

Brian M. Cain with Matt Morse

# MENTAL CONDITIONING FOR BASEBALL

GIVE YOURSELF THE BEST CHANCE FOR SUCCESS



**MASTERS OF THE MENTAL GAME SERIES BOOK**

**MASTERS OF THE MENTAL GAME SERIES BOOK**

# **Mental Conditioning for Baseball**

*Give Yourself the Best Chance for Success*

## **MASTERS OF THE MENTAL GAME SERIES BOOK**

This book is being given to

---

Because I care about you and your success

---



**Brian M. Cain, MS, CMAA**

Brian Cain Peak Performance, LLC

## **WHAT CHAMPIONS ARE SAYING ABOUT BRIAN CAIN AND MENTAL CONDITIONING FOR BASEBALL**

“Brian Cain is the Master of the Mental Game. We have used his system at TCU since 2006. Finally he has put that system into a baseball textbook that you can use to better play one pitch at a time.”

***Jim Schlossnagle***  
***Head Baseball Coach***  
***Texas Christian University***  
***2010 & 2014 NCAA College World Series***  
***2013 Team USA Collegiate National Team Manager***

“Brian Cain is a teacher. He helps coaches and players in baseball to slow the game down and play at their pace, which gives them the best chance for success. His system helped us to win the Southeastern Conference in 2009 and 2014 and advance to Omaha in 2014. He is one of if not the best in the game when it comes to training the mental side.”

***Mike Bianco***  
***Head Baseball Coach***  
***The University of Mississippi***  
***2009 & 2014 Southeastern Conference Champions***  
***2014 NCAA College World Series***

“This book will help you learn to master the mental game of baseball. Cain is the premier mental conditioning coach for college and high school baseball.”

***Erik Bakich***  
***Head Baseball Coach***  
***The University of Michigan***

"A classic that every baseball coach should own."

***Pat Casey***  
***Head Baseball Coach***  
***Oregon State University***  
***2006 & 2007 NCAA National Champions***



If this book has had a positive impact on the way you coach or play baseball and you would like to have a testimonial featured in future editions of *Mental Conditioning for Baseball*, please e-mail your testimonial to [admin@briancain.com](mailto:admin@briancain.com).

We look forward to hearing how this book has positively affected your game and life. We would also welcome the opportunity of working with you to become a master of the mental game, and to helping you DOMINATE the day, one pitch at a time.

In Excellence,

Your Mental Conditioning Coach for Baseball



A stylized, handwritten signature in black ink, consisting of a large, flowing 'B' and 'C'.

Brian M. Cain, MS, CMAA

**MASTERS OF THE MENTAL GAME SERIES BOOK**

# **Mental Conditioning for Baseball**

*Give Yourself the Best Chance for Success*

**MASTERS OF THE MENTAL GAME SERIES BOOK**



**Brian M. Cain, MS, CMAA**

Brian Cain Peak Performance, LLC

Brian M. Cain, MS, CMAA  
Mental Conditioning Coach  
Peak Performance Publishing  
Brian Cain Peak Performance, LLC

Mental Conditioning for Baseball  
Give Yourself the Best Chance for Success

A Masters of the Mental Game Series Book

©2014 by Brian M. Cain, MS, CMAA

All rights reserved. No part of this manual may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted in any form or by any means (electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording, or by any information retrieval system, or otherwise) without the prior express written consent of the author and Peak Performance Publishing, except for the inclusion of brief quotations in critical articles or a review.

Printed in the United States of America  
Edited by: Mary Lou Schueler  
Cover Design & Manual Layout: Brian M. Cain  
Illustrations: Nicole Ludwig and Greg Pajala  
Photography: Don Whipple

Brian M. Cain, MS, CMAA  
Mental Conditioning for Baseball  
Give Yourself the Best Chance for Success  
A Masters of the Mental Game Series Book

ISBN-13: 978-1503375727

ISBN-10: 1503375722

## PREFACE

Every pitch in baseball has a life and history of its own. In most games, there will only be a handful of pitches that determine the outcome of that game. As a coach or player, you never know which pitch will be the one that makes the big difference, so you have to treat them all as if they are going to be that big pitch.

Playing the game of baseball one pitch at a time is what the mental game is all about. Giving yourself the best chance for success on this pitch in turn gives you the best chance for success on the scoreboard at the end of the game.

This book is an extensive collection of my experiences working as a mental conditioning coach in baseball with some of the top college and high school programs in the country. This book is a body of work that, when put into action, will unlock your potential and take your game to the next level.

This is a book about the process of ***becoming a person and a program of excellence***.

This is a book about ***becoming a champion*** so that you can win more championships.

This is a book designed for those who want more and know that to get more you must ***become more*** so that you can get more out of yourself and others.

This book will provide you with the guiding principles that will give you the best chance for success in baseball and in life.

The material in this book has worked for real baseball players and coaches in real professional, college and high school



programs around the country. I have been with them along the way to experience the highs and the lows. There are always plenty of lows when you play the greatest game of failure that there is – the game of baseball.

This is not a book on theory; it is a book on APPLICATION!

Whether you are a veteran of mental conditioning or the mental game of baseball or just getting started, this book will provide insight and information you can use IMMEDIATELY to start becoming and creating masters of the mental game.

***DOMINATE THE DAY!***

# DEDICATION

This book is dedicated to all of the baseball players and coaches out there who realize the value of the game, the value of one pitch and the amazing life lessons you learn through participation.

This book is dedicated to you, the reader, because you are committed to excellence. You have chosen to invest the time it takes to be different, abnormal and uncommon, in order to take your game and life to the next level. You want more, and my mission through this book is to help you establish a process so that you can become more.

By signing your name below, you are dedicating yourself to reading and, more importantly, to applying this book and making the commitment to enjoy the journey to the summit of The Mountain of Baseball Excellence.

I \_\_\_\_\_ (print your name) have been given everything I need to become a person of excellence.

I am fully capable of living the life of my dreams and leaving this world and the game of baseball more than it was when I got here.

I am a TRUE one-pitch warrior who lives and competes in the present and chooses to focus on the process over the outcome, and I will stay positive in the face of adversity.

# ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

It is with sincere and deep appreciation that I, Brian M. Cain, acknowledge the support and guidance of all the coaches and players that have given me inside access into their programs, families, lives and experiences that have made me the mental conditioning coach that I am today.

There are so many people to thank that there are not enough pages in this book. I apologize ahead of time if you don't see your name here and are offended. Unfortunately, I know that will happen and you will call me on it. I can't wait...

I want to give special thanks to Dr. Ken Ravizza, my mentor at Cal State Fullerton and the author of *Heads-Up Baseball*. I came across this book on July 4, 2000, while shopping at a Barnes & Noble bookstore in Boston, Massachusetts, and it changed my life.

If you have not read this book, please do so. It can change your life as it changed mine.

I also want to thank Coach George Horton, who in the fall of 2002 took on a know-nothing graduate assistant from Vermont onto his staff at college baseball power Cal State Fullerton. What I learned from the players and staff in Titan Land will always be the foundation of my mental conditioning program, and I am forever in debt to you all for your shared experience.

Thanks also to Jim Schlossnagle and the TCU Horned Frog Baseball Family for bringing me into their program in April of 2006 and having me in ever since. I did not graduate from TCU,

but will always be a part of the Frog Family. Thank you for welcoming me with open arms.

And to the late, great Harvey Dorfman — thanks for creating the 200 Club. I am carrying the torch in your name.

# CONTENTS

**PREFACE**

**DEDICATION**

**ACKNOWLEDGMENTS**

**CONTENTS**

**FOREWORD BY MATT CARPENTER**

**AUTHOR'S NOTE**

**INTRODUCTION TO PEAK PERFORMANCE, MENTAL  
CONDITIONING AND THE MENTAL GAME OF BASEBALL**

*CONSISTENCY IN EACH PITCH*

*WHAT MAKES THE BEST OF THE BEST*

*MENTAL CONDITIONING IS ESSENTIAL*

*THE POWER OF THE MIND*

*MENTAL CONDITIONING FOR BASEBALL*

*THE POWER OF BELIEFS*

*COACHES' BUILT-IN EXCUSE: NOT HAVING A MENTAL CONDITIONING  
SYSTEM*

*EXCUSE EXTERMINATOR IN YOUR HANDS*

*MENTAL TOUGHNESS IS A SKILL SET*

*THE 90%/10% SHIFT*

*CAIN'S BLUEPRINT FOR EXCELLENCE*

*THE GOAL OF THE BOOK IN YOUR HANDS*

*ONE PITCH/DAY AT A TIME 10-WEEK PRIDE PROGRAM FOR BASEBALL*

*CLIMBING THE MOUNTAIN OF EXCELLENCE*

*ONE STEP TO THE SUMMIT – STAY & YOU DIE*

*WHAT IS YOUR SUMMIT?  
THREESTEPS TO ACCOMPLISHING ANYTHING  
ONE PITCH/DAY (TODAY) AT A TIME  
INTRODUCTION REVIEW*

## **CHAPTER #1 TAKING PRIDE IN BASEBALL AND CLIMBING TO THE SUMMIT OF THE MOUNTAIN OF EXCELLENCE**

*RISE AND GRIND  
WHAT ARE YOUR PROGRAM CORE VALUES & CHAMPIONSHIP CULTURE?  
DIFFERENT VALUES FOR DIFFERENT TIMES  
APPLYING CORE VALUES TO LIFE  
SUCCESS LEAVES CLUES  
SURROUND YOURSELF WITH BETTER STUDENTS  
DAILY GOALSETTING & TIME PRIORITIZATION  
THREE STEPS TO PERFORMANCE IMPROVEMENT  
INSTANT AWARENESS  
SELF-ASSESSMENT: STOP – START – CONTINUE  
SIMPLE VS. EASY  
THE NEXT 90 FEET  
DESTINATION DISEASE  
REFUSE THE URGE TO BE AVERAGE  
START YOUR JOURNEY WITH ONE STEP  
IF IT IS TO BE, IT IS UP TO ME  
CHAPTER #1 REVIEW*

## **CHAPTER #2 PRESENT-MOMENT FOCUS ONE PITCH AT A TIME**

*VALUE THIS PITCH & THIS DAY  
THE 30-SECOND DRILL  
FEEL THE PULSE OF THE GAME  
HOCUS-POCUS OR FOCUS-REFOCUS  
WATCH OUT FOR FISH HOOKS  
USING CONCENTRATION GRIDS*

*ONE NUMBER. ONE PITCH AT A TIME  
MEASUREMENT = MOTIVATION  
CHAPTER #2 REVIEW*

### **CHAPTER #3 PROCESS OVER OUTCOME**

*UNLEARN WHAT YOU HAVE LEARNED  
THE LAW OF AVERAGES  
THE BEST TEAM NEVER WINS  
WHY UPSETS HAPPEN  
CONTROL WHAT YOU CAN CONTROL  
BASEBALL AND THE CONTROLLABLES  
APE  
MY GOAL MUST BE IN MY CONTROL  
EXECUTE QUALITY PITCHES  
FOCUS ON PUTTING TOGETHER QUALITY AT-BATS  
CREATING AND USING YOUR PERFORMANCE ABC'S  
THE BEST COACHES FOCUS ON THE PROCESS  
THERE ARE NO LITTLE THINGS  
KEEP YOUR LOWS HIGH AND YOUR HIGHS LOW  
DEVOTE YOURSELF TO THE PROCESS  
CHAPTER #3 REVIEW*

### **CHAPTER #4 POSITIVE MENTALITY**

*THE PROPHECY OF THOUGHT  
THE SCIENCE OF STAYING POSITIVE  
POSITIVE THINKING IS NOT ENOUGH  
THE STORY OF ROGER BANNISTER  
DEFEATING LIMITING BELIEFS  
THE IMPORTANCE OF ROGER BANNISTER  
SELF-IMAGE OF EXCELLENCE  
INTRODUCTION TO SELF-TALK  
HARNESS YOUR SELF-TALK*



*FOCUS ON WHAT YOU WANT VS. WANT TO AVOID – THE PINK ELEPHANT*

*CONFIDENCE CONDITIONING STATEMENTS*

*CONFIDENCE CONDITIONING GUIDELINES*

*TIPS FOR WRITING EFFECTIVE CONFIDENCE CONDITIONING STATEMENTS*

*SAMPLE CONFIDENCE CONDITIONING STATEMENTS*

*PERFORMANCE CONFIDENCE CONDITIONING STATEMENTS*

*SAMPLE PERFORMANCE STATEMENTS*

*THE CONFIDENCE RESUME AND LIST OF WINS*

*SOURCES OF CONFIDENCE*

*KEEP YOUR CONFIDENCE HONEST*

*FAILURE IS POSITIVE FEEDBACK*

*THE THREE MAGIC LETTERS – YET*

*POSITIVE ENERGY IS CONTAGIOUS*

*GET BIG*

*SELF-TALK – FINAL THOUGHTS*

*REALISTIC POSITIVITY*

*CHAPTER #4 REVIEW*

## **CHAPTER #5 CHAMPIONSHIP PREPARATION**

*MENTAL PREPARATION*

*GAME-LIKE PRACTICE*

*REWARDED BEHAVIOR = REPEATED BEHAVIOR*

*STRATEGIES FOR GAME-LIKE PRACTICE*

*PROCESS-BASED SCORING SYSTEM*

*EXTRA EFFORTS OF EXCELLENCE*

*PRACTICE MAKES PERMANENT*

*PAY ATTENTION TO DETAIL*

*BIT BY AN ELEPHANT?*

*PERFORMANCE INTENSITY*

*BE QUICK, BUT DO NOT HURRY*

*THE “STEP UP” HAPPENS EVERYDAY*

*MEASUREMENT = MOTIVATION*  
*THE POWER OF TIME*  
*RECORD PROGRESS*  
*HOW TO KEEP A PEAK PERFORMANCE BASEBALL JOURNAL*  
*DEVELOP AWARENESS*  
*GET IT OUT OF YOUR HEAD AND ON PAPER*  
*CREATE A ROUTINE FOR WRITING*  
*SAMPLE QUESTIONS TO WRITE ABOUT*  
*TRUST YOUR PREPARATION*  
*CHAPTER #5 REVIEW*

## **CHAPTER #6 PERFORMANCE ROUTINES HOW YOU PLAY ONE PITCH AT A TIME**

*PRE-GAME & POST-GAME ROUTINES*  
*IN-GAME ROUTINES*  
*CIRCLE OF FOCUS*  
*VERBALIZING YOUR FINAL THOUGHT*  
*DRILLS FOR FINAL THOUGHTS*  
*SUPERMAN SEGMENTATION AND SEPARATION*  
*MOVE THROUGH THE HOURGLASS*  
*WHEN IS THE GLADIATOR READY FOR BATTLE?*  
*FOCAL POINTS, DEEP BREATHS, SELF-CONTROL*  
*TAKE A DEEP BREATH*  
*ROUTINE PERFORMANCE REVIEW*  
*MAKE IT ROUTINE*  
*CHAPTER #6 REVIEW*

## **CHAPTER #7 RECOGNIZE, RELEASE, REFOCUS**

*RECOGNIZING YOUR SIGNAL LIGHTS*  
*SIGNAL LIGHTS FOR BASEBALL EXPLAINED*  
*CAUSES OF YELLOW & RED LIGHTS*  
*THREE WAYS TO RECOGNIZE YOUR SIGNAL LIGHTS*  
*GREEN LIGHTS – THE CAT MENTALITY*

GREEN LIGHTS – SELF-TALK  
GREEN LIGHTS – PHYSICAL FEELINGS  
GREEN LIGHTS – SITUATIONS  
RED & YELLOW LIGHTS  
RED/YELLOW LIGHTS – SELF-TALK  
RED/YELLOW LIGHTS – PHYSICAL FEELINGS  
RED/YELLOW LIGHTS – SITUATIONS  
SIGNAL LIGHTS = PERFORMANCE CHANGE  
INVERTED U OF SIGNAL LIGHTS  
PERFORMANCE ROUTINES  
RELEASE  
RELEASE YOUR MENTAL BRICKS  
EXAMPLES OF IN-GAME RELEASES  
FLUSH IT  
REFOCUS ON THE NEXT PLAY  
SO WHAT, NEXT PITCH! MENTALITY  
REFOCUS SIGN  
THE RECOGNIZE – RELEASE – REFOCUS CYCLE  
A REALISTIC LOOK AT “THE ZONE”  
KNOW YOUR 4R CYCLE  
SHADOW WORK  
CHAPTER #7 REVIEW

## **CHAPTER #8 RESPONSE-ABILITY**

MAN FREEZES TO DEATH – LACK OF RESPONSE-ABILITY  
MAN OVERCOMES HELL ON EARTH – RESPONSE-ABILITY  
EVENT + RESPONSE = OUTCOME  
THE HUMAN PAUSE  
EMOTION CLOUDS REALITY  
RAVIZZA’S RULES OF CONTROL  
PRAYER, PRIMAL, PERFECT?  
TRAIN YOUR RESPONSE-ABILITY  
CHAPTER #8 REVIEW

## **CHAPTER #9 RELAXATION, RECOVERY & MENTAL IMAGERY**

*THE ABILITY TO RELAX IS INSIDE YOU*

*THE CALMING OF CAIN*

*MAXIMIZING OXYGEN IN THE OCTAGON*

*RELAXED INTENSITY – CONTROLLED RAGE*

*RELAX FOR RESULTS*

*RELAXATION IS A SKILL ANYONE CAN DEVELOP*

*THE 5-4-3-2-1 RELAXATION/FOCUS EXERCISE*

*TWO TYPES OF BREATHING*

*SCRIPT FOR THE 5-4-3-2-1 RELAXATION SESSION*

*CONTROL THE ENVIRONMENT*

*CONTROL YOURSELF*

*CONDITIONING THE RELAXATION RESPONSE*

*RELAXATION IN THE RECOVERY PROCESS*

*RECOVERY PROCESS*

*THE MAGIC 20-MINUTE WINDOW OF RECOVERY*

*DISCIPLINE IS THE KEY TO RECOVERY*

*ONE-THIRD OF YOUR LIFE – INVEST IN A BED*

*POWER SLEEP*

*10 TIPS FOR SOUND SLEEPING*

*OLYMPIC SLEEP TRICKS*

*CAIN'S EXPENSIVE EXPERIENCE ON RECOVERY*

*YOGA AS A MENTAL CONDITIONING EXERCISE*

*RE-CENTER YOURSELF*

*MENTAL IMAGERY*

*HEAD REHEARSAL*

*THE MIND-BODY CONNECTION*

*YOU ARE "THE ARCHITECT" OF YOUR VISION*

*PHYSIOLOGICAL BENEFITS FROM PSYCHOLOGICAL STIMULUS*

*THE LEMON EXPERIMENT*

*A TASTE OF THE IMAGE*

*MENTAL REHABILITATION & MENTAL REPS*

*VIDEO ENHANCEMENT*

*PRACTICING ADVERSITY  
IMAGINE YOUR EXCELLENCE  
4 STEPS OF MENTAL IMAGERY  
MENTAL IMAGERY WHILE WATCHING FILM  
CHAPTER #9 REVIEW*

## **CHAPTER #10 INSPIRATION & MOTIVATION**

*MOTIVATION IS A DAILY DECISION  
THE DAILY DOMINATOR & BASEBALL  
ADVERTISE TO YOURSELF  
KEVIN YOUNG – OLYMPIC ADVERTISING  
SIGNS OF SUCCESS  
MAKE YOUR OWN SIGNS OF SUCCESS  
EXAMPLES OF SELF-ADVERTISEMENT  
BATHROOM MIRROR – DRY ERASE MARKER  
GOAL CARDS CARRIED ALL THE TIME  
ATHLETIC TAPE & WRIST BAND ADVERTISING  
VISION BOARDS  
WORK TO MAKE “IT” WORK  
WATCH OUT FOR THE NEGAHOLICS  
THE FOUR STAGES OF ACCEPTANCE  
MOTIVATIONAL MOTION PICTURES  
INSPIRE YOUR DAILY DOMINATION  
CHAPTER #10 REVIEW*

## **CONCLUSION PURSUING EXCELLENCE**

*EXCELLENCE IS A LIFESTYLE, NOT AN EVENT  
THREE DOORS & THE LAW OF AVERAGES  
THE EXCELLENCE OF BLUE ANGELS  
PURSUIT OF EXCELLENCE OVER PERFECTION  
A WORLD CHAMPION STATE OF MIND  
THE CLIMB IS THE DISCOVERY  
THE JOURNEY IS THE REWARD, THE DESTINATION IS THE DISEASE*

*SUCCESS = THE RESULT OF EXCELLENCE*  
*THE MENTAL CONDITIONS FOR EXCELLENCE*  
*CONCLUSION REVIEW*

**ABOUT THE AUTHORS WHO IS BRIAN M. CAIN?**

**WHO IS MATT MORSE?**

**ADDITIONAL RESOURCES**

**CONNECT WITH CAIN**

**CONCENTRATION GRIDS**

**NOTES PAGES**

# FOREWORD

BY MATT CARPENTER

I played high school baseball in Texas at Elkins High School, where my father was my head coach. I was always a baseball junkie—a guy who lived, breathed and slept the game. It was in my blood. My goal was always to get to the Major Leagues. I was a student of the game like many kids who grow up around the ballpark.

