

HEADSTRONG!

Fall ~ 2005

THE MENTAL *EDGE* ~ GAIL ROYCE ~ 10045 Morningside Dr. ~ Morrison, CO, 80465 ~ 303-697-6389 ~ mental_coach@gbronline.com

Welcome to the first issue of "HEADSTRONG!" It's been my goal for quite some time to create a newsletter to encourage athletes in their quest to improve their mental game. It's finally gotten off the "to-do" list, on to paper and into your hands. YAY! As I learn how to use my new computer and graphic programs better, I hope to see it growing in both content and appearance.

My purpose for this newsletter is:

- To share my personal thoughts & ideas about the mental side of training and competition
- To relay interesting information, articles, anecdotes, etc. that you may find beneficial
- To serve as a reminder to keep developing and perfecting your mental edge!

I hope you'll find the newsletter useful and relevant to your pursuit of athletic excellence. Enjoy!

Gail

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♥ *A PASSION TO PLAY* ♥

When I think of the attributes of a successful and happy athlete, I have to put "passion" at the top of the list. While numerous other characteristics such as commitment, discipline, attitude, resilience, etc. are vital, I believe it's difficult to develop those traits without a genuine love for your sport. So how do you know if you've got the passion?

When you try to describe why you participate in your sport, it's hard to put into words. But you know it's in your blood, in the cells of your body. You don't say, "I play tennis." You say, "I **AM** a tennis player." There's a definite pride when you say, "I am a triathlete, I am a point guard, I am a pitcher." On a tough day of training or competing, there's still an unmistakable joy in your heart. And you can't even imagine your life without tennis, basketball, triathlon, baseball.....

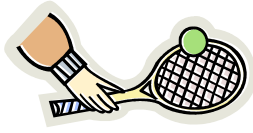
You're willing to give up things that other people can't begin to understand. Pass up backstage passes to a concert? (I actually did that once because of a race. What was I thinking?) Parties, friends, school activities, work social events, and French fries, are just a few of the sacrifices you make for your sport. But most of the time you do it willingly and you know the rewards are going to be more than worth it.

You're a sponge, soaking up everything you can to improve your performance. You're hungry to read articles, listen to athletes & professionals, watch competitions and attend clinics. You choose to surround yourself with individuals who motivate, encourage and support you. Your bedroom or office art consists of sport posters and trophies. You choose your new carpet by how well you can putt on it. (Yes- I know someone who did this!)

When friends ask you why you spend so much time playing racquetball, you just look at them like they're crazy for asking. When your triathlon magazine comes, you drop everything to read it from cover to cover. You know what racquet and clothing company sponsors the top 20 players on the tennis tour. You host a party and the main conversation is about gear ratios and endos. You'd rather watch the Final Four on TV than go shopping with your friends. And your wardrobe consists entirely of Nike, Reebok, Underarmour & adidas!

Now don't misunderstand, I'm not talking about an unhealthy obsession. It's essential for athletes to have a comfortable balance between their sport and "real life." Family, friends, work and school all need to have a place in your daily life. Music, movies, reading, art, gardening, volunteering, etc. provide enjoyment and breathing space that allow you to be a well rounded person and athlete.

But your athlete persona is the result of a **fire within**. A fire that allows you to push through pain, frustration, disappointment and doubt. It's your choice, your passion, your pursuit of a sport that fulfills and completes you. It's that inexplicable burning desire and "love for the game." Cherish the fact that you've been given the talent and the fire. I hope you continue to feel and fuel that flame for a long time to come. May you always have the passion to play!



An excerpt from "The Mental Edge" by Kenneth Baum



"In this study, which began as the Soviets were preparing for the 1980 Winter Olympic Games, their elite athletes were assigned to one of four training programs. The first group consisted of athletes who spent all of their time on physical training. A second group devoted 75% of its time to physical training and 25% to mental training. A third group divided its time equally between physical and mental regimens; and the final group spent 25% on the physical aspects of training and 75% on the mental side.

The results of the study were astounding. The more time athletes devoted to mental training, the more they improved! Those who made the greatest strides spent the majority of their time (75%) on the mental aspects of sports. The least progress was achieved by the athletes who worked exclusively on physical training. These findings were exactly the opposite of what many experts expected, particularly those who are disciples of the "no pain, no gain" philosophy.

The bottom line of the Soviet study: the mental side of sports can unlock your physical potential. By devoting time to mental training, you will be able to spend less time in your physical training- and when you do work out on the practice field, you'll be training smarter and more efficiently. In essence, you'll be getting more out of less."

(This is an excellent book. Fairly simple and straight forward. Worth your time to read!)



Observation Time!

As you're watching your favorite sports over the next couple of months (The U.S. Open, World Series, NFL) watch with a more "mental" eye. Observe some of the following:

- * What mental skills do you see the athletes using and under what situations?
- * How do the athletes handle pressure situations?
- * Are the athletes using a pre-competition routine/ritual?
- * What do you see in an athlete's body posture in relation to their performance?
- * How is the "underdogs" attitude and performance compared to the "favorite?"



"We play because we love the game, we love each other, and we love to win"

~Mia Hamm - Olympic Gold Medal Soccer Player~

"The most important thing is to love your sport. Never do it to please someone else-it has to be yours. That is all that will justify the hard work needed to achieve success. Compete against yourself, not others, for that is who is truly your best competition."

~Peggy Fleming - Olympic Gold Medal Figure Skater~

"Chance can allow you to accomplish a goal every once in a while, but consistent achievement happens only if you love what you are doing."

~Bart Conner - Olympic Gold Medal Gymnast~

"You've got to love what you're doing. If you love it, you can overcome any handicap or the soreness or all the aches and pains, and continue to play for a long, long time."

~Gordie Howe - Hall of Fame hockey player~

Thank you for your inspiration Alex, Ashley, Sampson and Sarah! Your names were taped on my bike for my 120 mile "Triple Bypass" bike ride. When I felt a little tired or slow, I looked at your names and reminded myself of your energy and commitment to your goals. You helped keep me going up those LONG hills. THANK YOU!!