

HEADSTRONG!

Summer ~ 2007

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

I've just returned from my first summer adventure - a 12 day trip to China with CO & TX gymnastics teams. We trained with a team at the Hunan Province Sport School, had a friendship competition, and were granted special permission to attend the National Training Center in Beijing. We observed a training session of the top 14 gymnasts in contention for the 2008 Olympic team. What a privileged and inspiring opportunity! While the Chinese system for training their athletes is controversial and so different from the U.S., it was very interesting to observe and learn more about. Their ultra-disciplined workout ethic, amazing ability to focus, and their commitment to excellence of execution are qualities all of us should strive to emulate.

I drew on that inspiration as I attempted my second adventure just four days after my return, The Triple Bypass. Three weeks of no training, long travel days, little sleep, strange food (like pig's ear!), 19 hour plane trip, jet lag, and a sore throat & cold didn't exactly set me up for a successful 120 mile bike challenge. But after not completing it last year, I had some unfinished business. So I taped my power words to the tube, wrote a motivational statement on my water bottle, stepped on the bike and committed to finishing no matter what. Riding up Loveland and Vail passes I had nagging doubts and weary legs. But I knew I needed to practice what I preach. So I read my words, set mini-goals, sang, focused on strong strokes, and finally pedaled across the finish line. I'm still always amazed at what the determined mind can convince the unwilling body to accomplish!



EXCUSES, EXCUSES!



Make an excuse or make an effort - but you can't do both! Excuses, no matter how strongly you may feel their truth, undermine your confidence and eat away at your mental toughness. They weaken your spirit and keep you from attempting your best.

Before and during a workout, excuses give you permission to not make the effort that day. "My ankle hurts; I'm tired; I'm really stressed; I broke up with my boyfriend/girlfriend, I don't have time." They allow you to slack off and not rise to the mental and physical challenges that strengthen you as an athlete. Excuses set you up to perform poorly.

During or after a competition, excuses corrupt your thinking and inhibit your ability to constructively evaluate and improve on your performance. "He didn't play fair; She's making sloppy shots; The wind was blowing; The equipment is terrible." By putting the responsibility on someone or something else, you decrease your capacity to rise above and effectively deal with the obstacle. You don't learn, grow, or improve from the experience. You sound like a poor sport.

Yes, there are days when you're sick, sore, or injured. The wind blows, it rains, it's too hot or too cold. Judges play political games; opponents play dirty. Equipment breaks and fans are disruptive. Officials make bad calls; coaches make questionable decisions; teammates make mistakes. But if you're a competitive athlete, you must accept the fact that these things are all just part of the territory - they come with the game. In truth, very few days of practice or competition offer you perfect conditions. So what can you do?

You can choose to become a helpless victim of the circumstances of your sport. You can reason, explain, complain, whine, argue, justify, and rationalize. You can give energy and power to your opponent, the weather, the officials, the injury, and the playing field. Or you can keep that energy and power and choose to implement your strongest course of action. You can decide to create the best possible solutions and perform the best you can TODAY, under the circumstances you've been handed.

State objectively what's happening and then use those four empowering words, "So I need to..." "My opponent is cheating, so I need to stay calm and make clean, indisputable shots." "I'm really tired, so I need to do fewer reps with good focus and quality." After performance, state what took place and your response. "It was really windy, and I had difficulty making the right adjustments." "My tire went flat. I rode hard, but was unable to make up the time." The problem may not be of your doing, but the accountability must be yours.

Listen to your favorite athletes and see what they say. Mentally strong athletes take full responsibility for their actions and results, both in practice and competition. It's rarely an easy thing to do. But it's the choice that consistently successful athletes make.

~Gail's Rules for Athletic Success~

Rule #3- Avoid habits, activities, actions, distractions, & people that detour you from your goals.

There are people and things all around you conspiring to keep you from achieving your dreams and goals. Your own actions, habits, and choices often sabotage your progress. Know who and what these are and prepare strategies for eluding them. Smoking, drinking, and drugs are bad habits disguised as de-stressors, remedies, and performance enhancers. Lack of sleep, oversleeping, overeating, under-eating, and unhealthy eating are self-destructive actions that are easy to fall prey to. The Play Station that keeps luring you into one more game until you're totally distracted & forget your physical therapy session. Excessive Internet, TV, TM/IM, and phone calls are activities that sap your energy and waste your time. There's well meaning friends who convince you to skip practice and come to the movies or out clubbing. Clueless co-workers who don't "get it" and hassle you for working out at lunch." "Caring" family members who frequently remind you of the futility and foolishness of your athletic quest. Teammates who are lazy, jealous, or negative. The list is infinite. So it's important to know exactly where you're headed (see rule # 2 last issue). Then be aware of what's lurking around that tempts and entices you in a different direction. Stay strong in your convictions, your thinking, and your actions. Avoid the temptations -You have important goals to achieve!



"101 Ways To Be A Terrific Sports Parent"

I've just finished reading an excellent book, "101 Ways To Be A Terrific Sports Parent." It's by Dr. Joel Fish and is available at amazon.com. (and possibly your local library.) I found it to be a very easy read and one that addresses a lot of concerns I've encountered from parents in the past. Dr. Fish is not only a well respected sport psychologist, he is also an athlete and a sport parent. So his knowledge and viewpoints come from several perspectives. What he says may not always be what parents want to hear, but he 100% has the interest and health of the young athlete at heart. If you're a sport parent, I strongly suggest reading this book. If you're a coach, it's also very applicable to how you deal with your athletes. I'd appreciate any feedback and opinions after you've read it.



Dear Diary.....

Journaling is probably one of the least used mental skills. It does take some time and discipline, and yet it can be an invaluable tool. There are many uses for a journal or training log. You can note what you do at practice, things that work well and those that don't. You can keep track of your sleep, nutrition, hydration, and heart rate. Journals are great places to vent and let go of the frustrations of a difficult day. You can record stats, scores, times and results from games and competitions. It's helpful to have previous training information to look back on- our memories aren't always the best! It's nice to have a place to jot down ideas and concepts during a workout that you might forget later. And at the least, it's always fun to read back through old journals and see how far you've come! How much or how little, how detailed or simple is up to you. You can buy a fancy journal at a bookstore or use a spiral notebook. You can create a personal journal page specific to your sport and lifestyle on your computer. If you're not currently doing any type of journal, give it a try for a month and see what you think. You might be surprised!

I Need Your Assistance!

I'd like to create a motivational music collection. I'm looking for songs with motivational lyrics, positive messages, adrenalin pumping music, quiet inspiration, or relaxing themes. I'm afraid I've done a poor job of keeping current with new music the past few years. What do you listen to? Any titles/artists you can email me would be greatly appreciated. If I get a good list, I'll share it with all of you next newsletter. Thanks!

~ ~ Parting Quotes ~ ~

Excuses are the nails used to build a house of failure. ~Don Wilder and Bill Rechin

No one ever excused his way to success. ~Dave Del Dotto

He that is good for making excuses is seldom good for anything else. ~Benjamin Franklin

Ninety-nine percent of failures come from people who have the habit of making excuses. George W. Carver

In life we either have reasons or results ~Peter McWilliams

The person who really wants to do something finds a way; the other person finds an excuse. Unknown