I had a good high school career and was a highly recruited player. I ended up choosing TCU as my college of choice and when I got to college, like many freshmen, I had a rude awakening. I was, for the first time in my life, in an environment where I was no longer the best player on the team. When you get to college baseball, everybody was the best player on his high school team.

Thankfully, after enduring adversity of many kinds, I was introduced to Brian Cain and the mental game of baseball. *Mental Conditioning for Baseball* is a must-read if you are striving for excellence, in baseball and in life.

If I had to talk about what the mental game means to me, my answer would be different now than when I first got introduced to the mental game during my first year of college. The first time Cain came to work with us at TCU I had no clue what it was about and, like most players, was skeptical at first. I heard what he was saying; I just wasn't listening.

I can honestly say that the mental game has changed my life. When you get to the point that I have gotten in my career, the mental game hits you like a ton of bricks. You realize that your



biggest enemy, your toughest battle in baseball, is yourself. It can be that way for players at any level, and especially when you get to the big leagues.

Everybody in this game is really good at what they do when you get into upper levels of college and any level of professional baseball. What separates the guys who make it and those that don't, and what I have seen separates a Minor Leaguer from a Major Leaguer, or even a college baseball player from a professional player, is the mental game. There is no question in my mind.

There's just no doubt that the mental game is the biggest part of succeeding at the highest level – being able to separate all the distractions, failure and negativity that are a part of what make baseball so great, training that voice inside of your head and the thoughts that get in a player's way from being great.

If you can become aware of when you start to beat yourself and can develop techniques like breathing, routines and releases, and positive self-talk to control your mind while you're playing this game, you're going to give yourself the best chance to be successful. That is what this book is all about.

If I have one piece of advice for a baseball player or team, and it really wouldn't matter what age, it is that the quicker you can learn the mental game, the better your career and life will be – and there is no better coach for you in the mental game than Brian Cain.

As an athlete, your physical tools will only take you so far. The mental game is something you've got to buy into to reach your true potential in this game and in life. I'm a living example of that.

If you do not currently believe in the mental game, maybe you will get lucky and you will have that eye-opening experience I did when I got hurt. You will see how important the mental game really is and you will change.

I hope this book helps coaches and players to get even more out of this great game and the greatest athletic experience available to young people in our country.

***Compete One Pitch At A Time!!!***

## AUTHOR'S NOTE

The intent of the author in writing this book in The Masters of the Mental Game Series was to create a comprehensive training program that could be used by baseball players and coaches as their blueprint for mental conditioning.

Mental conditioning and peak performance are all about searching within yourself to see what you are made of as a person. When you search within yourself, you learn that all the answers to life's questions and challenges live inside you. As you work your way through this book, you will learn what drives you by continuously reflecting upon your attitudes and actions around the game.

While reading this book, you will recognize the mental adjustments and changes you must make to access all the untapped and limitless potential that resides inside you. Tapping into every ounce of combined mental and physical potential is the art of peak performers, and the book will teach you this art form by coaching you to search from within.

This photo has impacted me since I first saw it in 2002 in a graduate school philosophy class with you know who... the Master of the Mental Game, Dr. Ken Ravizza.

For me this picture illustratively captures the concept of one's ability to search within oneself for the answers to life's questions. My life's mission is to help you uncover the excellence that lies within you and to coach you to develop the tools necessary to achieve your best in baseball and in life by taking a look inside and always playing the next pitch. ***Whether you play it like it is***

***your last pitch or like you will play this game forever is a great question for discussion.***



# INTRODUCTION

## INTRODUCTION TO PEAK PERFORMANCE, MENTAL CONDITIONING AND THE MENTAL GAME OF BASEBALL

"Baseball is 50% from the neck up."

*Ted Williams*  
*17-Time MLB All-Star*  
*"The Greatest Hitter Who Ever Lived"*

What is peak performance in baseball? What does it mean to give yourself the best chance for success and play your best when it means the most, each and every pitch or one pitch at a time?

What is mental conditioning and why is it essential to both understanding and answering those two questions?

This is your mental conditioning program for baseball, a 10-chapter/10-week training program that will give you the knowledge and techniques to unlock all of your performance potential on the diamond.

The Major League Baseball players, collegiate national champions, and high school state championship-winning programs I have worked with have all experienced one thing in common: ***As you elevate to higher levels of competition in baseball, success becomes less about the physical skills and more about your mental game.***

This truth is essential to acknowledging and appreciating the importance of mental conditioning. The more you think about it, the more obvious it becomes. At the highest levels of competition, everyone has the physical skills to be successful or else they would not be competing at that level. Talent is just not enough. If it were, every 1st round pick in the Major League Baseball Draft would make it to the Major Leagues, but less than half of them ever do.

Thus, on top of developing the physical skills to compete at the highest level, coaches and athletes must devote more time to the development of their mental game that will allow them to perform consistently at their best.

To further emphasize the importance of mastering the mental game, there is a simple two-word sentence to convey the significance of mental conditioning as it relates to baseball: ***Consistency wins.***

"Consistent behavior gets consistent performance."

***Harvey Dorfman***  
***Author of The Mental Game of Baseball***

## **CONSISTENCY IN EACH PITCH**

Consistency is the significant difference between the good and the great coaches, players and teams. Those who compete at the highest level on a consistent basis are the legendary and iconic figures in the game like Derek Jeter, Mickey Mantle, Nolan Ryan, Hank Aaron, Roger Clemens, Pete Rose and Cal Ripken, Jr.

Consistency is crucial to performing at a high level. This begins with your work ethic, as you must have the burning desire to

compete and win pitches so that you will do the things necessary to put yourself in a position to succeed.

As we will explore throughout this book, your performance routines will give you the best chance to lock in on each pitch and play with a relentless focus and concentration from the first pitch of the game until the game is over. Baseball is not a 9-inning game; it is a one-pitch game for 9 innings.

A good indicator that you are becoming a master of the mental game is to become aware that your laser-like focus is the same on every pitch, regardless of what you did in your previous at-bats or what the scoreboard says.

Hall of Fame pitcher Tom Seaver said: *"In baseball, my theory is to strive for consistency, not to worry about the numbers. If you dwell on statistics you get shortsighted; if you aim for consistency, the numbers will be there at the end."* A consistent focus on the process, putting together quality at-bats and executing quality pitches will give you your best chance to have success.

Anyone who has the physical prowess necessary to compete has the ability to perform at the highest levels of his ability once in a while, but it is the TRUE one-pitch warrior who stands out among everyone else – the one who brings his best every pitch and every time he puts the uniform on. That is the guy who will make the biggest impact on his team, in his school, and who will ultimately have the greatest career.

## **WHAT MAKES THE BEST OF THE BEST**

Demanding the best possible performance from your body is a characteristic of all great athletes. However, physical development to your peak potential does not come cheap.



The most competitive athletes invest significant amounts of time and energy into the many grueling hours it takes to train their bodies for performance at the highest levels of baseball. The off-season workouts of Hall of Famer Nolan Ryan and current Major League All-Stars like Bryce Harper, Dustin Pedroia and Chris Davis are something you will want to research on YouTube and use as motivation if you want to get the most out of your career.

Derek Jeter once said, *“There may be people that have more talent than you, but there’s no excuse for anyone to work harder than you do.”*

During an MLB playoff game years ago, I had the great pleasure to see Jeter’s laser-like preparation in action. As he was going through his pre-at-bat routine in the on-deck circle, timing up the pitcher and tracking pitches, the pitch was thrown up and in at the hitter at the plate, causing him to fall backwards out of the way. Simultaneously, Jeter fell to the ground in the on-deck circle. What an excellent example of a guy who is locked in and able to play at such a high level! Derek Jeter is an example of a guy who consistently does things the right way to put himself in a position to succeed.

## **MENTAL CONDITIONING IS ESSENTIAL**

The greatest players and teams in the game of baseball are aware of something that you might not realize: ***if you want to be the best of the best, doing the physical training is simply not enough.***

Dave Serrano, current head baseball coach at the University of Tennessee and former national championship-winning pitching coach at Cal State Fullerton (2004), told me once that belief in the

mental aspects of the game is what separates good programs from the great ones.

*Serrano said this about his 2004 National Champion squad: "I think that the Cal State Fullerton National Championship team in 2004 was not the most talented team in the country, but we were the most mentally prepared team that year. The mental preparation that goes into getting ready for a practice, a game or a season is the same type of preparation that these athletes will have to do when they are done playing and are out working in the real world. Like in baseball, in the real world success often finds the one who has prepared the most."*

Champions know that mental conditioning is essential in order to develop a psychological edge over their greatest competitors and give them the confidence to compete at a high level.

The greatest competitors understand that peak performance occurs only when the body and the mind are working together to maximize their performance potential. Your greatest performances to this day have come when your psychology and physiology are aligned. Thus, the best of the best know that mental conditioning is as vital to their success as physical conditioning.

## **THE POWER OF THE MIND**

The power of the mind is as miraculous as it is incomprehensible. Studies have continued for years, and we are still miles away from truly understanding the full capabilities of the human brain. Countless examples of the "mind over matter" type of experience have been documented over time.

There are incredible examples of prisoners of war being released and performing amazing physical feats that they had practiced mentally during their detentions.

One such example is of a POW who came out of exile having visualized playing golf every day. By the time he was free and stepped onto a golf course, he lowered his golf game by ten strokes. Upon his release, another POW who practiced mental conditioning became a competent guitarist by teaching himself the guitar through repetitive visualization processes, despite only having played the instrument minimally before.

There are endless miraculous stories similar to these, and it is safe to say that even though neurological function is not as well understood as the physiological, no one is prepared to discount the human mind as the most powerful tool available in the world.

The good news is that even without understanding the scientific intricacies of the human mind, anyone can improve his mental toughness for baseball with a simple mental conditioning program and by doing simple exercises on a routine basis. You learn best in conditioning yourself to be the toughest mentally just like you do physically – by ***doing a little a lot, not a lot a little.***

## **MENTAL CONDITIONING FOR BASEBALL**

Mental conditioning for baseball is the process of developing mental toughness, by which an individual exercises and develops the awareness to control his mental state in order to control his behavior. My mentor Ken Ravizza taught us as his students that ***you must be in control of yourself before you can control your performance on the field*** – and gaining self-control in the game of baseball is essential to your success. ***Gaining self-control is***

***largely related to your ability to take a breath pre-pitch and control the voice inside of your head.***

In dividing the two words, mental relates to the mind, while conditioning means to train oneself to behave in a certain way or to accept certain circumstances that will happen in a game, such as an umpire missing a call, the other team putting together a big inning or you having to move on to the next pitch after making an error.

Mental conditioning is a process similar to how you would physically condition your body in the weight room. When you lift weights infrequently, you don't get any stronger; but when you lift weights consistently, the timely repetition will make you stronger. Mental toughness is developed the same way, by doing a little a lot.

Mental conditioning gives you the techniques to develop control over the beliefs in your mind. Beliefs (both positive and negative) shape our behavior, create our experiences, and determine our results.

## **THE POWER OF BELIEFS**

Philosophers and spiritual leaders have been preaching the power of beliefs for centuries, while scientists have been conducting research on how the mind works for decades. Pioneers in sport psychology – such as Ken Ravizza and Harvey Dorfman, who worked with major league teams, collegiate national champions and MLB All-Stars – were among the first in our culture to recognize the practical application of positive affirmation training, visualization and the implications of mental conditioning for their performance. So many of the limits in our

life are put there by our own thoughts and imagination and can be removed and destroyed with proper mental conditioning.

Baseball coaches have realized that they could dramatically improve their players' confidence, resilience in the face of adversity and their on-field performance reliability by integrating positive confidence conditioning statements and mental imagery into their daily training regimens.

Peak performance and success strategist Tony Robbins says, *"Beliefs have the power to create and the power to destroy."* Many of your beliefs are not decided consciously but are formed based on previous experiences you've had. If these beliefs do not get you excited about your life and the future ahead of you, you must begin conditioning your mind and body with beliefs that support you along your pursuit of excellence.

The goal of this book is to give you the tools to develop your mental game, shatter limiting beliefs, develop the confidence and consistency needed to play your best one pitch at a time, and give yourself the best chance to win on the scoreboard and, more importantly, in life.



#### **CAIN'S COACHING POINT:**

**The mental conditioning skills you will learn to perform at your best in baseball will also help you to perform at your best in life when your baseball playing days are over. Great coaches recognize this and realize the important duty they have to train young men to be successful in life through the game of baseball.**

#### **COACHES' BUILT-IN EXCUSE: NOT HAVING A MENTAL CONDITIONING SYSTEM**

It is an unfortunate reality that many baseball programs leave mental toughness to chance. Many coaches think that their players will either figure it out or they won't – that their players either have it together between the ears or they do not. Many coaches think players are born mentally tough or mentally weak. This old-school thinking is actually an excuse for not knowing how to train and develop mental toughness in their baseball players.

These coaches believe there is nothing they as coaches can do to help enhance the athlete's mental toughness other than tough physical conditioning, and yet they will agree that performing at your best when it means the most is as much about the six inches between your ears as it is the six feet below them.

This coaching mentality fails to recognize that developing a strong mental game has just as much, if not more, significant value to performance on the field than developing a strong physical game.

## **EXCUSE EXTERMINATOR IN YOUR HANDS**

Until now, mental toughness training for baseball has been largely left to chance by many programs that have not made the investment of bringing in a peak performance coach, reading *Heads-Up Baseball* or going through my PRIDE Personal Responsibility In Daily Excellence program.

In this book, you will learn the importance of focusing on the ***present moment*** and will gain a true understanding of what it means to have a ***process over outcome*** approach, a ***positive attitude*** and ***performance preparation routines***, along with the ***discipline*** and ***dedication*** necessary to achieve your baseball and

personal goals, regardless of adversity and the failures you will face.

## **MENTAL TOUGHNESS IS A SKILL SET**

Mental toughness is simply a skill set that can be taught, developed, and continuously improved just like your physical game of baseball.

Mental conditioning is strength and conditioning for the six inches between your ears that control the six feet below them. Having a mental conditioning system is essential to playing your best when it means the most, ***one pitch at a time*** and ***giving yourself the best chance for success***. Mental conditioning will give you a skill set to be successful in baseball and, more importantly, successful in life.

"Baseball is 90% mental – the other half is physical."

***Yogi Berra***  
***3-Time American League MVP***  
***World Series Champion Manager***

## **THE 90%/10% SHIFT**

Whether or not coaches and athletes understand the complete significance of mental conditioning, most coaches and athletes I have worked with will agree that training for baseball games is 90% physical and 10% mental. They acknowledge that a noticeable shift occurs when the first pitch is thrown. In the heat of competition they acknowledge that performance becomes 90% mental and 10% physical. This is called the 90%/10% shift to give athletes and coaches an illustrative taste of how valuable mental conditioning is when it is time to put the uniform on and compete.

The reality is that there should be no shift. Mental conditioning should be integrated into physical conditioning and every aspect of baseball preparation. It should be 100% mental and physical conditioning combined – one is never complete without the other.

This book will give you a system for training your mental game and for unlocking your true potential. As you read this manual and develop your mental toughness, think about it as going to the gym to do strength and conditioning for your brain instead of your body. This book is your “Mind Gym.”

## **CAIN’S BLUEPRINT FOR EXCELLENCE**

I always get the question, “Brian, when you work with the top baseball programs and professional athletes, what do you teach?”

What I teach them is the same mental conditioning program that you will learn – about exactly how to play your best when it means the most, by teaching you how to:

- Live in the present moment and compete one pitch at a time.
- Act differently than how you feel and start having good and “bad” days and good “bad” pitches.
- Focus on the process over the outcome.
- Identify what you can control and what you cannot.
- Have your own personal and program philosophy and core values for baseball and life.
- Challenge your limiting beliefs and your perspective.



- Stay positive in the face of adversity – and baseball is a game of adversity.
- Develop preparation and performance routines for consistent high-level baseball performance.
- Take responsibility for your performance and life.
- Relax, recover, and gain control of your thoughts, feelings, and emotions before the next pitch and also in life.
- Recognize your signal lights and develop the awareness to win the next pitch and win the day.
- Release negative thoughts and refocus back to the next pitch when you get distracted and when adversity hits.
- Move from intelligence and thinking to trusting, action and positive results.
- Use mental imagery to help you prepare and be more confident for your next game and next pitch.
- Inspire, lead and motivate yourself to make the impossible possible.
- Develop the dedication and self-discipline that you need to power through the grind it takes to succeed.
- Take action steps to make excellence a lifestyle, not an event.

These are the fundamentals of mental toughness and represent the blueprint I use when working with any baseball coach, player or program to develop Personal Responsibility In Daily Excellence (PRIDE).

