others to approach potential. Athletes working hard on their mental game will gain awareness of what to look for and what to avoid. By understanding how thoughts impact performances, they will know how to practice smart. By having the courage to do their best at implementing what they know, they will find that the grind of championship pursuits becomes gradually easier. Great habits free up their internal resources, allowing them to focus more on how to help others effectively. Mentally tough competitors become leaders both on and off the field.

Two broad purposes exist for improving mental skills: performance enhancement and personal growth. Fortunately, the requirements for both are the same. Without guidance, acquisition of these mental skills is haphazard and slow. Systematic improvement to an athlete's mental game can clearly provide an edge over her unguided competition. Athletes who are in a hurry to find out how good they can become will be attracted to this course of study.

Leaders do not accept the idea that getting "hot" is something that merely happens by chance. It is true that an athlete cannot make it happen, but she can increase the frequency that it happens and its duration. She must accept responsibility for coaching herself towards her best possible performance by putting herself in a position to succeed. She must learn to control the controllables to perform up to her potential. What can she control? Here are some details...

PART 1

TOP JOCKS ARE SCIENTISTS

There is a choice you have to make,
In everything you do.
So keep in mind that in the end,
The choice you make, makes you.

Scientists have goals and race for progress. So do top athletes. Scientists form hypotheses about what will work and design experiments to test their ideas. So do top athletes. When something works, scientists are excited and plan to do it again. So do top athletes. And when an experiment “fails,” scientists are still pleased because they use that information to make effective adjustments. Most athletes are not pleased when their experiment does not work. Their attitude about striking out is the opposite of positive.

Leaders are relentlessly positive. “Every wrong attempt discarded is another step forward,” said Thomas Edison. By learning what works and what does not, scientists achieve progress. They do not have the emotional ups and downs that are so typical in athletics because the word “failure” is not in their vocabulary. The greatest athletes in the world share a common goal: to be the best they can be. They deal effectively with the challenges inherent to sport and competition by thinking like a scientist. They consistently make learning more important than the result of any single experiment.

Before the specifics of ideal practice and performance behaviors are discussed in Parts 2-5, a thorough understanding of the foundation of an athlete’s mental game is needed. This foundation is built on controllable skills, including awareness of where she is and where she wants to be in any category or situation. It also includes her discipline, which provides the means to acquire skills, both physical and mental.

Leaders do not lead sometimes, they lead all the time. This is achieved through habits, including the habits of competitiveness, self-control, alertness, discipline,

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and confidence. They are not perfect at these, but they try to be. With knowledge (including what is found in the pages that follow) and the motivation and courage to take massive action based on that knowledge, consistency is achieved.

CHAPTER 1

CONTROL THE CONTROLLABLES

I pray not for victory, but to do my best.
—Amos Alonzo Stagg, Football Coach

I've brainwashed myself to remember that you can't control your last pitch. It's already been thrown, so get over it. All you can control is the next pitch you're going to throw.
—Kevin Brown, Baseball Pitcher

It's easy to say success is having a gold medal or winning a championship, but I think it is much more than that. It's being able to know I did absolutely everything I could possibly do to win. The results are less significant than the effort.
—Kelly Williams, 1998 Female Athlete of the Year, U.S. Fencing Association

I can control the pitches I make, how I handle my mechanics, how I control my frame of mind. [It] benefited me most... when I realized that I can't control what happens outside of my pitching.
—Greg Maddux, Baseball Pitcher

You have no control of what goes on around you, but you have total control of how you respond to what goes on around you.
—Ken Ravizza, Sport Psychologist

