



Welcome to CoachTraub's Newsletter #4!!!!

Mental Skills Training = Performance Enhancement and Personal Growth

Thank you in advance for a couple of your minutes... minutes that can help you **"WIN" the mental side of the game.**

My mission is to over-deliver value on goods and services designed to help athletes "win" the mental side of the game.

This issue's theme: FOCUS

Excellence is not a singular act, but a habit. You are what you repeatedly do.

[-Aristotle](#)

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FOCUS IS PRE-POTENT!

Today's Mental Skills Tip – **FOCUS is PRE-POTENT.** It's the second holy grail of mental skills training. Athletes can do everything else beautifully, but if they fail to focus, they will not release their talent.

Did you ever try to hit a ball or target that you didn't see? Stop an opponent with your eyes closed? It won't work too well. What about the opposite? Did it ever look like the game was going in slow motion, and relevant cues (ball, target, etc.) seemed bigger than normal? That's a **tunnel vision focus on the task-at-hand.** The goal is to get zoned in like that; trying to get there will help performance, whether it becomes a "peak performance" or not.

The first step is to define precisely what to focus on. A pitcher, server, or shooter focuses on the target. A hitter focuses on the ball, picking it up right at the pitcher's release point. Next, "presentness" is needed. This means **being engrossed in the process of doing your job.** The mind is capable of processing thousands of thoughts in a minute, but to be *present*, the

athlete must block out all thoughts about the past and the future. Common interfering thoughts from the past include "failures" by self or others. Remember that a **RELEASE EQUALS FORGIVE AND FORGET**. Common interfering thoughts from the future include playing time, looking good, getting recruited, and (most of all) winning. **The way to win is to do W.I.N. (What's Important Now).**

COACHING POINT - During contests, try to ensure that in competing, teaching, or even just helping that your communications do not make it more difficult for your athletes to focus on the task-at-hand.

"Overheard" from the Minds of some Great Athletes:

Poor Self-Talk can be transformed into
Fantastic Self-Talk

Counter: I need to... to
I want to..

Counter: We gotta win. to
Winning is better than losing, but we don't have to win.

Change: What will so-and-so think? to
I only really care about what I think of my performance.

Change: If I don't finally do something great this time, I won't play again for a week. to
Do my job.
(The playing time issue may be true, but thinking about it will only hurt performance.)

Change: I'll make up for that mistake to
Release that by forgiving and forgetting. ... Now, focus on getting my job done. or
I can't do better than my best, so don't press. Just stay with it and trust my stuff.

Change: I'd better not mess up again. to
I expect a great outcome this time.



Quote-of-the-Day: Kareem Abdul-Jabaar, "You have to be able to center yourself, to let all of your emotions go... Don't ever forget that you play with your soul as well as your body."

Inspirational True Story: Roger Bannister finished fourth in the 1500m race at the 1952 Olympics and missing a medal felt like a "failure" to him. He was scorned by the British press for his unconventional training methods. He debated retirement, but instead decided to focus on running the mile in under 4:00:00. The record of 4:01.4 had stood since 1945. He was also a full-time medical student, but he found a way to train efficiently. His focus on the goal paid off when he achieved the feat on May 6, 1954 in 3:59.4. Within a year, 37 other runners had broken the 4-minute barrier, with over 300 doing it within two years, but Bannister was the first, and he is famous today because of it. Asked to explain how he did it, he said, "It's the ability to take more out of yourself than you've got."

Extraordinary Focus Quotes (from my FOCUS booklet):

Cal Ripken, Jr., "The most difficult aspect of baseball is concentration. Being able to put everything out of your mind while standing at the plate is not easy."

Tim Gallwey, (superb) author, "The greatest efforts in sports come then the mind is as still as a glass lake."

Ray Knight, "Concentration is the ability to think about absolutely nothing when it is absolutely necessary."

Greg Maddux, "It's all about executing a pitch."

Rick Dempsey, "If you play the game like that - one pitch, one hitter, one inning at a time - the next thing you know you look up and you've won."

You can bring Coach Traub straight to your team!

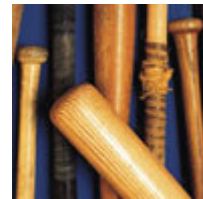
Coach Wooden Quote-of-the-Week: "Don't measure yourself by what you have accomplished, but by what you should have accomplished with your ability."

Coaches Reminder: "They don't care how much you know until they know how much you care."

Baseball/Softball Rules Tip-of-the-Day: Two bases on an overthrow by a fielder (not a pitched ball). Many people think that when a throw goes out of play, the runner gets the base he/she is headed towards and another -- when the ball goes out of play. That formula sometimes works, but the direction the runner was headed has no bearing, and it's the time of the throw that is critical. The rule states: the batter and each runner are awarded two bases from their respective positions when the ball left the fielder's hand. An exception in baseball is when it's the first throw of an infielder on a batted ground ball. In this case, it's two bases from the time of the batted ball.

For getting this far, I have warm wishes for you:

*May your hunt for excellence be fruitful and never-ending.
May you not only hold on to the dreams you've had, but also dream greater dreams
than before. May you not only enjoy this land and its wealth, but also
make it a better place to live by giving and loving generously.
God bless.*



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