## **THE GOAL OF THE BOOK IN YOUR HANDS**

The goal of the book in your hands is that you learn how to control your mind so you can successfully direct your body to achieve the level of baseball and life performance necessary to become a champion.



### **CAIN'S COACHING POINT:**

**If you want to win a championship, you must first become a champion. Using the skills taught in this book will make you a champion on the field and in life.**

**Everyone wants more. More from themselves, their teammates, their coaches. If you want more, you must become more, and this book will give you a process to become more.**

## **ONE PITCH/DAY AT A TIME 10-WEEK MENTAL CONDITIONING PROGRAM FOR BASEBALL**

This book is written in a 10-week program format for building mental toughness for baseball, a little a lot each week.

We will focus on two critical principles of success:

1. Playing one pitch/one day at a time.
2. Developing PRIDE – Personal Responsibility In Daily Excellence.

The PRIDE acronym serves as the backbone of this mental conditioning system for baseball, reminding you of the

significance of making excellence a daily pursuit for which you are personally responsible and accountable.

The outcome goal is that you become a peak performer on the field and in life. Before you can become a peak performer, you must first understand that excellence is a lifestyle, not an event, and is defined as being at your best when it means the most, which is every day and in baseball, every pitch.



### **CAIN'S COACHING POINT:**

**Excellence is being at your best when it means the most – every pitch and every day.**

For a baseball player, being your best when it means the most is every single pitch. Every rep in practice. Every lift in the off-season. If you are a student, it is every class. As legendary football coach Vince Lombardi said: *“The quality of a person’s life is in direct proportion to their commitment to excellence, regardless of their chosen field of endeavor.”*

Regardless of your performance arena, taking PRIDE is having an overall system for success and ***being able to describe what you do as a process.***

### **CLIMBING THE MOUNTAIN OF EXCELLENCE**

Climbing The Mountain of Excellence is a symbolic concept used throughout this book. The summit of the mountain represents your goal – a state or national championship, making it to the big leagues or becoming an all-star. The mountain represents the obstacle one must conquer to reach it – yourself and your season. (Remember in baseball your opponents are yourself and the game.) The journey up The Mountain of Excellence marks the

self-improvement endeavor an individual must take to become a peak performer.



### **CAIN'S COACHING POINT:**

**If you want more success on the field, you must become more off the field. Winning a championship is a by-product of becoming a champion.**

This book employs the concept of The Mountain of Excellence to demonstrate that the achievement of performance excellence is a long, but worthwhile, journey.

Similar to mountain climbing, baseball is about training to conquer one mountain at a time. Once that mountain has been climbed, it is time to return to base camp and set your sights on the next mountain's summit and get to work. Each mountain is scaled one step at a time. It does not matter if you are climbing Mt. Everest, Mt. Greylock or the local hill in your town – all mountains are summited one step at a time and all baseball games are won one pitch at a time. Base camp is your practice field, hitting facility and weight room. The next mountain to climb is your next game or your next workout.

### **ONE STEP TO THE SUMMIT – STAY & YOU DIE**

Mountain climbing also serves as a great activity to compare with baseball because when a team scales a mountain, they cannot simply live on the summit: They must return to base camp, regroup and climb another mountain, or their climbing career is over. Similarly in baseball, an individual or team cannot win a championship and be champions forever. They will forever be champions of that season, but as soon as the next season rolls around, the slate is swept clean and all of the opposition is ready to become title contenders. This forces the champions to start

the season anew in their quest for that season's championship, that climb's summit. Therefore, your time at the summit is only temporary.

Legendary LSU head baseball coach Skip Bertman took the Tigers to the College World Series 11 times in 18 seasons, winning 5 national championships.

Bertman clearly understood that you can't live on the summit in Omaha. You must get back on the horse and ride or you will die. I had the great opportunity to work with Skip on writing the book *Winning the Big One: Motivation and Teamwork You Can Use* and the accompanying DVD and CD. This is a MUST for coaches. Check it out at [www.BrianCain.com/Products](http://www.BrianCain.com/Products).



#### **CAIN'S COACHING POINT:**

**It is key that you give yourself a certain time frame to enjoy a win or lick your wounds from a loss, bad outing or bad atbat. Giving both a deadline where you reengage back into the moment and the next game gives you the best chance to prepare and perform consistently at your best. Some call this the "midnight rule" and force themselves to move on when the clock strikes midnight.**

Ultimately, there is no end to the pursuit of excellence, no one final summit to reach. Excellence is a constant journey that demands personal responsibility in your daily commitment. As you read this book, the use of the mountain climbing analogy will assist your understanding and application of the mental game as you strive to become more.

#### **WHAT IS YOUR SUMMIT?**

In reading this book, it is clear that your immediate Mountain of Excellence is conquering this book to understand how to transform yourself into a peak performer and achieve performance excellence to consistently play your best baseball. However, it is only by fully understanding the reasons for embarking on this journey and openly recognizing the larger mountain you desire to conquer that you will make the most of your personal growth and mental conditioning experience. Therefore, you must ***begin with the end in mind*** to give your journey a greater sense of purpose. You must know precisely where it is you want to end up and ***why*** you want to end up there, or you might find yourself climbing the wrong mountain – a mountain that your parents or someone else wanted you to climb, not the mountain you wanted to climb.

Think about your desired destination. Is it being the best baseball player on your team? Is it winning a state or national championship? Breaking a particular record? Getting the college scholarship or drafted into the MLB, or simply making the team? Whatever your journey, you must begin with the end in mind. You must have an outcome goal and a destination to start your journey.



**CAIN'S COACHING POINT:**

**What is The Mountain of Excellence you desire to climb and conquer? What is it you want to accomplish?**

---

---

**CAIN'S COACHING POINT:**

**Remember, you are allowed to climb more than one mountain, but should focus on one summit at a time.**



**Keeping your mind in the present moment, sticking with the process and staying positive will help you to better enjoy your journey and experience more success than if you mountain hop and pursue different summits during the day. Whatever mountain you are climbing at that time, focus on that specific summit. Be where you need to be when you need to be there, hike one step at a time, and play baseball one pitch at a time.**

"It is often said that the journey far outweighs the outcome. The championships are great – don't get me wrong. But it is another set of ships, relationships, that endure and last. That is what sport is all about – relationships, learning and giving it everything you have to become your very best you are capable of becoming."

***Skip Bertman  
Former LSU Baseball Head Coach  
5-Time NCAA National Champion***

### **THREE STEPS TO ACCOMPLISHING ANYTHING**

Most people have heard the saying "You can do anything if you set your mind to it" but are skeptical of deeming it a universal truth. Well, I am one of those people who believe that if you truly desire something, why not set your mind to it and give everything you've got to achieve it? To make your dreams become a reality you must pursue your goals in an effective and realistic manner. This is why peak performers must understand and effectively utilize the three-step process to accomplishing anything, both in baseball and in life.

The three steps that give you the best chance to accomplish anything are these:

1. Make a commitment to your goal by writing it down and putting it where you can see it on a daily basis.

2. Make it public and share your goal with your teammates, friends, family, accountability partners and the people in your inner circle.

3. Work with a relentlessly positive energy on a daily basis to make it happen – the type of relentlessly positive energy that can only be found when you are pursuing something you are passionate about and have a reason why. So be very selective about your goals.

These three steps provide you with the strategy that gives you the best opportunity to accomplish anything you desire.

As you proceed on your journey through this book, utilize these steps to accomplish your process-based goals along the way. This is why you identified and established your mountain in the previous section to facilitate the first step of this process in your personal journey. It is your job to facilitate step number two, and it is the purpose of this book to provide the information and knowledge to facilitate step number three so that you may conquer the mountain and reach its summit.

### **ONE PITCH/DAY (TODAY) AT A TIME**

Now that you have established your mountain and know the three principal steps to reaching the summit, it may still appear to be an intimidating mountain to climb. Do not be daunted by your destination. You chose it because you want it – because a fiery passion within you burns and yearns to shed its light on the snow-capped pinnacle of your mountain. You will conquer your Mountain of Excellence; it all comes down to taking the first step and then another and another until you reach the top. Have patience in the process and enjoy the journey.



## INTRODUCTION REVIEW

- ❑ In baseball and in life, consistency wins.
- ❑ If you want to be the best of the best, doing the physical conditioning is not enough. You must do both physical and mental conditioning.
- ❑ Peak performance occurs only when the body and the mind are working together to maximize their performance potential.
- ❑ The power of the mind is as miraculous as it is incomprehensible.
- ❑ Mental conditioning is the process of developing the mental toughness skill set by which an individual exercises and develops influence over his mental state in order to control his physical behavior.
- ❑ Mental toughness is taught, developed and continuously improved upon, just like going to the weight room for your physical toughness.
- ❑ Mental conditioning should be integrated into physical conditioning and every aspect of baseball performance. You do not separate the mental and physical conditioning; you do them together.
- ❑ PRIDE = Personal Responsibility In Daily Excellence
- ❑ Excellence is being at your best when it means the most – every single day.
- ❑ The Mountain of Excellence represents the obstacle one must conquer to reach his outcome goal at the summit.
- ❑ The journey up The Mountain of Excellence is a self-transformative endeavor an individual must take to become a

peak performer.

- ❑ One cannot live at the summit; you have to keep hiking or you will die.
- ❑ There is no end to the pursuit of excellence. You never reach excellence; you are always in pursuit.
- ❑ Peak performance is a constant journey pursuing excellence and demanding personal responsibility in this daily pursuit.
- ❑ Choose your Mountain of Excellence you desire to climb and conquer.
- ❑ Remember, you are allowed to climb more than one mountain, but should focus on one summit at a time.

# CHAPTER #1

## TAKING PRIDE IN BASEBALL AND CLIMBING TO THE SUMMIT OF THE MOUNTAIN OF VOLLEYBALL EXCELLENCE

"Every day is a new opportunity. You can build on yesterday's success or put its failures behind and start over again. That's the way life is, with a new game every day, and that's the way baseball is.

**Bob Feller**  
**Former MLB Pitcher**

### **RISE AND GRIND**

Each morning when you wake up, a new climb up The Mountain of Excellence begins. Every day it is time to rise and grind. In your backpack are your experiences and what you have learned on previous journeys from past days. Make your journey by focusing on one day and one step at a time.

The importance of taking one day at a time cannot be overstated. The baseball season can cover a rather long period of time, so the focus must be on dominating the present moment with focus on the next 90 feet. This is a much more manageable concept for the players and coaches alike. You know your desired destination – the summit of your mountain – but you must familiarize and condition yourself with the fundamental principles necessary for survival. This must be done on a daily basis. Start by breaking the journey down into smaller chunks – summer ball, fall practice, preseason workouts, spring training, regular season, and finally –

postseason. ***It is the start that stops most people, and the start of your day is the most important part of your day.***

As any mountain climber preparing to ascend Mount Everest can attest, one must gradually build the stamina and conditioning for the long trek to the summit. Putting in the time and establishing mental endurance is of high importance, so that you are prepared for the treacherous conditions you are bound to face on your long journey. ***Embrace the adversity*** and practice the mindset you need to succeed one day at a time to reach your summit.

## **WHAT ARE YOUR PROGRAM CORE VALUES AND CHAMPIONSHIP CULTURE?**

As you set your sights on the summit of The Mountain of Excellence, you must begin to prepare for your journey by establishing core values and a championship culture. A core value is a personal belief reinforced by how you spend your time and treat other people. You must identify your personal and program core values in order to realize what you stand for both now and in the future. These core values will provide an internal guide to direct you on your journey and will reflect how you approach your pursuit of excellence. These values will provide your safety net for when you fall. And make no mistake – when you hike the mountains that we will, you will fall. ***Falls are to be embraced, not avoided.***



### **CAIN'S COACHING POINT:**

**Reflect upon the following question: How do you want to be remembered when your last journey is over? What do you want people to say about you at the celebration of your life as a player/coach who was committed to the pursuit of excellence? As you**

**think about this, write down the core values you will strive to embody over the course of this season and how you want to be remembered. Answering the question of how you want to be remembered when your life's journey is complete will help provide clarity to what is most significant to you and how you will want to begin living your life today.**

---

---

---

As you reflect upon this big question, consider how your core values transfer to your baseball performance. Think about how you would like people to acknowledge you and your contributions to your sport and your team over the duration of the current season.

## **DIFFERENT VALUES FOR DIFFERENT TIMES**

The reason we transition focus to a set of core values for the present (off-season into the season or vice versa) and not for an entire lifetime is that a lifetime is a daunting time frame. A lifetime is too difficult to imagine and therefore presents an intimidating mountain to climb.

***It is important to focus on how you want to live over the course of the season in order to focus on how you must live in the present moment.*** Establishing this perspective will make climbing your mountain appear much more manageable.

Once you have identified what you want people to say about you and you have reflected this in your core values, start living by them "Today." These core values are fundamental principles that should be integrated into the routines of your daily life. If you are not regularly practicing these values, you will end up losing your way to the summit.



### **CAIN'S COACHING POINT:**

**The secrets of success are hidden in the routines of our daily lives. You will be as successful as your routines allow you to be on a daily basis. Start establishing routines and habits of excellence.**

### **APPLYING CORE VALUES TO LIFE**

When you look to the future, you may think it is difficult to have a commitment to excellence integrity for your entire life or to be responsible for your entire life or to have self-discipline for your entire life. This may be true, but you CAN live with a commitment to excellence, responsibility and self-discipline "Today." With this perspective, you have an appropriately sized mountain to climb "Today." And then, do it all over again when tomorrow becomes "Today."

To begin applying core values to baseball and your life, choose one or two and focus on them for a set period of time.



### **CAIN'S COACHING POINT:**

**I recommend working on your specific core values for 1-5 weeks. Research shows it takes 21-28 days for positive personal change to occur with a focused plan and accountability partner. Right now, look over your core values and ask yourself, "How do I apply my core values in my life at this present time?"**

Imagine it is the month of June and one of your core values for June is being relentless. As you commit yourself to working on being relentless this month, think about the following:

How would I define relentless?

---

---

What does relentless look like in the different aspects of my life?

If I am an athlete or a coach, what does relentless look like in sport, school, conditioning and the community?

---

---

---

To provide myself a point of reference and to give me a chance at living that way, how do I identify specifically what it is to be relentless in those areas?

Answering all of these questions is significant to defining exactly what it is and how you plan on living this core value. If you specifically outline your core values, you give yourself the best chance for success in living them.

By establishing what it looks like for you to live your core values, you set yourself up for success. ***It is easier to act your way into thinking and feeling than it is to think and feel your way into action.***

Knowing what action you must take and how you will take it to become the new-and-improved version of yourself sets the stage for a successful journey up the mountain.

When establishing your core values, I suggest you focus on between one and three for a given period of time. Initially, setting more than three would be an overwhelming endeavor. Giving yourself a more narrowed focus will increase your chances for successful mastery of a particular core value. If you can focus on being relentless for the month of June, you are going to be relentless beyond June into July. You may work up to having three

or five core values over time. As with most anything, start small, get some wins under your belt, and then go bigger.

## **SUCCESS LEAVES CLUES**

Here is some insight into achieving a successful career in anything you do: ***Success leaves clues.*** If you want to be a millionaire, go hang out with people who are millionaires. If you hang out with people who are making \$50,000 a year and you tell them you want to make a million dollars a year, what are they going to do? They are going to laugh at you, because they do not see it as a reality. If you go hang around people who make a million dollars a year, you will get some ideas on how to make your first million.

The same rationale is true for baseball. You always hear coaches telling players, “If you want to get better, play with people who are better than you.” This is because when you play with better players, you begin to pick up the clues to their success. Imitation and adaptation to higher levels of competition will ultimately lead to performance improvement and success of your own.

“Associate yourself with men of good quality if you esteem your own reputation, for 'tis better to be alone than in bad company.”

***George Washington***

***1<sup>st</sup> President of The United States of America***

## **SURROUND YOURSELF WITH BETTER STUDENTS**

To further illustrate the importance of hanging out with the right crowd, I will share a personal story from high school. When I was a high school student, I was not great academically. I reached a point where I knew I needed to improve my grades to play college baseball. I made a self-improving adjustment in my life



and began surrounding myself with those who were academically more successful. I started to study with my teammates who excelled in the classroom and in a short period of time I became a better student. Rather than go play video games or watch TV, I would go to their houses or the library at Williams College in the town I grew up in, and shifted my focus to being the best I could possibly be. Excellence is a lifestyle, not an event, and this became apparent in all areas of my life.



### **CAIN'S COACHING POINT:**

**If you want more in a certain area of your life, you must become more. You become more by associating with those who are more than you in that area. You will become the average of the five people you associate with most. Pick wisely.**

I didn't feel like going to the library, but I went anyway. The best students had a pre-established discipline that I knew I needed to develop.

I began noticing their study habits, and I started to learn that there are techniques you can use that are very simple to help with memorization and knowledge acquisition. When I began to imitate them, I started to get better results.

Success is largely about discovering a winning formula and implementing the system that facilitates excellence. Mastering the mental game is no different. If you surround yourself with those devoted to performance excellence, your chances of achieving it will drastically improve. When you invest your time properly into a winning system in the pursuit of excellence, success will take care of itself.

"If you're bored with life – you don't get up every morning with a burning desire to do things – you don't have enough goals."

**Lou Holtz**  
**National Championship-Winning**  
**College Football Head Coach**

## DAILY GOAL SETTING & TIME PRIORITIZATION

Beyond the establishment of core values, daily goal setting and time prioritization are important for establishing the routine discipline necessary for peak performance. ***I used to call it time management, but have since learned that you will manage your time based on how you prioritize your time; therefore, time prioritization is one step before time management.***



### CAIN'S COACHING POINT:

There is only **ONE** factor among all the baseball players in the world who are competing for what you want. You all have only **86,400** seconds in a day. Most will spend time; you will **INVEST** time. If you are not efficient with your time, the competitors who are will pass you by. Learn to take control and advantage of your time, or your time will take control and advantage of you.

As an aspiring peak performer, you must find different ways to make the best investment of your time to accomplish the daily goals you set. Throughout this book, I will share with you techniques you can use to better invest your time. For example, a great technique for time prioritization is to take a dry erase marker and write on your bathroom mirror what you want to accomplish the next day. I once heard Marcus Luttrell, author of *The Lone Survivor*, talk about how he used this very technique.

I started doing this in college and have found it to be VERY effective. ***When you look in your mirror, you are not seeing who you are. You are seeing who you are working to become.***



You are in your bathroom frequently throughout the day and the writing on your mirror will remind you constantly of what you want to accomplish. It also provides an effective method of preparing for the next day. When you go to bed, you will be relaxed knowing you already have a jump-start on the next day. By simply preparing the night before, your daily goals will always be waiting for you on your mirror when you wake up.