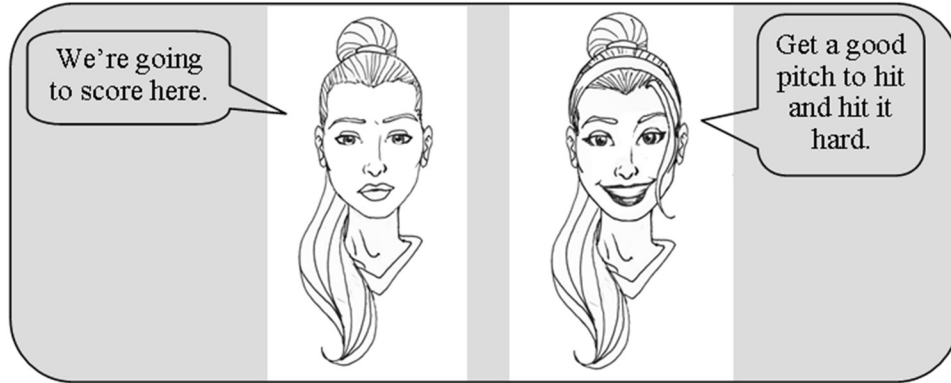
Softball players should know what can be controlled and what cannot. Uncontrollable aspects of softball include genetics, the other team's performance, adjudication, and other aspects of luck. Even teammates' behavior and coaching decisions are outside of the athlete's control. Behavior, on the other hand, is completely controllable. Behavior includes all details of an athlete's attitude, approach, focus, and

response (the next four major parts of this book). It also includes the mechanics of the athlete's performance, which is determined by a combination of mental skills and physical skills. All of an athlete's skills come from her (uncontrollable) genetic potential in any category and her (controllable) preparation.

Control is paramount. Clearly, trying to control uncontrollable variables will lead to frustration and disappointment. It makes no sense to be concerned with things that cannot be controlled, yet everyone falls into that trap at times. Any attempt by an athlete to have absolute control over outcomes is futile. She should not try to win the game; she should try to give her team the best chance possible to win the game. The difference is subtle, but huge. One is controllable; the other is not.

An athlete needs to know her job if she is going to do it effectively. Coaching advice about what to do can help significantly, but ultimately the athlete decides what she is trying to do. It is important that she learn to define her job appropriately. The answer to the question, "What am I trying to do on this play?" may have multiple 'if/then' statements, but ultimately her job should be defined in completely controllable terms. Trying to control too much can be a double-edged sword because it leads both to frustration and to neglect of what can be controlled, namely, behavior. John Wooden said, "Don't whine, don't complain, and don't make excuses." An athlete behaves like a champion by maintaining self-control and doing her best to execute her appropriately defined job in every situation.

Figure 1-1



Wooden is a coach who clearly understands the impact of thoughts on performance, and history proves that he taught his players to think effectively. Who is the greatest coach ever? It is impossible to say for sure, but the discussion must include John Wooden. According to him, he never spoke to his players about winning a basketball game. Nevertheless, his basketball teams at UCLA won 10 national championships over a 12-year period. At one point, they won 88 straight games. Wooden did speak often of what it takes to do your best. His Pyramid of Success (Figure 1-2) clarifies the steps necessary to climb to the pinnacle, which is success.

To help maintain control and focus attention appropriately, athletes and coaches should be meticulous with their choice of words. Both self-talk and spoken words will either facilitate or interfere with ideal feelings and behaviors. Most people use words nonchalantly, but clarity in communication is achieved with specific choices of words and specific definitions of those words. The following terms are used by the author in a specific manner to clarify controllability. *Outcomes* are results that include at least one uncontrollable variable, whereas *behavior* is always completely controllable. The common word *result* is often good to avoid; like behavior, it should be used only when all factors are controllable.

It is useful to avoid certain “bad” words in performance situations. This will be explored further in Chapter 8, but the Table 1-1 gives a summary of words that inhibit performance. Notice that it is always possible, though sometimes challenging, to express the same idea in terms that do not include these “bad” words.

