

Are you mentally ready to compete?

At last, the long winter is now behind us. After a long wait for warmer days, it is time now to get ready to rumble. The nicer days are upon us and that means the welcoming to the practice of outdoor sports. Regardless of your chosen sport, there are many factors that contribute to the participation of your game. Maybe it is just the enjoyment of the company of whom we choose to play with while, for others, the wanting to excel and improve from last year's performance will push them to get even better.

If we did not keep up with our exercise routines during the winter season, now it is the time to get back to the gym and get our muscles in athletic shape and ready to perform. Maybe during our long break, our skills became a bit rusty and they may need the assistance of a coach. Likewise, if we did not practice the mental side of sports, it is now the time we put some effort into getting ready before the game starts. Hence, there are three areas that need to be addressed in order to be completely ready to enjoy our game: physical, skills, and mental. The successful coach Joe Patterno once said, "Everybody has the will to win; not everybody has the will to prepare."

First and foremost, we need to set goals and, I mean meaningful goals that address the physical, skills, and mental areas. Goals set without commitment are wasted opportunities; goals are there to only serve you; expectations are there to serve others.

There are three conditions required to set meaningful goals:



1 - **Be specific:** write down the exact goal to be accomplished; make sure you separate short from long term goals.

2 - **Set a timeframe:** set a due date that is within a reasonable timeframe for each goal and commit to it.

3 - **Reward accomplishment:** make sure you take time to celebrate what you did.

To get in mental preparation shape, we need to set aside daily minutes to consistently practice what we want to achieve. I wish we could very easily accomplish what we desire, but it will most likely happen when we dedicate time and effort for the intended results.

So, here are a few rules to get us in a better mental preparation shape:

1- **Practice breathing relaxation:** Count to 4 when you inhale, then to 7 as you pause and to 8 when you exhale. Repeat this exercise eight times and it will help you to relax.

2 - **Practice affirmations and positive self-talk:** Focus on the positive not the negative, the present not the past, the process not the result, the target not an image of the self. Use short words that contain positive connotation, such as: “let’s go, now, this time.”

3 - **Use same a pre-shot routine:** stick with the basic fundamental to achieve good results. Practice a routine that feels natural for you and use the same pre-shot routine to help you focus on task. Remember, the routine is to help you remain focused on task, not just for the sake of doing it.

4- **Build self-confidence:** the best time to build confidence is with positive results. However, the best time to learn is when we look at all the positives even when we do not meet our expectations. Use these opportunities to learn how to improve rather than to get upset with yourself. By taking a positive approach for each of your performances, it will help you to continue improving.



Enjoy your summer and every opportunity you get to play your favorite sport!!



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