### **CAIN'S COACHING POINT:**

**Champions prepare their day the night before. Be sure that you pack your bag; then lay out your clothes, breakfast and everything you need to start the next day with TOTAL DOMINATION before you go to bed.**

### **THREE STEPS TO PERFORMANCE IMPROVEMENT**

Whether it is practicing core values or prioritizing your time, peak performance is all about continuous personal development and necessary change. A key theme throughout this book is that if you want more, you must become more.

Championship-winning coaches and athletes know that they must first become champions of personal responsibility in daily excellence before winning championships. They also know this takes an understanding of how to make necessary adjustments to change their performance to attain successful results.

One of the most successful mental conditioning coaches was the late Harvey Dorfman, author of *The Mental Game of Baseball* and mental conditioning coach to some of the greatest athletes in the world. Having had the chance to ask Harvey the million dollar question (What do you know now that you wish you knew then?), he taught me that there are three essential steps you must follow if you want to make a performance improvement:

1. Develop an **awareness** of what needs to change.
2. Develop a **strategy** for change.
3. **Implement the strategy** with an accountability partner and assess yourself regularly so that the necessary performance change can occur.

Most athletes fall short of significant performance improvement because they either lack the awareness of what they need to change, do not formulate an effective strategy for the change, fail to facilitate the strategy to bring about the necessary change, or have a “YES” partner rather than an accountability partner who tells them the truth. Without this three-step system of performance change, an athlete can never achieve the necessary performance improvement to achieve excellence.

## **INSTANT AWARENESS**

Here's a prime example of the three steps of performance change:

I was working with a player who was 20 pounds overweight. I had the player wear a 20-pound backpack to help develop his awareness of what it felt like to be 20 pounds overweight, and also what it would feel like to lose the extra 20 pounds he was carrying.

He wore the backpack around campus all day and at the end of the day came back to see me. He took off the pack and said he was exhausted. I made him put the pack back on and we went to practice. About halfway through I had him take it off, and after practice I asked how it felt moving around without the pack on compared to how it felt with the pack off. He said it was like night and day.

I placed my hands on his shoulders, looked him in the eyes, and said: "When you shed that 20 pounds you told me you wanted to lose, you are going to feel this good every day. Think about how much better you are going to be." The light bulb went on. He got it. It was a great way to get him to have INSTANT AWARENESS.

This athlete went through an experience that immediately conveyed an awareness he would not have had otherwise. This experience demonstrated that, "When I lose the weight, I am going to feel like I do, right now, without that pack on." There is the awareness. Then we came up with a strategy for him to lose the weight that involved working with a sports nutrition coach named Jason Spector (@SpectorJason) who got him locked in on his macro nutrition numbers. He thus had a plan to follow and guess what... plans work!

Notice that the athlete did two things: made his goal public and implemented the established strategies with multiple accountability partners to assure success. Only you can make the necessary improvements; nobody else can make your performance change. It is absolutely essential that you hold yourself accountable to your goals, and the best method is making your goals public. As one of his accountability partners, I talked to him once a week about his goal. After a number of months, he dropped the 20 pounds, became a much better player, was stronger physically and mentally, and realized that with the right strategy and system he could accomplish anything. **SO CAN YOU!**

As exhibited through this example, the change begins with an awareness of what needs to change. Once this is accomplished, a strategy must be developed for the change to occur. Finally, the accomplishment of positive change for performance improvement begins to manifest through the implementation of the developed strategy and consistent assessment with your accountability partners. The three-step process to accomplishing anything, combined with the three steps of performance improvement, provides you with the fundamental mental conditioning tools to effectively and successfully utilize the material within this program.

### **SELF-ASSESSMENT: STOP – START – CONTINUE**

In order to further initiate your personal development and facilitate the accomplishment of your goals, you must assess yourself to build self-awareness. As an aspiring peak performer, you must assess your most recent performances to establish self-awareness of what you must improve in your pursuit of excellence. Take a look at your last three days. What are some

actions or behaviors that you are doing that you need to STOP in order to achieve the goals that you have set?



**CAIN'S COACHING POINT:**

**What I must STOP doing in order to achieve my goals:**

1) \_\_\_\_\_

2) \_\_\_\_\_

Now, I want you to write down what it is you must START doing to help you achieve your goals.



**CAIN'S COACHING POINT:**

**What I must START doing in order to achieve my goals:**

1) \_\_\_\_\_

2) \_\_\_\_\_

Now, I want you to write down what it is you must CONTINUE doing to help you achieve your goals.



**CAIN'S COACHING POINT:**

**What I must CONTINUE doing in order to achieve my goals:**

1) \_\_\_\_\_

2) \_\_\_\_\_

The Stop, Start, and Continue activity is a very simple process that ought to be frequently practiced to provide self-assessment and to keep you moving up your mountain. It is a simple activity to

keep yourself honest about your work effort, but it is often not performed enough.

## **SIMPLE vs. EASY**

It is here that I will take a moment to address an important distinction in both mental conditioning and performance in general. For any performer, it is important to be aware of a very significant distinction between the words “simple” and “easy.” Simple and easy are not synonymous. Just because something is simple in concept does not mean it is going to be easy to do. If all simple things were easy, everyone would perform their best each time out and no upsets would ever occur. There would be no reason to play the game on the field – you could play it on paper.

There are a lot of average people walking around who have excellence buried inside of them but are not trained or not willing to harness their hidden, untapped potential. As you read this book, you must consistently work to adopt and implement the simple practices and techniques that make a significant difference in performance.

## **THE NEXT 90 FEET**

Imagine you were to hike from base camp to the top of The Mountain of Excellence – the tallest mountain in the world. If you were to leave base camp at midnight, could you hike to the top of The Mountain of Excellence on the trail that takes you to the summit? The answer is a definitive “Yes.” It will be dark out, but you have the ability to hike the entire way up the mountain in complete darkness because of your headlamp. Your headlamp allows you to travel anywhere in the dark, because it illuminates the next 90 feet (**#Next90**) of the path. Therefore, by simply



focusing on the next 90 feet, it is possible to hike through the darkness to the summit.

When you are hiking the next 90 feet, animals may attack you. You may take a wrong turn, you may challenge Sasquatch with some beef jerky, and/or you may roll an ankle. These events symbolize the adversity you are sure to face on your journey, and they are all outside of your control. All you can do is ***embrace the adversity*** and do what is necessary to reach your destination.

## **DESTINATION DISEASE**

When metaphorically hiking up the mountain, the biggest obstacle we face is our obsession with the end result, the destination. This destination disease is representative of whatever end result you desire – the championship, the starting lineup, a particular stat line, the perfect season or the Hall of Fame. Remember that ***the destination is the disease and the journey is the reward.***

Excessive focus and time devoted to looking at the destination beyond the next 90 feet is a common illness. People set their goals too far out in front of them without understanding, creating and implementing a process to get there. By focusing on the outcome, people become stationary dreamers as opposed to advancing toward their goal, 90 feet at a time.

This is, quite simply, inaction versus action: the dichotomy between thinkers and doers. This is the condition of people counting down the days until that dream comes true as opposed to making the days count in a proactive and productive pursuit of that goal or dream. A dream without action will remain a dream, while a dream that motivates action has the opportunity to become a reality.

***Offensively, the game of baseball is about scoring runs by moving around the bases 90 feet at a time. Playing one pitch at a time requires you to focus only on what is right in front of you at that moment. When leading off an inning, it's the next 90 feet; on the mound it's the next 60 feet 6 inches. That distance is all that matters!***

As you proceed through each chapter of this book, remember to focus on the next 90 feet as opposed to the summit of your mountain. This will prevent you from being overwhelmed at times and will make the ascent appear more manageable. ***Keep the process over the outcome and the journey over the destination.***

## **REFUSE THE URGE TO BE AVERAGE**

As you start to apply the strategies in this book to your game and to your life, you will receive some criticism, and some people may make fun of you for your commitment to self-improvement and performance excellence. Do not listen to the voices of negativity, for they are the voices of the masses – they are the voices of the average.

“Walk away from the 97%. Don't use their vocabulary, excuses, and pattern of drift and neglect. Join the 3%.”

***Jim Rohn***  
***Motivational Speaker & Author***

Average people and average teams are the best of the worst and the worst of the best. Do not settle for average; strive for excellence and set your sights on the summit. Reach the pinnacle of success by climbing The Mountain of Excellence with a focused determination on your goals and with a dedication to personal responsibility in your daily excellence. ***As the inspirational***

***speaker Zig Ziglar said, "There are no traffic jams on the extra mile."***

## **START YOUR JOURNEY WITH ONE STEP**

The rest of this book is devoted to your 10-week journey into baseball excellence. The material within these chapters will give you the mental conditioning skills to establish your blueprint for excellence. View each chapter as if it is the next 90 feet and conquer the mountain that is this book. It is a journey that will begin during the fall or winter and hopefully culminate with a state/national championship or trip to the World Series. Regardless of when you start the journey, however, this program will provide you with the knowledge and skills to make the progress necessary to reach the summit of your mountain.

## **IF IT IS TO BE, IT IS UP TO ME**

Remember, YOUR OWNERSHIP of this program is what will make the difference. You can't just read the book. You must OWN THE BOOK. You must put this book into action.

The most powerful two-letter-word sentence in the English language summarizes what this journey is all about: *If it is to be, it is up to me.* Your success in baseball and in life is determined by a lot of factors, and no factor is more important than the person reading this right now... YOU!

It has been said that ***it is the start that stops most people.*** Do not wait. Get started. RIGHT NOW!

Remember, if you take the four middle letters out of "DoN'T WAit!" you get "**DO IT!**"

So don't wait, ***DO IT!*** Get started on your journey up The Mountain of Excellence, TODAY!

## CHAPTER #1 REVIEW

- ❑ PRIDE = Personal Responsibility In Daily Excellence
- ❑ Excellence is being at your best when it means the most – every single day and every pitch.
- ❑ The Mountain of Excellence represents the obstacle one must conquer to reach his outcome goal at the summit.
- ❑ The journey up The Mountain of Excellence is a self-transformative endeavor an individual must take to become a peak performer.
- ❑ One cannot live at the summit – you have to keep hiking or you will die.
- ❑ There is no end to the pursuit of excellence.
- ❑ Peak performance is a constant journey pursuing excellence, and demanding personal responsibility is this daily pursuit.
- ❑ Choose your Mountain of Excellence you desire to climb and conquer.
- ❑ Remember, you are allowed to climb more than one mountain, but should focus on one summit at a time.
- ❑ The Three Steps to Accomplishing Anything:
  1. Make a commitment to a goal.
  2. Make it public with an accountability partner.
  3. Work with a relentlessly positive energy today.
- ❑ Today is where we are, every day.
- ❑ A core value is a personal belief and virtue reinforced through a commitment to yourself and your team.

- ❑ Live your core values and demonstrate what it looks like to live them in your key areas.
- ❑ It is easier to act your way into thinking and feeling than it is to think and feel your way into action.
- ❑ Success leaves clues.
- ❑ Surround yourself with those who are better than you.
- ❑ Take advantage of your time or time is going to take advantage of you.
- ❑ The Three Steps of Performance Change:
  1. Awareness
  2. Strategy
  3. Implementation of the strategy
- ❑ Frequent self-assessment is essential to establish performance awareness.
- ❑ Simple and easy are not synonymous.
- ❑ Focus on the next 90 feet of the task at hand.
- ❑ A dream without action will remain a dream, while a dream that motivates action has the opportunity to become a reality.
- ❑ Do not settle for average – it is the best of the worst and worst of the best.
- ❑ It is the start that stops most people, so get started TODAY!

## CHAPTER #2

### PRESENT-MOMENT FOCUS ONE PITCH AT A TIME

“Taking an enemy on the battlefield is like a hawk taking a bird. Even though it enters into the midst of a thousand of them, it gives no attention to any bird other than the one it has first marked.”

*Yamamoto Tsunetomo*  
*18<sup>th</sup> Century Samurai Warrior*

#### VALUE THIS PITCH & THIS DAY

The famous samurai warriors of Japan were some of the world’s first masters of the mental game. They were taught to “live being true to the single purposefulness of the moment.” What the samurai understood very well is that the time is now and the place is here.

One of the biggest challenges in life and in becoming a master of your mental game is developing an appreciation for the value in the present and then effectively possessing the ability to channel your focus into this present moment, this day and THIS PITCH in baseball.

This mission focuses on the present, the first of the Five P’s of the PRIDE program. In this chapter you will develop an appreciation for the importance of the present, and you will learn how to develop your present-moment focus so you can compete one pitch at a time.

In the introduction, you learned about the mindset of peak performers. You started to identify your values and put your

focus on the plan as to how you will summit your mountain. You learned the importance of concentrating on the next 90 feet and the disciplined commitment to the process necessary to climb to the summit. As a committed athlete and someone who wants to develop his mental toughness, you must understand that ***you do not count the days – you make the days count.***

How do we actually make the days count? The first step is possession of a present-moment focus.

### **THE 30-SECOND DRILL**

Before discussing the present, I want you to experience it. In the following exercise, I want you to live in the present moment by immersing yourself in a present-moment focus. This exercise was taught to me by my mentor, Dr. Ken Ravizza, and it is called the 30-second drill.

Now as you read this, I want you to invest 30 seconds of your time as if your life depended on what you were reading. Sit up straight in your chair with your feet flat on the floor and LOCK IN! Now, I want you to look at each word and hear it as if I am there inside your head speaking to you.

I want you to read every word with a commitment that if you could repeat what you just read, you would win a million dollars. Think of it as the Million Dollar Mentality, because when you engage and focus with this type of intent all the time, it will not be long before someone wants to pay you a million dollars to work with them.

Ready?

GET SET!



GO!

Give me 30 seconds.

For a short period of time you can do anything you want with your levels of attention, energy, and focus. Right now, the focus you are reading with is different than it was 10 seconds ago – feel that.

You see, you are more locked in right now than you were 15 seconds ago – recognize that. You are currently demonstrating your ability to be into the present moment and play one pitch at a time.

If you can focus like this without someone having to ask you, you are experiencing the result of present-moment mental toughness. So, while you read this chapter today, I want you to come back to this level of focus as many times as you can and lock in for 30 seconds at a time.

That is 30 seconds.

You can now space out for a moment.

Whew... I hope you felt the intensity of those 30 seconds.

If I asked you for 10 minutes of total undivided attention with that level of focus, you'd probably say: "Cain, that is crazy. There is no way I can read with that intensity for 10 minutes." I would agree.

It is the same way in baseball. You don't lock in for 10 pitches or an entire inning; you lock in for one pitch and then do that again pitch by pitch till the game is over.

Challenge yourself to become a samurai warrior of the mental game, someone who is totally immersed in the present; and when you get distracted or space out, recognize that you are distracted. Then release and refocus back into the present.

## **FEEL THE PULSE OF THE GAME**

When you think of the present-moment focus, compare it to watching a sports performance. For example, if you ever attend a game in a large baseball stadium and you go to the top row to watch, you will notice that there is a pulse to the game. As the pitcher goes into his windup, everybody steps into the present. The pitch is thrown. Everybody steps out.

There is a pulse to the game. There is a routine ebb and flow to the game where the players, and even the audience, enter the present, and exit that moment after the pitch occurs. It is a short, intense focus followed by a space-out. That process repeats itself over and over for about 300 pitches each game. Essentially, it is a much shorter version of the 30-second drill the players use as a part of their routine to get into the present moment.

As you read this chapter, you will develop an enhanced understanding as well as the mental skills of present-moment focus. It is important to remember that you can get here, the present moment, anytime you want. It is all a matter of awareness and choice.

“Do not dwell in the past. Do not dream of the future. Concentrate the mind on the present moment.”

*Buddha*

## **HOCUS-POCUS or FOCUS-REFOCUS**

Realize that success in any endeavor is not the product of hocus-pocus magic. You are not going to be successful today because the moon and the sun and the stars and the galaxy just happen to line up for you. ***You are going to be successful to the degree that you are able to focus and then refocus when you become distracted.***

Success is not hocus-pocus magic; it is actually much simpler than that. Success is largely dictated by your ability to maintain present-moment focus on the tasks at hand. The key to developing an intense and productive focus is to recognize when you become distracted, take a deep breath, and then refocus your attention.

You will get distracted, because everyone does. The attainment of peak performance is contingent on the development of distraction awareness. ***You must develop the ability to recognize when you are distracted and then refocus back into the moment.*** An easy way to remember this is to think, *If I want to win, I must focus on What's Important Now.* Focus on what you are doing right here in this moment and on accomplishing the tasks in the present moment.

## **WATCH OUT FOR FISH HOOKS**

Through recognizing that we all get distracted from time to time, it is equally important to recognize what distracts us from our goal. The term “fish hooks” is symbolic of the negative thoughts from external stimuli that your mind can get caught on during your pursuit of excellence.

Fish hooks represent distractions beyond your control that you focus on, which deplete your energy and rip you away from performing your best and competing in the present. Examples of

fish hooks could be obnoxious fans, poor umpires, unprofessional coaches, irritating teammates, past mistakes, etc.– all of which are outside of your control.

Ultimately, fish hooks are a hassle and a needless waste of your time. You must develop an awareness of them so you do not get hooked, and so that when you do, you can get off the gaff (what they call the barb on the fish hook in the angler's world) before getting ripped out of the water.

To further illustrate the application of fish hooks in performance, think of yourself as a fish. As a fish, you are swimming in a school up Rawhide River to the destination of Lake Excellence.

As you swim upstream, you need sustenance for your journey, so you dine on whatever you can find. You discover worms are an especially delicious but a rare treat. You have observed some of your teammates trying to eat worms dangling in the water, only to get stuck in the mouth with a fish hook.

You learn you must be wary of fish hooks when you see a worm. If you accurately identify fish hooks with worms, you can actually still have a meal by eating around the hook. ***Thus, if you keep the presence of mind to inspect your worms carefully, you will give yourself the best chance to reach Lake Excellence, aka playing your best baseball.***

In this analogy, the worms are the opportunities to learn and succeed on your journey to performance excellence, and the fish hooks are the external stimuli within those opportunities that could keep you from your forward progress. As a performer (or fish), you must stay in the present moment and strategically seize the opportunities for self-improvement.

You must focus on what you can control – your presence of mind – and work around the fish hooks that have the potential to hold you back. If you see the worm, don't forget to check for a fish hook. ***Do not get hooked.***



**CAIN'S COACHING POINT:**

**I want you to identify three fish hooks that you deal with on your team. What distractions have a tendency to steal your focus and get you hooked away from the present and playing the game one pitch at a time?**

**FISH HOOK #1** \_\_\_\_\_

**FISH HOOK #2** \_\_\_\_\_

**FISH HOOK #3** \_\_\_\_\_

**USING CONCENTRATION GRIDS**

Concentration grids have been a staple of mental conditioning for years. This game/exercise is all about concentration and efficiency, which is best accomplished by staying in the present moment and going one number or one pitch at a time.

Concentration grids are a great way to increase your ability to stay in the present moment for an extended period of time, as you will need to be able to do to play your best baseball.

