

HEADSTRONG!

Summer- 2011

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

Happy Sunshine! I always love summer when I don't have to bundle up to do my workouts! I've been spending some quality bonding time with my bike in preparation for the Copper Triangle ride in August. I'm also slowly getting back into doing some running and the body seems to be staying healthy so far - Yay! Maybe a duathlon soon? I'm hoping so!

I "spectated" an interesting event at Beaver Creek recently, The Tough Mudder. A truly creative, challenging and outright ridiculous obstacle course/9 mile hike & run. If you're over 18 and into crazy, you might give it a look next year. It benefits the Wounded Warrior Project. I'm also looking forward to being a support crew member for an athlete who's doing the Leadman Series (talk about CRAZY-it's 5 ultra-run and mountain bike races!) We'll be on her crew for the Leadville Trail 100 Run at the end of August. As always, my athletes continue to amaze and inspire me!

A quick mention of an upcoming adventure. My husband and I are planning to attend as many of the 2012 Olympic Trials as we can over the next 12 months. Our first event was the TaeKwonDo Trials at the Olympic Training Center in November. We're researching dates and locations and trying to figure out the travel and logistics, as we'll be driving and camping in our pop-up trailer. So any information, connections or suggestions you might have are more than welcome!

Have a most spectacular summer!



Learning to Be Comfortable With Being Uncomfortable

Sometime in your sporting life someone will tell you that you need to "get comfortable with being uncomfortable." You'll smile and shake your head like you know exactly what they're talking about. And then you'll walk away thinking, "What the heck was that all about?"



What it means is that if you're going to be successful as an athlete, you have to expect situations in your training and competition where you'll feel unsettled or ill at ease. Times when you'll feel unsure, apprehensive, pressured, nervous, intimidated, anxious, fearful or awkward. Times when you'll feel physically out of control or at your limits. And you have to learn to accept and be OK with those feelings and situations while they're happening.

Why? Because discomfort usually means that important change, growth or improvement is about to take place. You may be doing something that you've never tried or just don't feel confident with yet. But you can only develop as an athlete when you take risks and step outside what's comfortable. So if you want to succeed in your sport, you have to get used to feeling "out of sorts."

Your uneasiness might be physical or mental, a big deal or just a minor disturbance. Here are some examples:

- *Your hitting coach changes your batting stance and elbow position, making your swing feel awkward and clumsy.
- *As a gymnast or skater, you feel "out of your league" or intimidated the first time you compete a higher level at Nationals.
- *As a runner or cyclist in a race, you push yourself into the red zone, feeling heart pounding, oxygen sucking "discomfort."
- *For the first time you're leading the golf tournament into the final day. You feel self-conscious in this new position.

So you need to make friends with the discomfort. Acknowledge it and find an effective way of thinking to manage it.

- *"This stance and elbow position feels really weird, but staying with it will make me a more consistent and stronger hitter."
- *"I belong here! I'm going to perform my best and remember I'm growing big time as an athlete."
- *"Pain means I'm putting it all out there. Yay me!! It's only temporary and I can deal with it to the finish line!"
- *"This is an unusual experience for me. But I deserve to win. Winning is going to be my new comfort zone!"

Even with disciplined thinking you'll probably still feel uncomfortable and that's OK. But being in control of your thoughts will help relax your muscles and allow them to perform better. The discomfort will end eventually, one way or the other. It's your choice whether or not to be mentally tough and get through it more successfully.

So the next time Mr. Uncomfortable comes to visit, just invite him in and decide you're going to get comfortable with him!

A MENTALLY TOUGH ATHLETE

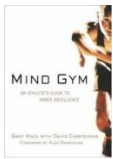
I've developed a list of 15 actions and habits I feel help define a mentally tough athlete. These actions concern how an athlete handles herself/himself in both the practice and competitive arenas. I'll be sharing them with you over the next few newsletters. As you read them, evaluate yourself and see 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.

#5 Acquires skills and develops strategies for recovering quickly from disappointments, mistakes, and failures.

Over the course of your athletic life, you'll likely encounter all three of these. But if you have a pre-planned strategy for dealing with your misfortunes, you'll bounce back much quicker and stronger. Practice your mental skills for "letting go" of mistakes in your workouts so they'll come easier and more automatically during competition. Have your own personal routine prepared for working through a loss or a failure. Part of that plan should be to figure out what happened and why, what you could have done differently, what you learned and how to be better next time. Establishing your strategies in advance make them easier to implement.

#6 Creates & uses a personal plan for working through or controlling fear, frustration, anger, nervousness, & pressure.

When you're confronted with these feelings in your training or competition, it can sometimes be easiest to just give in. It's often tough to fight back when things aren't going well. But the mentally tough athlete is ready with a battle plan. It might be a series of deep breaths, some old-fashioned positive self-talk, a reminder of your "fire in the belly" goal or some relaxation exercises. You have to know what works best for you. The important part is being disciplined enough to choose to put your mental skills into practice.



Summer is a great time to get in a little extra mental skills reading. The perfect book is *Mind Gym-An Athlete's Guide to Inner Excellence*. It has forty short lessons that address everything from Attitude to the Zone. They can be read in order, or you can study the ones that apply to your sporting life right now. It's a book that you can revisit often and always find something worthwhile!

Resilience To the Max!!

Resilience is one of the most important traits an athlete must possess. Being able to bounce back quickly and strongly from a setback or failure is crucial to an athletes' success. Here's a recent and extraordinary example of resilience.

In April, Rory McIlroy shot a bogey-free 7-under-par 65 in the first round of the Masters Tournament to take the lead after the first day. At 21, he was the youngest player to ever lead the Masters at the close of the first day. On Friday, he shot 69 to lead by two strokes. On Saturday, he shot 70 to finish at 12-under-par, four strokes ahead of four other challengers. However, on the final day he shot the worst round in history by any professional golfer leading after the third round of the Masters. He shot a round of 80, finishing tied for 15th for the tournament. Words like "collapse, implode, crumble and choke" followed him for days.

In June, just 2 months later, Rory led the US Open for the first three days with spectacular play. The question, "Will it happen again?" followed him to every hole. But on the final day, he finished with a record score of 16-under-par on his way to an eight-shot victory, as the youngest winner since Bobby Jones in 1923.

What an impressive comeback victory for an amazing and mentally tough athlete!



"Move out of your comfort zone. You can only grow if you are willing to feel awkward and uncomfortable when you try something new." ~Brian Tracy

"Be willing to be uncomfortable. Be comfortable being uncomfortable. It may get tough, but it's a small price to pay for living a dream." ~Peter Mc Williams

"A dream is your creative vision for your life in the future. You must break out of your current comfort zone and become comfortable with the unfamiliar and the unknown." ~Denis Waitley

"THE PAIN YOU FEEL TODAY WILL BE THE STRENGTH YOU FEEL TOMORROW." ~Apolo Ohno