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ABSTRACT

**“BEFORE YOU GO FOR THE GOLD, YOU MUST
FIRST GO FOR THE GOAL”. “GOAL SETTING IN
SPORTS”**

“Before You Go For The Gold, You Must First Go For The Goal”. “Goal Setting In Sports”

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Before you go for the gold, you must first go for the goal. Goal setting is the foundation of personal achievement in sport and all of life's important experiences. Most goal setting begins with a dream goal: to medal in a national competition, to gain an international ranking, to make the Olympic team. In order to benefit from goal setting, you must accept the goal as you own. The goals that are set must follow a number of principles if they are to be effective.

Goal setting principles are as follows:

- ! Link Performance Goals to Outcome Goal
- ! Set Challenging, But Realistic Goals
- ! Describe Goals in Language that is Positive and Specific
- ! Progress through Collaboration to Personalization
- ! Integrate Short-term, Intermediate, and Long-term Goals
- ! Use Regular Feedback to Adjust Goals
- ! Practice Self Acceptance

LINK PERFORMANCE GOALS TO OUTCOME GOALS

Outcome goals focus on results, such as the score of a bout, final placing in a tournament or national ranking. In a head-to-head competitive sport, outcomes depend on the athletes effort and skill, and the performance of the other competitor. Such outcomes are ultimately not within athletes control. You could perform the best of your career and still lose, if the other competitor is better on that day. Wanting to win is not enough. You must know what to do in order to succeed. This is the role of performance goals. Physical condition, mental preparation, technical skills, and tactical sense are the foundation of athletic excellence. The development of these abilities through training is within your control, as is performance within your own game plan during

competition. Goal setting is about systematically building such skills through regular practice and applying these in competition.

SET CHALLENGING, BUT REALISTIC GOALS

The most common goal setting error is striving for results that are beyond your ability. Most of the time this is psychological trap. When you fail to meet goals day after day, you may become discouraged. When goals are set unrealistically high, it is impossible to develop a sensible training program. In contrast, realistic goal plan bolsters your motivation by creating a sense of progress and by paving a pathway to success. In order to do this, you need to be grounded by sensible goals for training and competition. Sport psychologists o'clock and Evans have developed a simple method for setting realistic competition goals called Interval Goal Setting (IGS). IGS utilizes a formula to compute a range of indicators of goal achievement.

Step 1: Find **A**, where A is the average over your last five performances.

Step 2: Find **PR**, where PR (personal record) is your best finish within the last five performances.

Step 3: Find **D**, where D is the interval difference between the average and the best finish. $D = A - PR$.

Step 4: Find **UB**, where UB is the upper interval boundary. $UB = PR - D$.

DESCRIBE GOALS IN LANGUAGE THAT IS POSITIVE AND SPECIFIC

The language of goal setting is quite important. By following certain guidelines in the goal setting process, the clarity and precision of goals is enhanced. As a general rule, objectives should be stated in a positive (versus negative) language. On many occasions negative (what “not to do”) goals backfire. What about the statement, “don’t choke!”? To the extent it plays into the your fears, “choking” becomes more likely. In a critical situation you may

need to know what to do and to feel a sense of confidence that it can be done. In this situation, the use of negative language is probably the most common coaching error. Consider alternatives to the statement “don’t choke.” The statement “you can do it” is positive and potentially confidence building but provides no information about what to do. “Don’t fleche” provides specific information, but falls short of advising the athlete what action might be best. Alternatives like “wait for a counter attack” or “look for an opening in six” are generally more effective because they help focus athlete on what to do. Set specific mental training goals for practice. For example, you and your coach identify “refocusing after giving up a critical touch” as an aspect of your mental game that needs improvement. A worthwhile goal to develop and use is a positive affirmation after a touch that will keep you focused on the critical elements of the bout, provide encouragement, and give you specific instructions on how to proceed. Once you are comfortable with this training you can use it during competition. Find times that are comfortable for you and use the goal setting guidelines described here to help determine the length and nature of your mental practice.

PROGRESS THROUGH COLLABORATION TO PERSONALIZATION

The coach guides athletes by helping them remain focused on the distant objectives as they negotiate the difficult twists and turns of training and competition. True in all sports, the close, personal contact between coach and athlete in lessons, and because of the reliance on the coach for tactical advice. For these reasons, goal setting must be a collaborative effort between the coach and you. Ultimately, you must have a sense of ownership for the goals set. No matter how sensible the goals and no matter how well planned out, if you do not embrace these goals as your own; they will sooner or later be left along the wayside.

INTEGRATE SHORT-TERM, INTERMEDIATE, AND LONG-TERM GOALS

In order to achieve competitive success, the athlete must establish short-term goals. In order to stay focused and energized, short-term, intermediate, and long-term goals must be integrated so that the way toward the final destination is clear, and so that today’s goals feel connected to the distant goal. All athletes progress through stages, coming periodically to key points of reckoning. It is from these vantage points that progress to the destination can be assessed, and goals evaluated and revised. Virtually all sports move on a yearly cycle with training programs and competitive schedules set, completed, and reset. The yearly cycle with its related activities is the basis of long-term goal setting. In the Olympic family of sports the 4-year quadrennium further sets the energy and rhythm of training and competition. Yearly goals will be influenced by proximity of the Olympic year and by the

athlete’s level of progress. There is also a critical need to fill the gap between the long-term and short-term goals. Intermediate goals are like milestones. They help the athlete stay on course and help gauge progress.

USE REGULAR FEEDBACK TO ADJUST GOALS

Keeping a careful record of goals set and completed (e.g., a training log) is an excellent way to monitor your progress. Frequent evaluation will keep you from veering off course, help make adjustments as needed, and increase your confidence as you succeed. Coach evaluation and self-evaluation together enable the athlete to work smarter; the athlete knowing what feels right from the inside, and the coach bringing insights from his/her background. As the coach provides feedback, the athlete can find sustenance to continue working and improving in their sport. A successful goal setting program balances commitment and flexibility. Regular dialogue between coach and athlete about goals set, goals met and goals to come is the key to maintaining this balance.

PRACTICE SELF-ACCEPTANCE

There is no enduring success without the ability to accept the personal ups and downs that are an inevitable part of sports experience. So an implicit goal in sport learning to live well with winning and losing. Turning losing into learning and maintaining perspective in victory enables the athlete to sustain focus on the larger goals. Self-acceptance, the honest acknowledgement of personal strengths and weakness, is critical to this. This is in turn linked to setting goals that are realistic and personalized. With well-set goals, everyone can be a winner through the satisfaction of personal achievements and for the richness of their competitive experience.