

To all of our Aspiring Athletes,

I hope you enjoyed last week's newsletter in how it outlined a map for when you and your baseball player should begin planning in the recruiting process. Some of you have personally written me on how the information is useful which make me feel like my efforts are not in vain. So thank you!

I have also completed another week of great College Placement Interviews with our families, and they are gaining priceless information that will aid in their college journeys. This is the idea that Coach Santiago created almost a decade ago, and I am glad to add to it and also see it come to fruition in my tenure. Note: That no matter how much we do as an Organization, athletic scholarships are not given to just anyone but earned through hard work, so a partnership between your family and our College Placement Program is critical.

As all of our players are growing in their own personal skill sets, keep in mind the MENTAL aspect of your game. No player, no matter recreational, travel, varsity, college, or pro will ever have efficient success if they do not learn to control their emotions in the playing environment. This information can sometimes be very confusing because it deals with a subject matter that people can not completely understand; Psychology. I found a word document that clearly explains this phenomenon, and I am sure that if our players can master the process it will drastically improve their athletic performance.

I have attached another copy of the remaining Camps/ Combines/ Showcases that I presently know of; I hope you enjoy the document.

Best Regards,

Coach Dominique Rodgers

 The logo for Aron Braves features the name "Aron" in red cursive, a blue baseball bat with a white feather, and "Braves" in red cursive. The Orioles logo features a black and orange Oriole bird perched on a green and yellow diamond, with the word "Orioles" in orange cursive below. The Diamond Nationals logo features the word "Diamond" in blue cursive, "NATIONALS" in blue block letters, and a baseball with stars below. The GIANTS logo features a baseball with the word "GIANTS" in black block letters across it.



Camps:

Bowling Green	Jan. 24 (12-4)	\$90
-Perfect Game	Dec. 28-30	\$549 Ft Meyers FL
-Ohio Elite Showcase	Jan. 3	\$110
-Oakland Baseball Camp	Dec 20	\$95
-Shawnee State	Jan. 16 (9:30--)	\$50
-Cleveland State	Dec. 28 (9-3)	\$125
-Pittsburgh	Feb 14 (9-1)	\$100
-Univ. Toledo	Dec 29-30 (1-4)	\$100
-Mentor TPF showcase	Jan. 18 th	

* Check School's Athletic Website for Additional Info *

This is a good site to see additional camps for specific universities.

<http://www.HcollegebaseballcampsH.com>



Psychology

The increased stress of competitions can cause athletes to react both physically and mentally in a manner that can negatively affect their performance abilities. They may become tense, their heart rates race, they break into a cold sweat, they worry about the outcome of the competition, they find it hard to concentrate on the task in hand.

This has led coaches to take an increasing interest in the field of sport psychology and in particular in the area of competitive anxiety. That interest has focused on techniques that athletes can use in the competitive situation to maintain control and optimize their performance. Once learned, these techniques allow the athlete to relax and to focus his/her attention in a positive manner on the task of preparing for and participating in competition. Psychology is another weapon in the athlete's armory in gaining the winning edge.

The 4C's

Concentration, confidence, control and commitment (the 4C's) are generally considered the main mental qualities that are important for successful performance in most sports.

- Concentration - ability to maintain focus
- Confidence - believe in one's abilities
- Control - ability to maintain emotional control regardless of distraction
- Commitment - ability to continue working to agreed goals

The techniques of relaxation, centering and mental imagery can assist an athlete to achieve the 4C's.

Concentration

This is the mental quality to focus on the task in hand. If the athlete lacks concentration then their athletic abilities will not be effectively or efficiently applied to the task. Research has identified the following types of attention focus:

- Broad Narrow continuum - the athlete focuses on a large or small number of stimuli
- Internal External continuum - the athlete focuses on internal stimuli (feelings) or external stimuli (ball)



The demand for concentration varies with the sport:

- Sustained concentration - distance running, cycling, tennis, squash
- Short bursts of concentration - cricket, golf, shooting, athletic field events
- Intense concentration - sprinting events, bobsleigh, skiing

Common distractions are: anxiety, mistakes, fatigue, weather, public announcements, coach, manager, opponent, negative thoughts etc.