### **ONE NUMBER. ONE PITCH AT A TIME.**

Your training program with concentration grids is simple. Cross out the grid numbers from 00-99, in order, as fast as you can. During this exercise, you are testing yourself to see how efficiently you can perform the task. You are also testing your ability to concentrate and stay in the present.

Start practicing this exercise in a quiet environment to become comfortable with the activity and to monitor your present-moment focus. Once you have become proficient at it in a quiet environment, you may play music or do this activity in front of the TV as a way to include distractions, just as there will be when you compete. The more you do this activity and the more quickly you can cross out the numbers in order, the more you are developing your ability to concentrate and keep your mind in the present moment.

Baseball players I have worked with report that the grids allow them to become more aware of when they start to space out and lose focus in school and on the field. They become more aware of when they slip out of the present and into the past or the future. This exercise also allows them to become more aware of when they are trying too hard and need to take a breath in order to relax and get back into an optimal level of focus.

Many Olympic and professional athletes use concentration grids regularly, including Major League Baseball All-Star pitchers Roy Halladay and Jamie Moyer. It is becoming a built-in part of many players' pre-game routines and mental preparation to compete

with the concentration grids. Similar to quickly and efficiently moving to the next number on a concentration grid, you must develop the ability to move on the next pitch in baseball.

## **MEASUREMENT = MOTIVATION**

It is also important to keep track of the time it takes to complete each grid. When I started doing concentration grids on a routine basis (Monday, Tuesday, Thursday and Friday mornings before I ate breakfast), my time was in the low- to mid-teens in minutes. After almost two weeks, I was able to do them in about four or five minutes, even in the crazy and chaotic environment known as a high school cafeteria. I would bring grids with me and compete with students before school when I was working as a high school athletic director.

Here is a sample concentration grid you can use to help train yourself to stay in the present moment for an extended period of time.



### **CAIN'S COACHING POINT:**

**Yesterday is a cancelled check, tomorrow is a promissory note, and today is cash: Invest it wisely.**

**Yesterday is history. Tomorrow is a mystery. Today is a gift; that is why we call it the present.**



**Brian Cain Peak Performance, LLC**  
Concentration Training Grid  
[www.BrianCain.com](http://www.BrianCain.com)

86	54	04	72	20	05	34	79	52	17
73	43	50	70	44	12	28	59	94	35
45	62	63	97	51	95	91	67	84	75
27	69	23	00	08	83	09	41	65	78
80	39	68	47	29	93	36	30	38	42
61	53	19	48	49	74	40	18	15	21
60	01	14	22	64	07	58	02	32	16
13	31	26	71	66	33	06	85	10	89
76	46	98	37	99	24	57	11	55	82
92	25	81	96	87	88	77	03	56	90



**Brian Cain Peak Performance, LLC**  
Concentration Training Grid  
[www.BrianCain.com](http://www.BrianCain.com)

86	54	04	72	20	05	34	79	52	17
73	43	50	70	44	12	28	59	94	35
45	62	63	97	51	95	91	67	84	75
27	69	23	00	08	83	09	41	65	78
80	39	68	47	29	93	36	30	38	42
61	53	19	48	49	74	40	18	15	21
60	01	14	22	64	07	58	02	32	16
13	31	26	71	66	33	06	85	10	89
76	46	98	37	99	24	57	11	55	82
92	25	81	96	87	88	77	03	56	90



## CHAPTER #2 REVIEW

- ❑ Yesterday is history, tomorrow is a mystery, and today is a gift—that is why we call it the present.
- ❑ Do not count the days; make the days count.
- ❑ The present moment is a matter of awareness and choice.
- ❑ Success in baseball is not hocus-pocus. It is all about your ability to focus and refocus.
- ❑ Focus on WIN (What's Important Now).
- ❑ Beware of fish hooks and things you cannot control.
- ❑ Train your present-moment focus by using concentration grids.
- ❑ The time is now and the place is here.

## CHAPTER #3

### PROCESS OVER OUTCOME

“Focus on the process of doing what it takes to be successful and the result will take care of itself.”

*Nick Saban*  
*NCAA National Champion*  
*Head Football Coach at the University of Alabama*

The ability to perform at a level of excellence on a consistent basis is the goal of all peak performers. As the previous chapter discussed, the maintenance of a present-moment focus will assist you in this goal; however, you must have something to focus on in the present moment during performance. ***This something is the process.***

A peak performer’s focus must always be on the process. By keeping focus on the present elements of the performance process, athletes give themselves the best opportunity to perform on the level of excellence. An excellent process will give the best chance for success in yielding excellent results, and performing a step-by-step process directed at excellence will get you up the mountain as quickly as possible.

Remember, the commitment and concentration on the next 90 feet of the hike will get you safely to your destination. Focus on being excellent on your journey step by step up The Mountain of Excellence and you will be sure to reach the summit.

#### **UNLEARN WHAT YOU HAVE LEARNED**

The current baseball culture we live in is a bottom-line results-driven monster. If you are a coach reading this, you will not likely have a job if you do not win games. The kicker is that to win games you must not focus on winning, but on the process of winning. Coaches and athletes I work with most often unlearn what they have learned to focus on in their sport – mainly winning and focusing on other outcomes that are outside of their control vs. processes that are within their control and that give them the best chance for success.

A peak performer must understand that winning is the outcome of performance excellence – thus, the product of an individual's or team's performance. The focus of the individual athlete and team, therefore, ought to be their performance, because that is what is truly within their control and yields the desired outcome. More precisely, a performer's focus should be on the process of his performance and directly on what he can control to provide the best opportunity for success.



### **CAIN'S COACHING POINT:**

**You must often unlearn what you have learned and realize that what got you here might not get you there. You must always be asking yourself: Why are we doing it this way? Is this the best way?**

### **THE LAW OF AVERAGES**

Former Louisiana State University head baseball coach Skip Bertman was a true Master of The Mental Game and won five national championships in 1991, 1993, 1996, 1997 and 2000. Bertman is a man defined by excellence, and he stressed the importance of the process, emphasizing that anytime you compete there are only four possible occurrences:

1. You can play well and win.
2. You can play well and lose.
3. You can play lousy and win.
4. You can play lousy and lose.

Bertman called these the law of averages because if you play your best, you give yourself the best chance to win – **AND you are not guaranteed to win even if you do play your best.** *What he knew was that he never had control over the outcome of the game. All he had control over was how prepared his team was come game day and then how they played.* Through this understanding, Coach Bertman knew that the process of performing excellently was what won games, not a focus on winning games. As a coach, he made the law of averages swing in his favor by emphasizing the process of performance excellence and execution on each pitch over the outcome of winning. You can swing the law of averages in your favor as well, if you commit yourself to the process. ***Las Vegas knows this better than anyone. The entire city and gambling industry are built on the law of averages.***

## **THE BEST TEAM NEVER WINS**

I have had the wonderful privilege of getting to know and work with Ultimate Fighting Championship Welterweight Champion, Georges St. Pierre. Georges is one of the best athletes on the planet, and a large part of his consistent success has been his ability to stay focused on the process of becoming the best fighter he can be (the journey) while letting go of his desired outcome to be and maintain the status of world champion (the destination).

By focusing on the process of being the best he can be through constantly evolving as he aims for self-improvement and

personal progress, Georges gives himself the best chance to retain his World Championship title every fight. Georges realizes that even though he is one of the best fighters, if not the best fighter, on the planet, he can get knocked off the summit of the mixed martial arts mountain known as The Ultimate Fighting Championship on any given night inside the Octagon. Relatively, in baseball, ***the best team never wins – it is always the team who plays the best.***

*“I truly believe that I am the best fighter in the world. And in every sport it is the same story. It is not the best team that wins in baseball; it is the team that plays the best. It is not the fastest horse who will win the race; it is the horse who races the best. And Saturday night, even though I believe that I am the best fighter in the world, the guy who’s going to win the fight is the guy that will fight the best. I am very glad to fight Josh Koscheck. He’s the number one contender right now, so I want to get back to what I lost and I will go step by step and stick to the process. I am very happy to fight him.”*

**Georges St. Pierre**

**Ultimate Fighting Championship**

**Welterweight Champion**

**2008, 2009, 2010 Canadian Athlete of the Year**

**UFC 74 Pre-Fight Press Conference**

This quote is from Georges on the eve of his UFC 74 fight with Josh Koscheck, his first fight after losing his World Championship to Matt Serra at UFC 69 on April 7, 2007. I love what he says about how the best fighter never wins, that it is always the one who fights the best. I hope you can see that he clearly understands the value of the process.

**CAIN’S COACHING POINT:**



**St. Pierre saying, “I go step by step” illustrates the mentality and focus on the process as well. When he says, “I am the best fighter in the world,” he displays his confidence in his abilities – but he also recognizes that “the guy who’s going to win the fight is the guy who will fight the best.” This truly emphasizes his mental ability to separate the outcome from what he must do to achieve it: are lentless focus on the process.**

The same logic can be applied to any form of competition. You may be the defending state/national champion or part of the best program in your area – but during competition between the lines, it does not matter who is more talented, how hard you throw, what your batting average is (just a reflection of yesterday) or who has a more impressive resume. In the heat of competition, all that matters is who competes at the higher level, who executes and plays better on this pitch.

If you are the underdog and your whole mentality revolves around you playing your game regardless of the accolades and accomplishments of your opponent, then you have done what I call “released your mental emergency brake,” enabling you to play the game at the highest level, one pitch at a time.

“The difference between the impossible and the possible lies in a person’s determination.”

***Tommy Lasorda***  
***Former MLB Manager and Player***

## **WHY UPSETS HAPPEN**

To further challenge and change your perspective on the old cliché that “the best team always wins,” let’s reflect upon some of the great moments in sports history.

The “*Miracle On Ice*” in the 1980 Winter Olympics between the Soviet hockey team and the US hockey team: The Soviet team consisted of seasoned professional athletes while the US team consisted of amateur collegiate athletes.

The whole world expected the Soviet team to come out victorious. The Soviets had destroyed the same USA team in an exhibition game 10-3 in Madison Square Garden on February 9, 1980, just days before the Olympics started. We all know, however, that the end result was anything but what was expected. The US team’s 4-3 victory over the Soviets will go down in history, undisputedly, as one of the greatest upsets of all time. Clearly, the Soviets had the better team, but it was the US team that won. Why? ***They played better!***

Another prime example that defies the “best team always wins” cliché is Super Bowl XLII between the New England Patriots and the New York Giants. The Patriots had accomplished an undefeated season (16-0) and reached the Super Bowl with a cumulative record of 18-0. This Patriots team was hailed by analysts as arguably the greatest NFL team ever and was the 12-1 favorite to be victorious in the big game. The victory, however, went to the undaunted Giants, who led 17-14 as time expired. Who was the better team? The Patriots had beaten the Giants earlier that season. The Patriots were clearly the better team. Who played better on that night? The Giants.

Yet another example of a phenomenal upset is the 1985 NCAA Men’s Division I Basketball Championship between the Georgetown Hoyas and the Villanova Wildcats. The Georgetown Hoyas were the defending national champions and the No. 1 ranked team in the nation, led by Patrick Ewing, the 1984 tournament’s Most Outstanding Player and one of the most

dominant players in college basketball history. The Wildcats were unranked in the regular season with a 19-10 record and received an at-large bid as a number 8 seed in the tournament.

In the National Championship game, Villanova went on to play an excellent game against a team most thought to be unbeatable. The Wildcats shot an historic 79 percent from the floor as they defeated the Hoyas 66-64 to become the lowest seed in NCAA basketball history to win the national championship. Who was the better team? Georgetown. Who played a better game that night? Villanova.

In boxing, James “Buster” Douglas, the unknown 42-1 underdog, defeats Mike Tyson. In Olympic wrestling, unknown US wrestler Rulon Gardner defeats Russian wrestler Alexander Karelin, who was previously undefeated in 13 years of international competition. Appalachian State beats The University of Michigan in one of college football’s great upsets. The list goes on and on.

All of these upsets are sufficient evidence to conclude that the old cliché “the best team always wins” is false. The main reason is that the more talented teams often get so caught up in the outcome that they forget about the process to achieve what they desire. They shortchange their preparation, and as Super Bowl XLVIII Champion and Seattle Seahawks quarterback Russell Wilson always says, *“The separation is in preparation.”*

“There may be people that have more talent than you, but there’s no excuse for anyone to work harder than you do.”

**Derek Jeter**  
**Major League Baseball All-Star**

**CONTROL WHAT YOU CAN CONTROL**



A huge part of the process is controlling what you can control (your performance) and letting the outcome take care of itself – and when the “best teams” show a mental lapse, the underdog is usually right there ready to seize the moment. We can, thus, definitively state that the best team never wins; it is always the team that plays the best.

The baseball players that best understand the significance of the process over the outcome have established proficiency for recognizing what they can control and what they cannot. It is amazing how many baseball players still get hung up and hooked on things outside of their control. If you want to become a peak performer in this game, you must learn how to differentiate between what you can control and what you cannot control.

When you put time and energy into things you cannot control, you are wasting both of those valuable resources. Focusing on these things is self-defeating and assists the opposition in the process. Peak performers in baseball do not play that way; they stay locked in on what they can control.

Here is a list of things you cannot control in baseball: You cannot control the umpires, the fans, the media, the other team, playing time, the field conditions, the schedule, statistics, coaches, parents, what college coaches think of you, your batting average, the MLB Draft and most of all, the outcome of the game. The only thing you can control is yourself and your APE. APE is an acronym for your attitude and appearance (body language); your positive self-talk, presence (focus), process (preparation), performance (how hard you compete), perspective; and your effort, energy and emotions.

## **BASEBALL AND THE CONTROLLABLES**

One of my favorite sports I use to illustrate just how little control an individual has while participating in competition is baseball. Baseball is a crazy game. You can virtually do everything right and still lose. There are also days where you can do very little right and win.

Sometimes, you and your teammates can execute the game plan to perfection and meet the performance goals that the coaches have set for the team during the game, but a bad call, an unfortunate bounce or any other of the uncontrollables can happen and completely undermine the team's effort. On the other hand, you can fail to meet your coaches' goals but get a break here or there that keeps you in the game. **Baseball is an unfair game. So is life. Get used to it, and stop saying "that's not fair."** According to the philosopher Confucius: *"Life is really simple, but we insist on making it complicated."* Whining about how unfair things are may get you sympathy from some, but not when you are trying to reach the summit and win on the field.



#### **CAIN'S COACHING POINT:**

**Are you that bad of a baseball coach or a player that you have to feel good and have every call go your way to win? If the answer is no, say *SO WHAT, NEXT PITCH* the next time a call does not go your way. You cannot control the outcome; all you can control is what you do on this pitch. Become a **TRUE one-pitch warrior**.**

In baseball, as in life, when you focus on the process of playing the game one pitch at a time and let the outcome take care of itself, you will give yourself the best chance for on-field and scoreboard success.



Look at the list of things you cannot control. If you choose to focus on these things, you will inevitably beat yourself. If you choose to focus on these things, you are getting hooked. You must keep your focus on what you can control. If you go to YouTube and watch the TCU Baseball *Quiet Confidence* video, you will hear Coach Schlossnagle talking about how they focus on attitude and effort and everything else is a complete waste of time. I assume that if you are reading this you are one of the million-plus people who have seen this video. If not, check it out now.

## **APE**

As a peak performer, you must focus your attention on what is within your control. External adversity is a part of life – you make the choice of how you react to it. APE provides you with a reminder of just what it is you have the ability to control.

**APE** is an acronym to remember that you control:

A – Your attitude and your appearance (body language)

P – Your perspective (how you see things), the process (how you choose to play), your preparation, your presence (focus) and your self-talk (positive)

E – Your effort, your energy, and your emotions



This acronym is symbolic of the concept “control what you can control.” This concept is a fundamental skill of mental conditioning. Self-control is essential to peak performance, and by the end of this book you will fully understand why you only have control over yourself in the

midst of performance. As my mentor, Dr. Ken Ravizza, would say, ***you have got to be in control of yourself before you can control your performance*** and ***you have very little control of what goes on around you but total control of how you choose to respond to it.***

## **MY GOAL MUST BE IN MY CONTROL**

All athletes and coaches will agree that goal setting is a critical part of the process in climbing your mountain of excellence. When setting performance goals, you must remember that ***your goal must be within your control. A common mistake made in goal setting is setting performance goals that focus on the desired outcome instead of setting goals that reflect the process that you must execute to get that desired outcome.***

## **EXECUTE QUALITY PITCHES**

A pitcher should not set a performance goal of striking someone out, but should instead set a performance goal of executing a quality pitch that gives him the best chance for success (process). Understand the distinction between focusing on the strikeout versus a quality pitch. A pitcher's goal should not be to get strikeouts; execution of quality pitches may result in strikeouts. A pitcher's goal is to commit to that pitch he going to throw and execute quality pitches in a fundamentally sound manner to give the best chance for a result in the desired outcome.

## **FOCUS ON PUTTING TOGETHER QUALITY AT-BATS**

Remember, your performance goal must be within your control. If you are a hitter, focus on putting together quality at-bats, not getting hits. You could hit the ball hard right at someone and you're out. Are you going to lose confidence because your batting

average goes down? You should see this as a success because you executed your job – you just did not get your desired result.

You can also get beat offensively but still get on base, and you should see this as falling short of success because you did not execute your process. Even though you got the desired result, your performance was less than excellent; you did not execute correctly but were bailed out by an error or another factor out of your control. You just got lucky. By setting your performance goals on quality pitches and quality at-bats, you acknowledge and focus on what you can control and give yourself the best opportunity for performance excellence.

By understanding exactly how your game is played – all the real causes and effects of performance within baseball – you can direct your focus to the process of your performance. This knowledge cuts out all the unnecessary elements of the game that most people harp on and gives you a direct route to peak performance. This is what it means to have an understanding of the process when you set performance goals. This is what you hear high school, college and professional coaches talking about when they refer to the process.

## **CREATING AND USING YOUR PERFORMANCE ABC'S**

One of the most effective strategies to help you focus on what you can control, and to create an effective process to help you play in the present, is an exercise called performance ABC's.

Performance ABC's are three keys that can be mental, physical, or a combination of the two that you repeat to yourself, visualize, and think about before and during competition. These ABC's of your performance will keep you focused on the process you need to follow to be successful.

There are many things that athletes may think about at times during performance, from physical mechanics to game strategy, to the opponent, to issues in personal life or other distractions happening off the field. Setting ABC's will help keep your mind focused on the proper process for your performance based on the key elements on which you want to focus. This strategy will give you the best chance for success.

Here are some samples of Performance ABC's that I helped create with a top college baseball program.

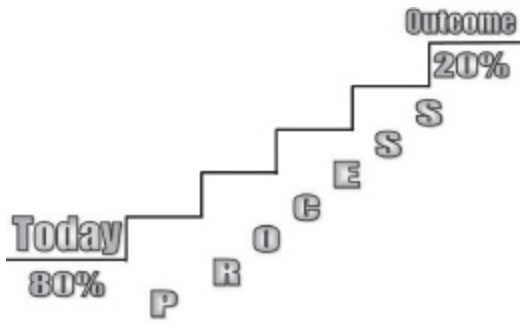
You can see that we set general Performance ABC's for the team, pitching, base running, offense, defense, and coaches. Setting Performance ABC's for the team helps give the team a common focus on the process during competition. It also benefits each athlete and coach to set individual ABC's as a way for them to better identify the individual processes they must follow to give themselves the best chance for success.