Table 1-1¹

| Change these “curse” words... | to these good words |
|--------------------------------------|--------------------------------------|
| Can’t | Can |
| I’m not | I am |
| Need/Have to/Gotta | Want to |
| Should/Supposed to | Could |
| Apologizing | No outward response; good adjustment |
| Fail | Part of the process |
| Always/Never | Usually / might |
| Slump | Overdue |

Sometimes it is easier to notate the danger of a particular word than to avoid it completely. Quotation marks can often serve this purpose. They indicate that the word being used is not completely true, at least not in the way the word is most commonly used. This avoids undesirable self-fulfilling prophecies or negative attitudes. People know what is meant by words like “fail,” “always,” “slump,” or “clutch,” but the quote marks indicate that something about the words are false. A “failure” is really a stepping stone to success. “Need” to win is not a requirement for continued life. A “slump” is real only if the athlete believes in it; otherwise, it is just one of the inevitable performance declines in life. A “clutch” situation is *not* special because champions give their best effort on each and every play.

Figure 1-2: The Pyramid of Success by John R. Wooden

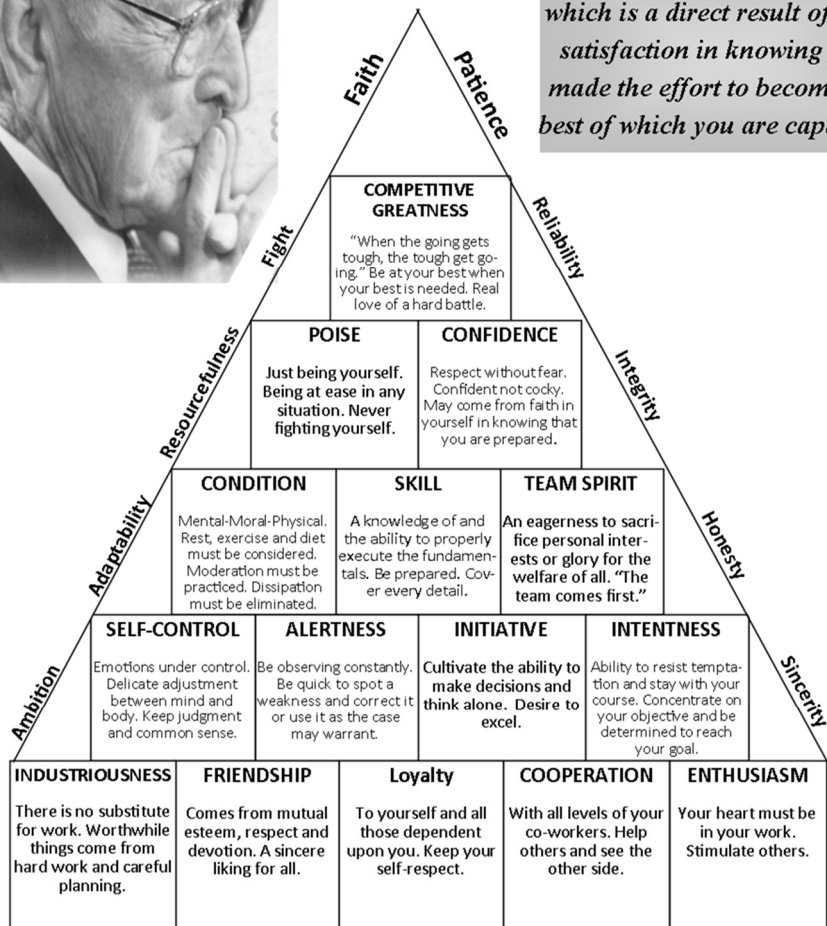
¹ Examples and more details are posted online at:
www.CoachTraub.com/images/pdfs/GoodWordsandCurseWords.pdf

WOODEN ON LEADERSHIP



SUCCESS

“Success is peace of mind which is a direct result of self-satisfaction in knowing you made the effort to become the best of which you are capable.”



12 LESSONS IN LEADERSHIP

1. Good Values Attract Good People
2. Love Is The Most Powerful Four-Letter Word
3. Call Yourself A Teacher
4. Emotion Is Your Enemy
5. It Takes 10 Hands To Make A Basket
6. Little Things Make Big Things Happen
7. Make Each Day Your Masterpiece
8. The Carrot Is Mightier Than A Stick
9. Make Greatness Attainable By All
10. Seek Significant Change
11. Don't Look At The Scoreboard
12. Adversity Is Your Asset

This concludes the preview.

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