



How to go from being **BENCHED** to being **YOUR BEST**

Being Benched: Mental Readiness Tips

If there is one role athletes dislike is that of playing the bench. It is often frustrating, upsetting, feels unfair, and it is very hard to get motivated. Athletes feel under-appreciated and wonder when it will be MY chance to start.

Whether they are replaced in the middle of a game, assigned to be a bench player or lost their starting position due to an injury, it is not fun, at all, to watch the game they love from the sidelines.

As challenging as it is, being on the bench actually provides an enormous opportunity to gain mental strength. How you use this role can positively shape the athlete and person you aspire to be. Let's look at these 3 mindset lenses.



1. YOU are the one who really moves the needle.

All winning teams have strong supporting role players. They are the ones who push hard for starters to excel, cheer teammates to stay focused, and provide motivation for one extra push. Starters often rely on this energy to continue fighting to not give up.

Benched players can often unite or split teammates based on his/her attitude. A team-minded benched player becomes positively contagious to teammates. But an angry benched player is a distraction to other players and coaches. As a benched player, you play a pivotal role to create a strong team atmosphere.



2. Embrace the unfairness as it will make YOU stronger

If you allow your frustration to take over, it will spill over onto the team and coaches. How YOU choose to respond to unfairness shapes your character. In sports and life, there are many

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factors outside of your control. You can get mad, disengage from team members, and get angry with the coach; however, all these reactions are yours. And, none of them help you to build positive character. Instead, by accepting the dislike of being benched you will be able to move past the frustration to positively learn from this experience. Unfairness IS part of your game. It sometimes plays against you, but sometimes it plays in your favor. As challenging as it is, look at ALL the positives. You can use this time to learn from other players' techniques, observe in more detail the opponents' weaknesses, carefully hear how your coach coaches, and do a self-evaluation on areas of your game you need to continue improving. More often than not, most of our learnings come from making adjustments after disappointing experiences.



UPCOMING EVENTS

Oct 21 - 5th Annual Symposium
Alliance of Social Workers in Sports



Starting in Fall 2019: Sports Psychology and
Mental Wellness
Consultant for Iona College

In the works: partnering with Private
Prep to provide sport psychology
strategies to test taking.



A TED talk-like on:
Pre-Post Surgery
Mental Health
Intervention for
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3. Accepting your bench role speaks louder about YOU

We all totally agree that being on the bench is the last place you want to be. You've been dedicated to your sport to play it, not to be seated by the sideline. But, if you are replaced and benched, nobody wants to be near to or hear from a complainer in a team.

Demonstrating unacceptable behavior will only isolate you from your teammates. On the other hand, accepting with dignity your coach's decision and use this moment to cheer for your teammates will, by far, enhance yours and your teammates' role. There is plenty of time to later ask your coach about how to improve for next time. In the meantime, cheer as you'd like to be cheered.

Celebrating progress rather than wins. Equally important, learning when to peak, how to rest, and what to eat provide tools excel. When young athletes achieve their goals, it promotes confidence. Intrinsic motivation is a personal experience that can be taken anywhere else in their life.



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