I challenge you to create your own Performance ABC's for your hitters/pitchers. Choose categories that apply to your position and determine an effective set of ABC's that will reflect the performance demands of those categories.

NAME	A	B	C
TEAM	Belief in Self, Teammates, System	Play the next pitch	Dugout energy for the process
PITCHING	Attack the zone	Force contact	One pitch at a time
OFFENSE	Quality at-bats	Team offense	Run producing machine
DEFENSE	Hit it to me	Step inside your Circle of focus	Win this pitch
BASE RUNNING	90 feet at a time	Look to take the extra 90	Anticipate dirt ball reads
COACH	Be the fountain, not the drain	Stay one pitch at a time	Say less, let them compete

**THE BEST COACHES FOCUS ON THE PROCESS**

The best coaches and players in baseball know the value of focusing on the process. They see the process as a staircase they climb each day. They know what their desired outcome is and focus on that outcome 20% of the time, while focusing 80% of the time on TODAY and the steps they must take to get the outcome they desire.





My challenge for you is to begin committing yourself to the process. Start evaluating your performance on the process it takes to perform at a level of excellence. Focus on the effort you give every day and, most importantly, every pitch. Focus on executing the fundamentals when you perform in practice and during competition. As a baseball team, focus on playing with great energy and intensity, supporting teammates with excellent dugout participation, and always demonstrating strong body language. All the physical mechanics of your sport and all the elements required for the performance of your sport matter, and performing them all excellently is what makes a peak performance.



**CAIN'S COACHING POINT:**

**What are some aspects of the process that, if you focused on them, would give you the best chance to perform at your best?**

1) \_\_\_\_\_

2) \_\_\_\_\_

**THERE ARE NO LITTLE THINGS**

It is worth emphasizing explicitly that there are no little things in the pursuit of excellence in baseball. As alluded to in the previous section, one must also recognize and appreciate all the little details of peak performance within the game of baseball to become a peak performer. When you are fully committed to the process of becoming a peak performer, you must be aware of all the details of your performance process, for they are necessary to make a successful journey to the summit of The Mountain of Excellence.

## **KEEP YOUR LOWS HIGH AND YOUR HIGHS LOW**

Emotional consistency is essential for on-field success in baseball. The goal of those striving for success in any arena is to maintain performance excellence day in and day out. The control of emotions is imperative for consistent peak performance.

When you are faced with adversity and your performance is not reflective of your potential, it is crucial to take a step back from your performance and focus on the process of excellence. ***Command your emotions by reminding yourself to control what you can control; and focus on releasing the mental bricks that can weigh on your mind by having a physical release that you can use, such as taking your hat or glove off, redoing your batting gloves and taking a deep breath.***

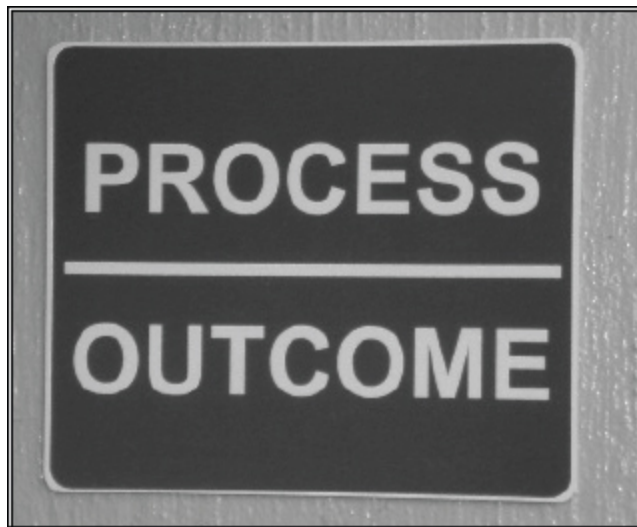
***Resist the pressure to personalize performance and remember baseball is what you do, not who you are.*** If you have a bad day at the plate, that does not make you a worthless human being, just as having a career day on the mound does not make you any better than anyone else once that game is over.

By paying attention to the process and not the outcome, you give yourself the best opportunity to achieve excellence, because if you focus on the process and make the necessary changes to it, the result will take care of itself.

The same systematic process is true when you are performing at your best. When you are performing at your highest level and achieving success through performance excellence, it is crucial that you not become complacent. Resist the urge to buy into the hype. Do not think that a little success suddenly renders you more valuable than the process that got you there. Cemeteries are full of irreplaceable men. Stay humble. Continue to work the

process. Give yourself the best opportunity to maintain the excellence you have been achieving by identifying the process you followed to get there, and then keep refining that process by making it more efficient and excellent.

On the following page is a “sign of success” from the one of the top college baseball programs in the country. This image is testament to the program’s understanding that you must focus on the process of becoming a champion in order to win championships.



It is challenging to commit oneself to the process of performance excellence. The journey is long and hard, full of obstacles and detours, but this is what makes the glory of achieving performance excellence all the more glorious. ***Remember, nothing worth having comes easy. Your enjoyment in the end will be a direct reflection of the effort you had to give in the process of becoming who you needed to become to be worthy of getting what you wanted.***

“Self-discipline is a form of freedom. Freedom from laziness and lethargy, freedom from the expectations and demands of others, freedom from weakness and fear—

and doubt. Self-discipline allows a pitcher to feel his individuality, his inner strength, his talent. He is master of, rather than a slave to, his thoughts and emotions."

**Harvey Dorfman**  
*Author of The Mental ABC's of Pitching*

## **DEVOTE YOURSELF TO THE PROCESS**

Commitment to the process of excellent performance will give you the best opportunity to achieve your goals. In this chapter, you have learned that when you devote yourself to the process, you focus on the aspects of performance within your control as opposed to the elements beyond it. You now understand that maintaining control of the process of your pursuit of performance excellence is a means to getting your desired outcome and end result.

Unfortunately, it is common for most people in baseball to become fixated on the goal/outcome/end result of performance. As an aspiring peak performer, focus on what you need to do to achieve the outcome and the results you desire. Devoting yourself to the process of performance excellence will undoubtedly give you the best chance to win and, more importantly, to reach the summit of The Mountain of Excellence this season and in your life.

## CHAPTER #3 REVIEW

- ❑ Unlearn what you have learned about winning.
- ❑ Process should always be placed before the outcome.
- ❑ Performance Excellence is greater than Winning.
- ❑ Know the four possible performance outcomes and the Law of Averages.
- ❑ The best team never wins. It is always the team that plays the best.
- ❑ Control what you can control.
- ❑ Develop self-control over your APE.
- ❑ Winning is a by-product of excellent execution of the fundamentals and focusing on the process over the outcome.
- ❑ Establish your Performance ABC's.
- ❑ There are no little things.
- ❑ Keep your lows high and your highs low – emotional consistency is essential for peak performance.
- ❑ Make "signs of success."
- ❑ Nothing worth having comes easy.
- ❑ When you devote yourself to an excellent process, the result will take care of itself.

# CHAPTER #4

## POSITIVE MENTALITY

“Baseball is the only field of endeavor where a man can succeed three times out of ten and be considered a good performer.”

*Jarrett Bayliss*  
*College Baseball All-American*

The power of positive self-talk and a positive mentality makes a huge difference in an individual’s performance. It is a simple concept that is both useful and effective. Having a positive mentality is so simple that it is often overlooked. We’re used to hearing people tell us to “think positive” prior to performance or in the heat of competition, but the words often roll in one ear and out the other without our full appreciation of the true value in this all-too-simple piece of advice.

Having positive self-talk (the voice inside your head) with a positive mentality is a mental skill that requires proper mental conditioning to utilize its power. The magnificent quality of positivity is that everyone is capable of it. It is simply a mental attitude that is conducive to growth and excellence through the expectation and perception of favorable and beneficial results. This chapter is devoted to conveying the importance of positivity in performance while presenting you with the strategies you need to develop your own positive mentality.

### **THE PROPHECY OF THOUGHT**

The basic tenet is that whatever the mind expects, it will attract. This “law of attraction” has been proven with neuroscience. Thoughts manifest through actions and affect outcomes. If you

are doubtful you will accomplish a task, you drastically increase the likelihood that your actions and effort will reflect that doubt, thus ensuring the failure of accomplishment. Similarly, if you possess a positive mentality when faced with a difficult task, you dramatically increase the likelihood that your actions and effort will reflect that positive attitude, and you will succeed.

## **THE SCIENCE OF STAYING POSITIVE**

Research has proven that staying positive will make a big difference in your life.

Positive people live longer. In a study of nuns, those that regularly expressed positive emotions lived an average of 10 years longer than those who didn't (Snowdon, 2001).

Employees who perceive their work environments as positive vs. negative outperform their negative counterparts (Goleman, 2011).

Positive and optimistic salespeople sell more than pessimistic salespeople (Seligman, 2006)

Marriages are more likely to succeed when the couple experiences a 5-to-1 ratio of positive to negative interactions, whereas when the ratio approaches 1-to-1, marriages are more likely to end in divorce (Gottman, 1999).

Positive people who regularly express positive emotions are more resilient when facing stress, challenges and adversity. Baseball is full of stress, challenges and adversity.

Baseball is also full of negative events and negative people. Robert Cross, a researcher at the University of Virginia, found that 90% of anxiety at work is created by 5% of one's team –

those energy vampires that SUCK the life out of you. Make sure YOU ARE NOT a 5-percenter on your team.

## **POSITIVE THINKING IS NOT ENOUGH**

The successful accomplishment of a task, however, is not guaranteed by positive thoughts. All a positive mentality does is significantly increase the probability that you will walk away from the task, successfully accomplished or not, with greater experience and with greater peace of mind. In this way, a positive mentality makes a significant difference between educational self-improvement (growth) and self-stagnation (death). Thus, your mentality represents the ultimate self-fulfilling prophecy. Thoughts Become Things (#TBT).

## **THE STORY OF ROGER BANNISTER**



On May 6, 1954, Roger Bannister, a British medical student and avid runner, did the previously unimaginable. From the start of archiving world records and modern timekeeping in track events, no one had been able to break the seemingly impassable barrier of the 4-minute mile. His story demonstrates the prophecy of thought and the power of positive belief.

At the age of 25, the British sports media had already discovered Bannister, who had become one of the most scrutinized track athletes in the United Kingdom. His speed in the mile and 1500-meter events drew initial attention to his talent, but when he declined the 1948 Olympics in London to concentrate on his training and medical studies, he drew the criticism of British track enthusiasts. In 1951 Bannister won the British title in the mile, but his fourth-place finish in the 1500-meter race at the 1952



Olympics in Helsinki – the result of a last-minute schedule change that compromised Bannister’s preparation routines – fueled further scrutiny for his unconventional training regimen.

After the media publicized his Olympic performance as a failure, Bannister resolved to redeem himself by breaking the seemingly unbreakable 4-minute mile barrier. He increased the intensity of this training, but not the duration, and saw steady improvements in his times, all while he continued to be a full-time medical student. In fact, the duration of his training was less than an hour per day, because he wanted to focus on his study of neurology. Bannister, however, was committed to his new goal and ***loyal to the process*** he felt would get him there. He was convinced that as long as he continued to see gradual improvements in his times, he would maintain his own training regimen.

The opportunity Bannister had been training for arrived on May 6, 1954, in a meet between the British Amateur Athletic Association and Oxford University at the Iffley Road Track in Oxford, England. Running mates Chris Chataway and Chris Brasher exchanged setting the pace for Bannister’s first three laps. Bannister unleashed his kick in the last lap, finishing it in less than a minute before he broke the tape and collapsed in the arms of the crowd at the finish line.

The announcer affirmed what the crowd of roughly 3000 spectators already knew. To thunderous applause it was announced that Bannister ran 3:59.4 – the unbreakable record had been broken and Roger Bannister had made history! He had made the impossible possible.

## **DEFEATING LIMITING BELIEFS**

The 4-minute mile story, however, is not simply about the historic moment of a broken world record. The story of Roger Bannister is about breaking mental barriers and defeating limiting beliefs. At the time, the world of track and field believed the 4-minute mile was an insurmountable human barrier, an impassable obstacle that could not be breached. The critics said it couldn't be done and that it was physically impossible to run a mile under four minutes. It was thought that the heart would stop, the brain would explode, and the lungs would collapse.

As the world scoffed at what it saw as an amateur athlete's unachievable dream, Bannister hardened his resolve to the pursuit of excellence. What makes his feat even more remarkable was that he was dedicated to attain excellence not only on the track, but also in his academic ambitions of becoming a doctor. Bannister believed in himself and he believed in the process to which he had committed himself. As long as steady improvements accrued, he knew the outcome he desired would take care of itself – and that is exactly what happened.

## **THE IMPORTANCE OF ROGER BANNISTER**

After the myth of the 4-minute mile had been debunked by Bannister, other runners around the world began breaking the 4-minute mile barrier. The week after his historic performance, Bannister and two other runners ran a sub-four-minute mile. Over the course of the following year, thirteen more runners broke the barrier. Within the next two years, exactly 134 runners ran a mile under 4 minutes, and today over 20,000 have been recorded. On July 7, 1999, Hicham El Guerrouj of Berkane, Morocco, ran the current world record in 3:43:13. In 1997 Daniel Roman of Kenya ran two miles for the first time ever in under 8 minutes, in a time of 7:58:61.

This is evidence that there are no physical barriers, only self-limiting barriers. We are the ones who put up these barriers within our own psyche because we choose the beliefs of those around us. You need to unlearn these limitations and realize that once mental barriers are lifted, anything is possible. Peak performers and champions perceive the world differently, and as perspectives change, the realm of possibility expands. My goal for you is to have no mental barriers, to believe you are capable of anything you desire and work toward with the right strategies.

***Bannister proved all the naysayers wrong with his positive mentality and self-belief, and now is the time for you to do the same.***

"It is spiritless to think that you cannot attain to that which you have seen and heard in the masters. The masters are men. You are a man. If you think you will be inferior in doing something, you will be on that road very soon."

***Yamamoto Tsunetomo  
18<sup>th</sup> Century Samurai Warrior***

## **SELF-IMAGE OF EXCELLENCE**

The field of peak performance has substantiated the notion that, as a performer, you will never outperform your self-image. If you believe you are slow, you will perform slowly. If you believe you are fast, you will perform at a fast pace. Therefore, positive thought processes, combined with clear goals and right strategies for how to accomplish them, will give you the best opportunity for success. In this way, staying positive is symbolic of belief in yourself.

A self-image of excellence is absolutely necessary if you are to embark on the quest to conquer The Mountain of Excellence. You must believe in yourself and your ability to improve throughout

the process you have established to achieve your goals. You must believe in your inner excellence and its transcendence to the performances you give on a day-to-day basis. Self-image is a powerful tool in peak performance, which is why it is so important for you keep it positive.

## **INTRODUCTION TO SELF-TALK**

When you are playing your best, what are you thinking? When you are at your best, what types of words are going through your head? What's that self-talk like?

---

---

---

In peak performance, the little voice talking inside of your head, sometimes becoming outwardly expressed thoughts directed at yourself, is referred to as self-talk. During performance, this little voice inside your head talks to you constantly. You may be reading this and thinking: "What is this 'voice' Cain is talking about? I do not talk to myself, only crazy people do that." That would be the voice to which I am referring.



### **CAIN'S COACHING POINT:**

**When referring to self-talk, I often use the analogy of your two mental assassins. You have a green assassin that helps your performance and a red assassin that crushes your performance. You must train your green assassin to win the battle between your ears with positive self-talk.**

Everybody has self-talk. As an expression of thought, self-talk embodies your mentality towards your performance. We use self-talk to motivate ourselves and to calm ourselves down when stressed. We use self-talk to encourage ourselves to become

fascinated and, unfortunately, self-talk can be used to discourage ourselves when we are frustrated. Self-talk is a reflection of self-image.

When you are performing on the field or in the classroom, the voice in your head is either working for you or against you. Some people visualize the contrasting tones of voice as two little people on your shoulders battling for control over your conscience. Recognize, however, that this self-talk is yours. You own it; you are in control of it.

“Rule your mind or it will rule you.”

*Horace*

## **HARNESS YOUR SELF-TALK**

Mastering control of your self-talk can be a challenge. Imagine your self-talk is a mustang (not the car, the horse – and there is nothing better than driving a Mustang convertible with the top down and Metallica blasting on the radio), a wild and spirited, seemingly uncontrollable mustang horse. Now, imagine yourself as a cowboy who does not wish to strip this wild animal of its fiery spirit, but you do want it to work for you to enhance your pursuit of excellence on the open plains – so you must gain control of the animal without taking away its aggressiveness. This is how to think of your self-talk. It is an untamed and powerful beast that has the potential to significantly improve your performance.

Many of the baseball players I work with describe their self-talk as an active voice but always under control. They often describe it as living and competing on the edge. ***One player said, “If I am not competing on the edge of my emotions and energy, highly***

***engaged but on the controlled side of the line, I am taking up too much space."***

As a baseball player, your self-talk can be thought of as:

- Relaxed aggression
- Relaxed intensity
- Controlled rage
- Engaged in the fight

To effectively harness your self-talk, you must follow the three steps of performance improvement as earlier discussed. The first step in the process of channeling the power of your self-talk is to establish an awareness of its power over the mind. During performance, try to recognize when you use it and what mentality it reflects – positive or negative. Notice particular situations that bring it out, both the good and the bad. Notice the particular tones and language used. This is all in an attempt to understand your mental state during time on and also away from the field.

Once you have developed a proficient awareness, the next step in effectively harnessing your self-talk is through a technique called confidence conditioning.

## **FOCUS ON WHAT YOU WANT VS. WANT TO AVOID THE PINK ELEPHANT**



Has anyone ever performed the mind tease on you where they instruct you to focus on something and then say, "Whatever you do for the next 10 seconds, do not think about a pink elephant"? Well, naturally the image of a pink elephant pops into your head and you

have difficulty focusing on whatever it was you were told to focus on.

This little mental tease exemplifies the importance of an individual's ability to keep a focus on what you "want vs. want to avoid" because the brain does not recognize the negative connotation of "do not" and only sees the image of that pink elephant.

The key to ignoring the pink elephant is developing the ability to focus on what you are trying to accomplish, not what you are trying to avoid. If you are a pitcher, think about executing this pitch instead of trying not to give up a hit. If you are a hitter, think about hitting the ball hard instead of trying not to strike out.

Academically, when you are taking a test, you want to focus on solving the problem or answering the question at hand, one question at a time, not worrying about the next question till you finish this one. These general scenarios represent the present-moment focus that makes the difference between subpar performance and performance excellence.