Strategies to improve concentration are very personal. One way to maintain focus is to set process goals for each session or competition. The athlete will have an overall goal for which the athlete will identify a number of process goals that help focus on specific aspects of the task. For each of these goals the athlete can use a trigger word (a word which instantly refocuses the athlete's concentration to the goal) e.g. sprinting technique requires the athlete to focus on being tall, relaxed, smooth and to drive with the elbows - trigger word could be "technique"

Athletes will develop a routine for competition that may include the night before, the morning, pre competition, competition and post competition routines. If these routines are appropriately structured then they can prove a useful aid to concentration.

Confidence

Confidence results from the comparison an athlete makes between the goal and their ability. The athlete will have self-confidence if they believe they can achieve their goal. (Comes back to a quote of mine - "You only achieve what you believe").

When an athlete has self confidence they will tend to: persevere even when things are not going to plan, show enthusiasm, be positive in their approach and take their share of the responsibility in success and fail.

To improve their self confidence, an athlete can use mental imagery to:

- visualize previous good performance to remind them of the look and feel
- imagine various scenarios and how they will cope with them

Control

Identifying when an athlete feels a particular emotion and understanding the reason for the feelings is an important stage of helping an athlete gain emotional control. An athlete's ability to maintain control of their emotions in the face of adversity and remain positive is essential to successful performance. Two emotions that are often associated with poor performance are anxiety and anger.



Anxiety comes in two forms - Physical (butterflies, sweating, and nausea, needing the toilet) and Mental (worry, negative thoughts, confusion, lack of concentration). Relaxation is a technique that can be used to reduce anxiety.

When an athlete becomes angry, the cause of the anger often becomes the focus of attention. This then leads to a lack of concentration on the task, performance deteriorates and confidence in ability is lost which fuels the anger - a slippery slope to failure.

Commitment

Sports performance depends on the athlete being fully committed to numerous goals over many years. In competition with these goals the athlete will have many aspects of daily life to manage. The many competing interests and commitments include work, studies, family/partner, friends, social life and other hobbies/sports

Within the athlete's sport, commitment can be undermined by:

- a perceived lack of progress or improvement
- not being sufficiently involved in developing the training program
- not understanding the objectives of the training program
- injury
- lack of enjoyment
- anxiety about performance - competition
- becoming bored
- coach athlete not working as a team
- lack of commitment by other athletes

Setting goals with the athlete will raise their feelings of value, give them joint ownership of the goals and therefore become more committed to achieving them. All goals should be SMARTER.

Many people (coach, medical support team, manager, friends, etc) can contribute to an athlete's levels of commitment with appropriate levels of support and positive feedback, especially during times of injury, illness and poor performance.

Successful emotional states

The following are emotional states experienced with successful performance:

- Happy - felt that this was my opportunity to demonstrate an excellent performance. Felt I could beat anybody.
- Calm and nervous - Felt nervous but really at ease with these feelings. I accepted and expected to be nervous but felt ready to start.



- Anxious but excited - Felt so ready to compete but a little nervous. Nerves and excitement come together
- Confident - I remembered all the successful training sessions and previous best performances

Psychology Skills Training

Training for the athlete should aim to improve their mental skills, such as self-confidence, motivation, the ability to relax under great pressure, and the ability to concentrate and usually has three phases:

- Education phase, during which athletes learn about the importance of psychological skills and how they affect performance
- Acquisition phase, during which athletes learn about the strategies and techniques to improve the specific psychological skills that they require
- Practice phase, during which athletes develop their psychological skills through repeated practice, simulations, and actual competition.

“You cannot fake success! It is something that is engrained in the minds of the tough. Only the weak give into the feebleness of outside distractions...What kind of ball player are you?”

-Coach Rodgers