

HEADSTRONG!

Fall ~ 2006

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

Happy Fall! And yes, a little bit of winter here in Colorado. It's been a glorious autumn, beautiful color, and perfect workout weather. I hope you had the opportunity to get out and play!

My big adventure for the summer was to be The Triple Bypass Bicycle Ride- 120 miles Evergreen to Avon, three mountain passes, 10,000 feet elevation, one day. I trained hard, planned well, and did my mental preparation. I was strong and ready. I started off at 6:00 a.m. in chilly temperatures and light drizzle. As we crested Squaw Pass, the rain increased and the temps decreased. The ride down Squaw was wet, cold, and very slick. I saw more than one rider crash. Arriving in Idaho Springs riders were huddled in coffee shops, warming up under bathroom hand dryers, and on cell phones calling for rides home. I was soaked and shivering as I waited for my husband, who had three flat tires.

Quit is not a word in my vocabulary. But on that day, I have to say I was relieved when both my brother and husband agreed that continuing wasn't a good idea. We had no dry clothes, we heard rumors of snow on Loveland Pass, and we still had 90 miles to go. So with more than a little disappointment, we joined the others at the coffee shop and phoned for a ride home.

So, did I quit? I think that knowing when to "let go" and "giving up" are two different things. As athletes, we have to be realistic about our limitations and safety concerns. So with my safety in mind, I let go of the idea of finishing The Triple that day. Bummed? You bet. But sometimes we need to choose to let go- and know that it's OK.

P.S. My bike and body are in one piece and I'm starting my training for 2007!



PRESSURE!!!



Many people like to say that pressure is all in your head. But I don't believe that's exactly true. Pressure is very real, even if you can't see it or hold it in your hand. Whether it's from coaches, family members, peers, teammates, the media, fans, or yourself, pressure exists. What DOES take place in your head is how you choose to deal with the expectation of making the team, getting the hit, qualifying to Nationals, landing your jumps, scoring the goal, finishing the race, or winning the game.

Imagine pressure as two big hands hovering over you. You have several choices of how to "hand-le" it! You can:

~ Allow pressure to have the **Upper Hand**. These big palms press down on your shoulders making your movement sluggish and ineffective. Your muscles tense up as they strain to work against the pressure. You're constantly feeling the weight and it becomes impossible to execute a strong serve, an accurate free throw, or a clean double axel. Pressure becomes an additional opponent.

~ **High-Five** that burly hand and welcome its' presence. When pressure shows up, you can rise to the occasion by reminding yourself that you've trained hard and are well prepared. You acknowledge that it's there, but let it know in no uncertain terms that YOU are in control and you thrive in challenging situations.

~ **Shake Hands** and make friends with pressure. Get to know a little about it, its' habits and how it affects you. Expect pressure to pay you an occasional visit. And when it does, politely request that it sit in the stands with the rest of your friends. You're aware that it's hanging around, but you choose to put it in a comfortable place and focus totally on your performance. Out of the corner of your eye, you might even notice it applauding along with the rest of your fans!

~ **Hand it Over** to your opponent and let them feel the pressure. **Hand it Off** to your coach until the competition is over. **Hand it Back** to the reporters and the fans. **Hand it Up** to a higher power.

Ignoring the pressure is NOT a good way to deal with it. Acknowledge that the pressure is present and make a conscious choice to manage it effectively. Remember to think positively and use "So I need to..." Focus on how you need to execute. Utilize all of your mental skills. If you're an athlete, you must accept the fact that pressure is going to be a part of your sporting life. What you choose to do with it will determine your success.

So the next time you're feeling that **heavy hand** of pressure, **shake your fist** at it and refuse to **knuckle under**. Then give yourself an emphatic **thumbs up** and remember success is at your **fingertips**!



High fives To:

Braden- Southwestern Regional Champion. Good Luck at Mid-Westerns and Nationals!

Brian- for completing the 24 Hours of Winter Park Bike Race

Annabel, Erica, Brittany, Ashley- Southwestern regional competitors- great efforts and fun programs!!

Sampson- 24 Hours of Moab competitor- (the race was called due to weather and trail conditions 7 hours into the race)

Tricia- for qualifying to the Ironman World Championships in Hawaii

Kirk- High School State soccer competitor

Good Luck To:

Stephanie- at Nationals!

Jo- at NY and other upcoming pro tournaments

Hannah- at your early season diving meets

Justine & Courtney- in your high school diving season

Darrin- on your new hockey team

Allie, Mikaela & Kathryn- in your club volleyball tournaments



PEPPERMINT

The New Spinach!

"In a story reported by webmd.com, researchers say that the smell of peppermint helps to boost mood and motivation and improve athletic performance. Bryan Raudenbush, Ph.D., and his colleagues found that peppermint-infused strips placed under the nose helped to significantly improve the performance of a groups of athletes. Results showed a whiff of peppermint enabled athletes to run faster, squeeze a had-grip harder, and do more pushups. Most of the effect was probably psychological, "Raudenbush says, "but it resulted in a measurable improvement in performance." " (reprinted from Cooking Light-Sports Medicine Update)

Whether or not this specific study proves anything is questionable. However, aromatherapy can have a place in your sport performance. Certain scents can be comforting or calming, energizing or uplifting. Aromas activate specific areas of the brain and we respond accordingly. So if you're in need of energy, try a little peppermint. To induce calmness, breathe in chamomile. For confidence inhale bergamot. More stamina, sniff some cinnamon. For stress relief, spray a little lavender. Incorporating some of these scents as part of your "pre-competition" ritual or refocusing strategy can be beneficial. Essential oils in your massage lotion can warm up or relieve sore muscles.

For more info on aromatherapy, there are several great books & the internet has a wealth of information. Local stores like Vitamin Cottage, Wild Oats and Whole Foods have knowledgeable staff that can help you. Happy Breathing!



OK, so what's with the deal with Andre Agassi and the skipping? I don't know how many of you watched the U.S. Open (which had some AWESOME matches!) But I saw Andre skip on and off the court several times. Whether he was doing it purposefully or not, skipping is an effective mental tool. You can't skip and be in a bad mood! Skipping sends a message to your brain that you have energy and are feeling great, which in turn sends a positive message back to your body for improved performance. I realize skipping isn't always an option in competition- you'd never live it down! But on an low energy day, give it a try in your living room, backyard, or out training. If it works for Andre.....!

*"There's no such things as coulda, shoulda, or woulda.
If you shoulda and coulda, you woulda done it."*

~Pat Riley~