

HEADSTRONG!

Winter- 2011

THE MENTAL *EDGE* ~ GAIL ROYCE ~ 10045 Morningside Dr. ~ Morrison, CO, 80465 ~ 303-697-6389 ~ mental_coach1@msn.com

Greetings! I hope you've had a fabulous start to 2011! My New Year began with four beautiful but COLD and very challenging days of cross country skiing amidst the geysers & bison in Yellowstone. I also got in a fantastic "no lift line" downhill day at Copper and a fun snowshoe hike. These days kicked off my new training for the upcoming year. I'm still working on my competition plans, but after two years of pesky injuries I'm hoping to finally get some fun race goals on the calendar.

If you set new goals at the beginning of the year, stay strong in your commitment to achieving them. If you're in the middle of your season, take a few minutes and review your goals to ensure you're on track. And if you have no goals, this might be a good time for a little "work." After all, if you don't know where you're going, how will you know when you get there?!

February brings Valentine's Day and National Heart Month. What a perfect time to take a few minutes & think about why you love your sport. Sometimes it gets lost in the sweat. Go out this month and practice and play with extra heart and passion!

"Do what you love and love what you do!"



..Mental Toughness is A Choice..

So what exactly is mental toughness? Athletes, coaches and sport psychologists have many opinions on this subject. Here are two very different but excellent viewpoints.



"Mental Toughness is the ability to reach within and effectively implement skills that allow you to train, compete, or perform to the best of your ability in any situation." And, "The ability to perform on demand, regardless of the circumstances. To be able to handle the "brutality" of your playing field without melting down."

So how do these definitions relate to specific sport situations?

You're half way through the race; your lungs and legs are on fire. MT means breathing into the muscles and focusing on maintaining a strong leg turnover. It's creating a mindset that deals with the pain and powers you through the finish line.

You're waiting for the beam judge's salute. You know you have to stick your routine to qualify to Nationals. MT is using self-talk to quiet the doubts, deep breathing to stay calm, and your cue words to perform in the moment.

Bottom of the ninth, your team's up by one run; bases loaded, two outs, full count. MT is keeping your muscles loose, your head clear, your focus on the target, and knowing 100% that you'll throw the strike.

No matter what sport you're in, you have mental issues to deal with. Nerves, pressure, fear, intimidation, focus, mistakes and doubts are just a few of the challenges athletes face. The successful athlete is the one who chooses to use positive mental tools to confront and overcome these difficulties.

While mental toughness may be a choice, but it's not always the easiest one. Sometimes it's just easier to agree with the negative voice in your head telling you that you can't do it. Giving in to your fatigue, your tough opponent, the hard skill, the pressure, the steep hill, or the bad ice is much easier than summoning up the effort to keep going. But winning athletes know how to make the hard choice, and most importantly they're willing to do it.

So what can you do? Here are two ideas to get you started.

First, you have to commit to working on your mental skills consistently. You know you have to condition your body and perfect your sport skills daily; the same is true for your mental. Practice your breathing and relaxation techniques both on and off the field. Say your power statements and visualize at every opportunity. Try your pre-performance routine in practice. Use your disciplined thinking. Make mental toughness training a priority every workout, every day.

Secondly, when you're presented with a difficult challenge in practice or competition, ask yourself, "What's my most mentally tough response? What mental skill can I use to best get through this?" Make your reaction an **on-purpose** decision.

Dig deep, cowboy up, find the extra gear, fire up the mojo! Do whatever it takes to fight for your success. The choice is all yours!

A MENTALLY TOUGH ATHLETE

I've developed a list of 15 actions and habits I feel help define a mentally tough athlete. These actions concern how an athlete handles herself/himself in both the practice and competitive arenas. I'll be sharing them with you over the next few newsletters. As you read them, evaluate yourself and see what areas are strengths and which areas need some improvement. For the full list and your own personal checklist, please visit my website at mentaledgecoaching.net.

#3 Accepts full responsibility for his/her actions, decisions, attitudes, & performances.

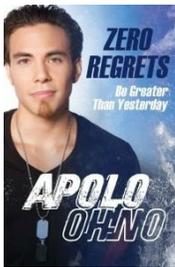
It's very easy to blame refs, umpires, judges, coaches, parents, the weather, equipment, mechanicals, or a hundred other things. Yes, "stuff" happens. But at the end of the day you need to take responsibility for all things related to your performance. It's impossible to strengthen your mental toughness while pointing fingers.

#4 Finds effective methods for dealing with fatigue, injury, illness & pain.

Unfortunately, these are all a part of being an athlete; the not so fun part. But if you choose to be an athlete, you have to accept that it's not always good. Sometimes you have to train when you're tired and compete when you're hurting. Complaining about it only make the tiredness worse and the ankle more painful. So you need to devise a personal strategy for minimizing the distraction and keeping your focus on your performance.

Congratulations to Joel Dreesen of the Houston Texans for receiving the Ed Block Courage award! This award honors NFL players who exemplify commitments to the principles of sportsmanship and courage. Recipients are selected by their teammates for team effort, as well as individual performance.

A former CSU Ram, Joel played his best season as an NFL player with a career high 36 receptions and 4 touchdowns! High fives for an awesome season!!



Apolo Ohno is a short track speed skater and Dancing With the Stars champion! At the 2010 Olympics in Vancouver Apolo became the most decorated American Winter Olympic athlete of all time. Having skated in 3 Olympics, he won 8 medals-two gold, two silver and four bronze. In his book **Zero Regrets** Apolo chronicles his road to the Olympics. He talks about growing up with a single father, his struggles to become a world class athlete, his intense training regimen and his Olympic experiences. A great read!

Sending Positive Vibes For Your Upcoming Spring Sports, Tournaments and Competitions



**Elliott Jake Will Drew
Court Colin Charlie
Ryan Daniel Taylor**



*Analise Amanda Sela Danielle Risa Sara
Stephanie Ilana Tomi Lauren Ava Jenni
Nora Leslie Shaylyn Olivia*



**Troy
Paige**

**Megan
Alyssa**




*Maddie
Baylea
Colorado United*



*Annabel Christianna Sofia Emily
Abbey Cayla Charlotte Katey Kimi
Macy Katie Karlee Phoebe
Emma Sara*




*Nico
Ashley
Teaggan*



**Keegan
Ryder**



"Toughness is in the soul and spirit, not in the muscles." Alex Karras

"The most important attribute a player must have is mental toughness." Mia Hamm

"Concentration and mental toughness are the margins of victory." Bill Russell

"Mental toughness is many things and rather difficult to explain. Its qualities are sacrifice and self-denial. Also, most importantly, it is combined with a perfectly disciplined will that refuses to give in. It's a state of mind-you could call it character in action." Vince Lombardi

"Every situation presents us with an opportunity to automatically react or consciously respond: a choice point...We are a product of our choices, not of our circumstances." Eric Allenbaugh