By channeling your self-talk and focusing on what you want vs. what you want to avoid, you will be competing with a positive mentality that will keep you locked into the present moment, giving yourself the best chance for success. The ability to focus on what you want with positive self-talk instead of what you want to avoid is a discipline developed over time. This process is dependent on the establishment of routines, such as practicing your self-talk and strengthening your self-talk through the use of confidence conditioning statements.

## **CONFIDENCE CONDITIONING STATEMENTS**

Confidence conditioning statements are a mental conditioning technique used to harness the power of self-talk to work in your best interest. Confidence conditioning is accomplished by simply writing down a list of statements that give you a sense of strength and empowerment when you read them. You can put these confidence conditioning statements on notebook covers, on the wall, on your mirror with a dry erase marker, in your locker, on little cards to carry in your wallet, or set them as the background on your iPhone. You can put them anywhere and everywhere.

Even though you may not be aware of it, you have been using confidence conditioning statements ever since you could talk. Every time you expressed your belief in the truth of an idea or an experience, you were conditioning it. Mental imagery, which is simply the creation of vivid mental images, is a natural process as well. Whenever you imagined something or looked forward to it, you were using imagery and conditioning your subconscious mind. Confidence conditioning and mental imagery are used by a wide variety of people from virtually every walk of life and in every profession. They use these techniques because they are simple to learn, even easier to perform, and they work!

When written and/or put on audio, confidence conditioning statements are your custom-made blueprint for personal growth and mindset achievement, providing a consistent state for your mental imagery and personal development. They are goal statements that help you imagine and realize positive change with minimal stress. If you use them correctly and consistently, they will help you create the athletic career, relationships and life you most desire.



In order to be effective, confidence conditioning statements must be written and used in a way that has the desired impact on your subconscious mind. They must be brief, usually a short sentence, and phrased in the first person present tense. They must be positive, specific and realistic. You want to include as many details as possible when writing and they should carry an emotional charge. If they do not make you feel anything, they probably will not help change anything either. ***The test of whether a confidence conditioning statement is written the right way is to ask yourself, "Can I read, picture and feel this statement?"***

## **CONFIDENCE CONDITIONING GUIDELINES**

The following are guidelines to help you better write your confidence conditioning statements:

**First Person:** Confidence conditioning statements are tools that help you to change your self-image; therefore, it makes sense to mentally condition for yourself, because your statements are always about you. They will usually begin with "I."

**Present Tense:** Use the present tense (I am, I have, etc.) because, in your subconscious, the future and past do not exist. Subconscious time is always "right now."

**Positive:** Condition and image what you want, not what you do not want or are trying to change. Do not phrase a statement in the negative, such as, "I no longer get anxious when I come to the line of scrimmage and know the ball is coming my way." Instead say, "I remain calm, in control and focused on what I want to do on this play, when the game is on the line." This focuses on what you want to do in the present with a positive mentality.

**Indicate Achievement**, not ability or potential: In other words, do not say “I can.” You already have the potential to change your performance. Instead, create words that describe the end result you want as if it has already happened by using “I am.”

**No Comparisons:** You are unique and have your own process of personal development, growth and change. Do not compare yourself to anyone else or measure your abilities against anyone else’s. Just aim for and condition performance change in your own self-image and self-belief.

**Vivid & Descriptive Language:** In order to “convince” your subconscious that your confidence conditioning statements are real, your language and the images they invoke must be as vivid as possible. Be sure to choose words that help you to really “see” what you are describing.

**Emotional Language:** Use words that spark an emotional response to make your statements more believable to your subconscious. The more emotion you generate, the faster the change you seek will take place. Describe how you feel about your achievement.

**Realistic/Accurate:** Do not affirm change that isn’t possible or realistic for you. Set your sights neither too high nor too low. Stretch your comfort zone a bit, but do not aim for anything you cannot honestly see yourself achieving. Remember, peak performance is a process. Do not aim for perfection; aim for excellence.

**Balance:** Make sure that the various goals you condition are in balance with each other. Do not overemphasize any one area while ignoring others in which growth would be beneficial. Strive for balanced growth and a balanced life.

**Confidential:** Without intending harm, others may remind you of your old self-image, or they may feel threatened by your desire to change. Keep your statements confidential. You may confide in coaches/mentors, if they understand the confidence conditioning process and are supportive of the changes you are trying to make for the sake of your performance.

## **TIPS FOR WRITING EFFECTIVE CONFIDENCE CONDITIONING STATEMENTS**

### **1. Change Your Beliefs Before Your Behavior:**

It is pointless to condition new behavior when the underlying beliefs driving your old behavior remain unchanged. Write your confidence conditioning statements for both internal beliefs and external behaviors. Failure to change underlying beliefs is one of the main reasons why confidence conditioning will not work for everyone.

**BEHAVIOR:** I spend an hour of quality one-on-one time with one of my teammates every weekend to strengthen our bond together.

**BELIEF:** More pressure on an already jammed-up schedule. I'd rather be hanging out with my friends who are not on the team than with my teammates all the time. When do I get my quality time away from my sport?

Do you see the problem? If the underlying belief does not change, it will be impossible to sustain the new behavior. As long as it feels like something you "have to" do, and not something you "want to" do, your creative subconscious will find ways to get you out of it. Try this as an alternative:

**BEHAVIOR:** I enjoy spending an hour of quality one-on-one time with one of my teammates every weekend.

**BELIEF:** I look forward to spending time with my teammates every weekend because it is fun, leaves me feeling great about our team, and is building strong relationships that will help us to perform better on the field.

## **2. Build Personal Value in Your Confidence Conditioning Statements**

The positive emotions you feel as you repeat and picture your statements is what makes them “take” in your subconscious. For example:

**BELIEF:** My health and fitness are major priorities in my life.

**BEHAVIOR:** I am creative at finding ways to exercise at least one hour a day, six days a week, and I generally eat only nutritious, low-fat foods.

**PERSONAL VALUE:** Because I exercise and eat right, I feel energized, strong, in control, and excellent.

## **3. Review Your Statements to Imprint Confidence into Your Subconscious**

Imprinting is simple: READ or LISTEN to your confidence conditioning statements, PICTURE them in your mind, and FEEL the personal value (positive emotions) connected to them. The best times to do this are just after awakening and just before sleep. Review your statements twice a day at a minimum, although more often is better. Make sure you are relaxed (take several deep breaths) and free yourself from distractions. Limit yourself to 3-5 statements to start – you can add more later.

Remember, it is the start that stops most people, so take the initiative and get started NOW!



**CAIN'S COACHING POINT:  
CONFIDENCE CONDITIONING WORKSHEET**

What do you want to change?

---

Describe the way it is right now:

---

Why is it a problem?

---

How do you feel about the way it is?

---

Describe your own behavior(s) that you want to change:

---

What are your deepest beliefs about this situation? Be honest with yourself:

---

Describe the way it will be after the change(s) you seek (use present tense):

---

Describe the way you will behave to generate the result you want (use present tense):

---

What beliefs will you need in order to support these new behaviors (use present tense)?

---

How will you feel when you bring your vision into reality? What is the personal value for you?

---

## **SAMPLE CONFIDENCE CONDITIONING STATEMENTS**

If they accurately express your own goals and feelings, use these examples as written or use them as models for creating your own powerful confidence conditioning statements.

Remember, you do not have to confine yourself to just personal and baseball-specific confidence conditioning statements; imagine growth in any area of life you choose.

## **PERFORMANCE CONFIDENCE CONDITIONING STATEMENTS**

During performance, confidence conditioning statements become simplified statements for more memorable self-talk. The requirements for these statements are reduced to reflect the importance that they be present tense, positive, and emotional. All other requirements, however, continue to remain relevant. When you are getting ready to take the field, use these confidence conditioning statements to maximize your positive mentality.

## **SAMPLE PERFORMANCE STATEMENTS**

1. I command confidence.
2. I trust in my abilities to execute one pitch at a time.
3. Today is mine. I own this.
4. I will hit the ball hard all game long.
5. I have put in the preparation and I am ready to perform.

6. Stay in control, baby – one-pitch warrior!
7. Let the negative go and the positive grow.
8. Just win this pitch.
9. Dominate the strike zone.
10. I am the best catcher in the SEC, a major leaguer playing in college.

Whenever you read one of your confidence conditioning statements, pause for a moment to picture and feel that statement as if it were happening now. Consciously use the self-talk voice within your head to read and recognize the meaning of the statement.

Confidence is essential to the generation of a positive mentality. During competition, you must be confident in your ability to perform and trust that all your preparation will pay off. This practice of confidence conditioning not only helps you harness your self-talk voice, but it also builds internal confidence so that when the moment of truth arrives on the field, you will believe in yourself and know that when all is said and done, you gave yourself the best chance for success. Thus, the process of building confidence will create the positive mentality necessary for success in your pursuit of excellence.



#### **CAIN'S GAME PLAN:**

**I personally set my confidence conditioning statements in the reminders app on my iPhone so that they pop up at specific times during the day or when I leave or arrive at specific locations.**

**What confidence conditioning statements, when read on a daily basis, will help you increase your confidence and increase your positive mentality?**

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---



**CAIN’S COACHING POINT:**

**Earlier in this manual we talked about your core values. How are you doing with living out those core values? Are you still setting weekly goals? Your chances for success significantly increase through the simple practice of setting daily goals.**

**Remember, focus on the next 90 feet, working towards improvement and focusing on what you want, not what you are trying to avoid.**

**THE CONFIDENCE RESUME AND LIST OF WINS**

Another strategy for creating a positive mentality and conditioning yourself to be more confident is to make a confidence resume and list of wins. The confidence resume and list of wins is an activity in which you identify all of the wins you have had in your career – wins both on and off the field. The purpose of the confidence resume is to facilitate the development of greater confidence in yourself and your performance by listing all the qualifications that justify why you deserve the outcome you desire.



By nature, we as human beings beat ourselves up when we fall short of our goals and briefly celebrate our wins before we focus on what's next. For example, when you graduated from college, did you really enjoy and take confidence from the body of work you just completed, or were you focused on getting that first job out of school? When you were a child and learned how to ride a bike, did you take confidence from ditching the training wheels, or did you focus on going further and faster? Listing all of your wins will help you to see the amazing body of work you have done over time and will allow you to have a resource you can review to help build the mental muscle of confidence.

Your confidence resume and list of wins should include anything and everything that, when reviewed, helps you feel empowered and confident. The confidence resume and list of wins should be extensive and ongoing. Like climbing The Mountain of Excellence, the confidence resume and list of wins has no finish line. Your choices can focus on your personal, academic and athletic skills. They may include previous results, quality preparation, great teammates, books you have read, the people you have met, the places you have been, the wins you have had on the field, the coaches you have played for, doing what was uncomfortable (asking someone out on a date) and celebrating that she said yes, or that you mustered up the courage to ask even though you were turned down (her mistake and you learned that you need a refined process). Instead of focusing on the no, focus on the process that you asked. ***Remember, you will never get anything in life that you don't ask for.***

### **CAIN'S GAME PLAN:**

**Get started with your confidence resume and list of wins. What are some of the wins you have had in your life that you**



may have overlooked? Simple wins like performances in baseball that stand out or positive experiences that you have had in the game or in life:

---

---

---

---

---

Filling out the confidence resume is beneficial for baseball players because it forces individuals to identify the work they've done and the preparation they've put into the development of their game. This exercise can provide the player with either a confidence boost or a look at a sobering reality. Even if the resume shows you have a lot of work to do, it is important to maintain a positive mentality by realizing you are on the right path and that the resume has given you the constructive criticism you need to get started on your journey. ***Remember, it is the start that stops most people.***



#### **CAIN'S COACHING POINT:**

**In my work with coaches and athletes, even the best athletes on the planet can struggle with developing their confidence resume. That struggle is exactly why we need to have the confidence resume in our arsenal as we climb The Mountain of Excellence. Confidence is fragile, and every time you review your confidence resume it will be the equivalent of lifting weights for your confidence and belief. You must do a little a lot to obtain the mental muscles you are looking for. Just as physical muscles take time and effort to develop, so do your mental muscles of confidence.**

After you have written out your confidence resume and reasons to believe, post them where you will see them on a daily basis. I have my list in Evernote (computer app) and review it each morning as part of my daily routine. Having this document visible will give you confidence by seeing you have reasons to believe in yourself. Some teams I work with will create a confidence resume for the season and review it before each game to remind the team of the hard work and preparation they have invested so that they should have confidence.

This daily and/or pre-game action is like strength and conditioning for your mental game. Through the repetitious acknowledgement of your reasons to be confident, you will steadily build a stronger, more confident mentality. During competition, this should be reason enough to stay positive while you embrace the adversity that baseball brings every day.

## **SOURCES OF CONFIDENCE**

Confidence conditioning will improve positive self-talk, and the confidence resume will supplement your belief in yourself and a positive mentality. Both techniques of confidence building rely on a solid base of preparation. True and authentic confidence comes from the combination of actions an individual takes in preparation for performance. Confidence comes from these four key areas:

1. Physical preparation – the BST (Blood, Sweat, and Tears)
2. Positive self-talk & confidence conditioning
3. Performance routines you have to keep you consistent
4. Mental imagery of you performing at your best

There is no substitute for smart, hard work. The consistent implementation of effective mental conditioning with your physical conditioning will give you the biggest confidence boost. Physically, you would never do strength and conditioning once a week or once a semester and expect to get any stronger. The same rules apply to mental conditioning, and by integrating it into your physical conditioning, you get the most out of mind and body. Strengthening and conditioning to enhance your mental confidence is obtained by doing a little a lot, not a lot a little. Every time you grind it out in practice and give that extra effort, and every time you take the opportunity to reflect on your confidence conditioning statements and your confidence resume, you build the mental muscle of confidence.

Conditioning self-confidence is all about building a positive mentality. When it comes down to your performance, all you can do is rely on your preparation and execute in a manner that gives you the best opportunity for success on that play. You cannot control anything else. You must strive for excellence in practices and games one pitch, one rep at a time to give yourself the peace of mind that you have done your best to give your best; the rest will fall into place.

### **KEEP YOUR CONFIDENCE HONEST HAVE AN ACCOUNTABILITY PARTNER**

A great way to keep your confidence honest is through the utilization of an accountability partner(s). There are many different ways for teammates to keep each other accountable for building confidence. Feel free to arrange whatever methods you feel will serve you best in your program. One great way to keep your confidence honest is for your accountability partner to ask you questions about your confidence whenever you see each other. As teammates, if you see each other walking to class or in

the dining hall, ask “Can you tell me two things on your confidence resume?” “What are three of your confidence conditioning statements?” If you do not respond within a few seconds, then you know you are not reviewing and giving enough focus to your mental conditioning techniques.

During practices, the question I ask players all the time is, “What are you working on today to get better?” If they cannot answer me quickly, they have not properly prepared for practice. They are not present and are not getting the most out of their time at practice that day. They are not building mental confidence and are not building a positive mentality necessary for performance excellence. They are simply going through the motions.

“I tried to practice the way I played... You can't practice one way and then expect to do it differently in a game.”

*Al Kaline*  
*Major League Baseball Hall of Famer*

## **FAILURE IS POSITIVE FEEDBACK**

In your pursuit of excellence, you will experience failure. This is a fact. Nothing worth having comes easy, and no success story is created without trials and tribulations to overcome. Accept failure as an inevitable part of your journey and learn to view failure as positive feedback.

Failure is actually the most effective form of positive feedback. Failure provides you with the most direct and honest insight into why and how something has gone wrong. If you are trying to accomplish a task and are giving it your best effort, exercising various techniques but are failing, then you are receiving positive feedback from the task on what not to do. This is when you

should become fascinated, not frustrated, and realize with each attempt you are exposing the details that will lead you to success.

Remember the prophecy of thoughts, and how your positive or negative thoughts manifest through actions and outcomes. Be positive. Be confident. **Confidence is a choice.** Challenge your limitations and move beyond your mistakes and shortcomings by learning from them. **In life there are winners and learners.** The quicker you make mistakes and learn from them, the quicker you move beyond them and the more prepared you are for the next 90 feet. Choose to be a learner, not a loser. Get better, not bitter. Accept failure as positive feedback.



#### **CAIN'S COACHING POINT:**

**It is important to have the capacity to distinguish when you are getting closer to success and when you are moving further from it. Be sure to ask for advice or counsel when necessary, but be aware that this is your journey. Also, remember that sometimes when the accomplishment you desire feels far away, it actually may be waiting right around the corner.**

#### **THE THREE MAGIC LETTERS – YET**

When you experience a disappointment in performance and the result you worked so hard to achieve falls beyond your reach, there is a three-letter word to keep your positive mentality – “YET.” You can turn statements of failure into goal-setting exclamations by adding this simple three-letter word. This word will turn negative comments around and change your attitude, confidence and perspective. When you notice you are telling yourself (self-talk) that you cannot do this or that, add the three magic letters “Y-E-T” to the end of your sentence.

I am not in the starting lineup... YET.  
I cannot hit a home run... YET.  
I do not squat 450 lbs... YET.  
We didn't win the championship... YET.

By adding "YET" to the end of your sentence, you leave the door to your mental hall of excellence open as opposed to slamming the door in your own face. YET is also an acronym for Your Energy Talks, referring to the influence of your energy on yourself, your team and your goals. When the mood is down and thoughts are negative, use this acronym to remind yourself or others to change the outlook of the situation. Disappointments will occur in your performances, but treat failures as positive feedback and learning opportunities to work smarter and harder, and keep a positive mentality.

## **POSITIVE ENERGY IS CONTAGIOUS**

### ***Energy is contagious. Is yours worth catching?***

People subconsciously take cues from others to gauge their own feelings. You probably know when your friends and teammates aren't feeling 100 percent even before they tell you, maybe even before they are aware of it. You definitely know when people are feeling great, because they often exude an aura of positivity that is difficult to ignore. Whether through an outward expression of body language or just feeling a vibe, humans are exceptional at interpreting moods. For better or worse, we are so proficient at detecting moods that we often subconsciously take direction from them and mimic that energy in our own actions. The importance of energy in performance should be quite clear.

If energy is contagious, it is obvious you should make that energy positive. ***If you are a head coach reading this, your energy is THE***

## ***MOST CONTAGIOUS.***

“Keep your thoughts positive because  
your thoughts become your words.

Keep your words positive because  
your words become your behavior.

Keep your behavior positive because  
your behavior becomes your habits.

Keep your habits positive because  
your habits become your values.

Keep your values positive because  
your values become your destiny.”

Negative energy is simply counterproductive and detracts from gaining momentum for forward progress. A positive attitude when facing the challenges and obstacles of practice or competition goes a long way. Attitude reflects leadership, and if you perform with a positive attitude and bring positive energy on a daily basis, the atmosphere of your team and working environment will begin to reflect your commitment to positive energy. Therefore, if energy is contagious for producing attitudes and attitudes reflect leadership, then leadership, too, is contagious. As you perform, make a concerted effort to build a team of leaders by bringing positive energy to the table.

## **GET BIG**

The term GET BIG refers directly to body language in relation to peak performance. It means to convey a big, confident body language. As you walk down the hall, on the floor of the weight room, on the field or into your office, your body language is an



expression of yourself and conveys a message to those around you.

What happens physiologically and psychologically as you GET BIG is that your brain and body will start to release chemicals that will make you feel more confident. You will start to come up with reasons why you should feel more confident, and you will become more confident. Psychology and physiology form a two-way street. You will affect your physical performance by how you think and talk to yourself, and you will affect your psychology by how you carry yourself physically, all the while reinforcing a positive self-image.

***I have found that it is easier to act yourself into a way of thinking than it is to think yourself into a form of acting.*** You must practice GETTING BIG by consciously walking BIG, and reinforcing confidence by self-talking BIG. GETTING BIG will help you to find the confidence you need to perform at your best. One team I worked with that won an NCAA National Championship understands the importance of GETTING BIG and uses signs of success in their facility and locker room to remind them of this key peak performance principle.



## **CAIN'S COACHING POINT:**

**Where will you hang a GET BIG sign where you can see it each day?**

## **SELF-TALK – FINAL THOUGHTS**

During performance, your “final thought” symbolizes the last conscious thought in your head before the next pitch. The moment before the pitcher starts his motion, you want to narrow your mental focus on a word or phrase that mentally facilitates the physical accomplishment you wish to execute. This final thought should reflect a positive mentality and affirm confidence to intensify your focus on the task at hand and thus increase the likelihood of its successful execution.

Too often athletes focus on what they want to avoid, rather than what they want to accomplish. ***When the last thought you give an athlete is negative, negative things usually happen.***

If I tell you not to think about a pink elephant, what is the first thing you think of? A pink elephant. Exactly!

If I tell you not to strike out, what is the first thing you think of? Striking out. Focus on what you want, not what you are trying to avoid. Instead of thinking “don’t strike out, don’t strike out,” focus your energy on being aggressive and hitting the ball hard.

Develop your own final thoughts for particular performance actions. Once you have chosen them, you want to incorporate these final thoughts into your performance routines to enhance the mind-body performance connection. Mentally conditioning a final thought will establish confidence by building a routine rhythm to your performance and pre-pitch routine. Developing

your own final thought process will undoubtedly help give you the best opportunity for performance excellence on each pitch.



**CAIN'S GAME PLAN:**

**What are some final thoughts that you could use in your performance to help keep you consistent at the plate, on defense and on the mound?**

1) \_\_\_\_\_

2) \_\_\_\_\_

3) \_\_\_\_\_

**REALISTIC POSITIVITY**

A positive mentality alone will not grant you performance excellence. Do not get carried away with the thought that a positive mentality is the sole element of success, **because positivity alone will get you nowhere - you must still take massive action.** A positive mentality is, however, essential to the development of a present-moment focus on the process and your overall perception of performance and life. Positive people do better in the face of adversity, and baseball is a game of adversity.

## CHAPTER #4 REVIEW

- ❑ Thoughts manifest through actions and affect outcomes.
- ❑ A positive mentality makes a significant difference between educational self-improvement and self-stagnation, being bored.
- ❑ Defeat limiting beliefs with a positive mentality.
- ❑ Keep a positive self-image.
- ❑ Self-talk is a reflection of self-image.
- ❑ Harness your self-talk through confidence conditioning.
- ❑ Your confidence conditioning statements build a positive mentality.
- ❑ Your confidence resume facilitates development of confident performance.
- ❑ Keep your confidence honest by utilizing an accountability partner.
- ❑ Failure is positive feedback; get better, not bitter.
- ❑ Turn statements of failure into goal-setting exclamations by adding YET.
- ❑ YET – Your Energy Talks.
- ❑ Energy is contagious, so make yours positive.
- ❑ GET BIG with your body language and self-talk.
- ❑ Know that positive thinking alone will not get you anywhere. You must couple your positive thinking with massive action.

## CHAPTER #5

### CHAMPIONSHIP PREPARATION

"The most important thing is how a guy prepares himself to do battle."

**Hank Aaron**  
**Major League Baseball Hall of Famer**

In 2004, the California State University, Fullerton baseball team completed the first half of their season with a 15-16 record. At this midway point in the season, the team made the collective promise to turn their season around by placing their collective faith and trust in their preparation and process. In one of the greatest single-season turnarounds in college baseball history, Cal State Fullerton would go on to win the NCAA Division I National Championship with a final record of 47-22.

The Titans and their head coach George Horton were able to turn their season around with a commitment to the fundamentals and an intense focus on preparation, both physical and mental. I was a member of the Fullerton staff in 2002 and 2003, and I know firsthand that Coach Horton is a firm proponent of competing every day in practice as if it were a national championship game. I've seen firsthand how he is able to replicate championship intensity in practice with proper structure and commitment to the preparation process.

When the team reached the College World Series in Omaha, Coach Horton brought a water bottle filled with dirt from the team's field in Fullerton. Before the start of the College World Series, the team went out onto the field and sprinkled that Fullerton dirt on the mound and in the batter's box of Rosenblatt

Stadium, former Home of the NCAA College World Series. This action served as a reminder to his players of all the hard work and preparation put in every day of practice back home, and that performance on the biggest stage of college baseball was no different than back home.

The game remains the same anywhere you play – nothing changes. It reminded players that the goal was to do the same thing in Omaha that they did every day in training at Fullerton – to continue to play against themselves and the game, throw quality pitches, have quality at-bats and play quality defense. It reminded the team that they compete as hard as anyone in the country on a daily basis in practice and that is what they were going to do in Omaha – nothing changes. It was clear that Horton and the Titans trusted their preparation, because the result took care of itself.

Focusing on preparation and what you can control will give you the best chance for success on the diamond and in life.

## **MENTAL PREPARATION**

Mental preparation is fundamental to peak performance. In the words of John Wooden, “Nothing is better preparation for intense game pressure than countless hours of disciplined effort spent mastering the fundamentals.” In this chapter, we focus on mastering the fundamentals of mental preparation through the implementation of effective mental conditioning practices and techniques.

Performance reflects preparation, and these strategies aim to cultivate a peak performance mentality as you practice for your performances, as well as the practices of your daily life. This

chapter will help you establish a disciplined effort in developing a lifestyle of performance preparation.

## **GAME-LIKE PRACTICE**

Game-like practice is essential for enhanced mental preparation. If you want to perform at a level of excellence, you must practice at a level of excellence. Practice is performance. The dictionary definition of “practice” is “to perform (an activity) or exercise (a skill) repeatedly or regularly in order to improve or maintain one’s proficiency.” This definition illustrates what peak performers must internalize: ***Repetition of quality performance is fundamental to the achievement of excellence in baseball and in life.***

Coaches are always telling players that “You will play like you practice, so you should practice like you play.” This is contingent, however, on making practices game-like. The purpose of game-like simulations is to help familiarize players with the conditions they will face in the heat of competition. Repeated exposure to game-like conditions is the best method to mentally condition for the real game. When your time comes to perform on the big stage, if you already put in the hard work to accustom yourself to the environment, it will pay off through your performance.

Vanderbilt University head baseball coach Tim Corbin actually has his team practice the national anthem. He does the same at all of his camps because of the respect he believes the National Anthem deserves each time it is played.

The celebrated 20<sup>th</sup>-century American author Ray Bradbury said: *“I know you have heard it a thousand times before. But it is true – hard work pays off. If you want to be good, you have to practice, practice, practice. If you do not love something, then do not do it.”*

This sentiment is dead on. If you have the love and desire to be excellent at baseball, practice is a positive, not a negative.

Everyone wants to go to the World Series, but in order to win the championship you must first become a champion. To reach this high level, practice must be of proper quality to render desired results. Repetition of a poor-quality performance will result in just that, whereas excellent quality will produce performance excellence. Remember, repetition alone does not bring rewards; it is the quality and game-likeness of preparation that brings quality performance.

### **REWARDED BEHAVIOR = REPEATED BEHAVIOR**

Developmental psychology espouses that rewarded behavior becomes repeated behavior, true for both poor and quality behavior. By rewarding specific steps in the preparation process when executed properly, the development of skill proficiency is enhanced. Coupled with simulated competition in game-like practices, players place themselves in the best environment to cultivate performance excellence.

What a player wants to hear most is his name attached to a specific positive compliment from a respected authority. As you pass out praise to your teammates, the more specific you can be, the more beneficial the impact of that praise. Telling Tyler that he did a good job means very little because Tyler does not hear exactly what he did to receive the positive compliment. Telling Tyler that he did a great job advancing into scoring position with an excellent dirt ball read rewards him for his hustle and relentless pursuit of the next 90 feet, #Next90. This will yield more of the same effort in the future. Through this positive reinforcement, rewarding proficiency will ultimately improve performance.



## **STRATEGIES FOR GAME-LIKE PRACTICE**

1. **Make it competitive** – have a winner and loser for everything. If there is a winner and a loser when you compete in a game, structure that same competitiveness within your daily practices so that everything you do simulates that competitive intensity. Athletes love competition, so giving athletes more opportunities to compete will increase intensity and enhance development. Giving each player an individual win/loss record for competitions held each day and then posting these win/loss records so that they can be seen each day help to show who the competitors and winners are in your program. Competing against each other sets standards of excellence in practice that will help take your practice competitiveness to the next level.

2. **Different-colored practice uniforms** will help to create a separation between the two teams and give the practice a more competitive flavor. When you put the practice uniform on, it becomes part of your routine and helps an athlete's segmentation from school (boy scout mentality) into baseball player (bounty hunter mentality). Athletes also appear more uniform when in uniform, which seems only appropriate. This emphasizes the importance of the team as a unit, setting the stage for the collective "we" over the individual "me."

If you can break out your game uniforms, this is a great opportunity for each player to see if his uniform fits comfortably and does not hinder any physical movements. It also helps create that competitive environment of two teams going head-to-head to enhance competition.

3. **Bring in umpires when you scrimmage:** This will free up coaches and players on your team from having to make the calls of balls and strikes, and it will also increase the competitive

nature of the scrimmage because it is more game-like. If you cannot get umpires, have a designated person to be the umpire – don't have your catchers calling balls and strikes since it takes away from their game-like mentality.

4. **Use a scoreboard** so that the coaches and athletes can keep track of the stats just as you would in competition. Creating a process-based scoring system in which you give points for specific aspects of performance is also a great way to reward the behavior you want in your team. For example, giving three points to the team whose player executes situational hitting in a scrimmage will reward the type of behavior desired in games. It will also give instant feedback to the team that the focus must be on the process.

## **PROCESS-BASED SCORING SYSTEM**

A strategy to make practice more game-like is to create a process-based scoring system for intra-squad scrimmages. Under the premise that rewarded behavior becomes repeated behavior and measurement is motivation, points are earned for a player's effort and execution of particular skills rather than just points for getting a hit or striking a batter out.

Coaches often choose to use process-based scoring systems during practice to highlight particular skills in which the team must improve. I often recommend coaches begin using this system to focus on one particular skill at a time. As players familiarize themselves with the framework of the system that the coach has implemented, the coach may introduce and highlight more skills to monitor. This process-based scoring system is, like all systems of preparation, one of steady progression. Coaches may even add different dimensions to the scoring system, such

as taking away points or giving points to the other team for anything seen as disrespect in the game.

Here is an example of a process-based scoring system for baseball:

### **PITCHERS**

NO WALKS – 3pts

ANY 1-2-3 INNING – 3pts

3 OUTS IN 12 PITCHES – 2pts

INDUCE DOUBLE PLAY – 2pts

KEEP LEADOFF OFF – 2pts

WIN THE 1-1 PITCH – 2pts

### **HITTERS**

QUALITY AT-BAT –  
2pts

2-OUT RBI HIT – 4pts

STOLEN BASE – 2pts

EXECUTE H&R – 2pts

DIRT BALL READ –  
2pts

BASE ON BALLS –  
2pts

### **DEFENSIVE**

WEB GEM – 3pts

THROW OUT LEAD RUNNER WITH A TAG –  
4pts



#### **CAIN'S COACHING POINT:**

**The process-based scoring system can be changed to fit your program needs, and you can award points for any part of the process that you wish to emphasize.**

I've seen these process-based scoring systems implemented to encourage performance excellence in everything

a team does during preparation. If there is a non-hustle play, two points go on the board for the other team. If there is team energy with involvement, such as players getting excited for a great at-bat, they get two points on the scoreboard for energy and engagement, because energy and engagement are two very important parts of the process of playing championship baseball. Between innings, if the teams get off or on the field in 12 seconds, points are awarded because getting on and off the field is significant in doing little things at a high level.

It is the little things like getting on and off the field that look good but, more importantly, they add pace and tempo to the game and give you a competitive advantage - you can suffocate the other team by being ready to play before they are and the umpire can put their leadoff hitter into yellow lights by rushing him into the box for the first pitch of the inning.

"Failure isn't really failure. It's a necessary part of the learning process. In life, there are winners and learners. The only time you become a loser is when you stop learning."

**Brian Cain**  
**Peak Performance Coach**

## **EXTRA EFFORTS OF EXCELLENCE**

To further emphasize the significance of excellent preparation in all things, no matter how small, let's explore the importance of extra efforts. By elaborating on the importance of the aforementioned example of getting on and off the field in a timely manner, the crossover effect from preparation to competitive performance becomes clear. For example, if you are facing a good arm, you want to make sure that your defense gets off the field as soon as possible so that they have the most amount of time to get ready to hit as possible. The extra effort to

get off the field quickly gives your team more time to see the pitcher's warm-up pitches and visualize having success off of him before getting to the plate.

This example of extra effort applies on defense as well. It is critical for defense and pitcher to get on the field quickly and be ready to go. This allows a team to control the tempo of the game. If they hustle onto the field and are ready before the other team, it is possible to hurry the opponent and force them to get out of their routine. This instantly gives you an advantage. Extra effort can make them uncomfortable and therefore more likely to make errors in execution.

## **PRACTICE MAKES PERMANENT**

Practice does not make perfect; practice makes permanent. It is the quality of your practice that gives you the best chance for quality performance. If your practice is high or low quality, or inconsistent, you can be certain your performance will reflect it. Also, notice that I am highlighting quality instead of quantity. I mentioned the value of quality repetition earlier, and it cannot be overemphasized. You can practice something all day long, but if you have practiced the wrong technique, all that preparation means little. It is not the quantity, but the quality that counts. This is also why proper mental conditioning is so significant, because if you do not exercise a winning mentality, you are bound to lose before competition even starts.

It is your obligation in your pursuit of excellence to utilize your preparation time to make the right skills permanent. As athletes, we do not often, if ever, have control over the situations in competition. In practice, however, the control is ours. In practice, you control the repetition of your actions and running through game-like scenarios. In practice, you can try something over and

over again. Take advantage of that time, because we all know that when game time rolls around and the stakes are elevated, you only have one shot to get it right. This is also why elevating the level of practice to simulate game-like intensity is beneficial. Recognize that practice makes permanent; control the quality of preparation – it will determine how you perform.

## **PAY ATTENTION TO DETAIL**

The practice of mental preparation is founded on attention to detail. When you give the little details the same treatment as the larger ones, you give yourself the most opportunities to employ techniques of the mental game. ***Excellence in small things is excellence in all things.***

This applies not only to when you practice your sport, but to cultivating your mental preparation through daily actions representative of that preparation mentality. With the adoption of this lifestyle, the practice of mental conditioning becomes routine and this perspective becomes habit. Daily tasks become performance preparation. All the more reason to seize the day and take PRIDE (Personal Responsibility In Daily Excellence) in your preparation.

## **BIT BY AN ELEPHANT?**

Have you ever been bitten by an elephant? What about a mosquito? My guess is that you have never been bitten by an elephant but have been bitten by plenty of mosquitos. Please understand baseball and life are the same way. It is the little things that add up over time. It is not the BIG elephants that keep us from achieving excellence; it is the small daily decisions, the metaphorical mosquito bites, that either take us where we want to go or hold us back.

## **PERFORMANCE INTENSITY**

If you want to improve your performance in games, the best way to begin is to start increasing the intensity of your practices. This can be accomplished by increasing the tempo and pace in practice. The harder and faster you compete in practice, the more comfortable you feel in games. Award-winning author Jon Gordon wrote in his book *Training Camp*: *“What greatness really requires is a willingness to be uncomfortable. Here’s the deal. If you are always striving to get better, then you are always growing. And if you are growing, then you are not comfortable. To be the best, you have to be willing to be uncomfortable and embrace it as part of your growth process.”*

***You must learn in practice to get comfortable with being uncomfortable.***

If you can make decisions and actions happen faster in practice than in games, you are giving yourself the best chance to play at your best against teams or players who have more talent. When you face these opponents, the pace of the game tends to speed up. If you practice under up-tempo conditions, you will be more capable of holding your own, because you will have established – mentally and physically – the endurance and stamina through your preparation.

Remember, tempo and pace are measured under time. Find ways you can use a stopwatch in practice to pick up the pace of play and make your pace of play faster than it will be on game day.

**BE QUICK, BUT DO NOT HURRY**

One of Coach Wooden's great maxims was the advice, "Be quick, but do not hurry." This is significant because you want to increase the tempo of practice without compromising the quality of the practice. This is an important balancing act in your performance preparation. If you work too fast, the more mistakes you will make and the less you improve your game. This rule is applicable to the development of both physical skills and mental skills.

Coach Wooden's advice, however, serves as a warning to those who want to shortcut the process. Before you increase the intensity of performance, you should be proficient in the fundamental skills necessary for such performance. This seems intuitive, but when people hurry to play at the highest level, they often run headfirst into the brick wall of reality – the reality that there is no shortcut to excellence. This is why it is important to make sure to practice technique before you increase tempo. It is good to be a quick study, but some things should not be rushed. Sometimes the best way to learn something is to take care and be methodical, and then steadily increase the pace of your practice.

In order to prepare for performance, you should push the pace in practice and make yourself uncomfortable. ***It is absolutely necessary to learn how to be comfortable with being uncomfortable*** if you want to perform at a level of excellence. It is important to practice a fast pace and quick tempo, but do not hurry your preparation.

## **THE "STEP UP" HAPPENS EVERY DAY**

A lot of athletes say they will "step up their game" when they play their division rivals or that they will "step it up" in the big game. As a peak performance coach, this is both perplexing and insightful. It is perplexing because if you have the ability to "step



up," why are you not "stepping up" at today's practice? It is simultaneously insightful because it shows the mentality of the player(s) saying this, illustrating an immature perspective towards performance. These players obviously do not understand the value of excellent preparation.

There is no "step up." If you can play at the highest level by stepping up, the step up must occur every day so that there is no step up. There is no conceivable reason to not play at your best during competition; there isn't even a conceivable reason to not do it in practice. As Michael Jordan said, *"I play to win, whether during practice or a real game, and I will not let anything get in the way of me and my competitive enthusiasm to win."* As His Airness would probably ask, why "step up" in the big game when it is what you should be doing every day in practice?

As we have discussed, performance reflects preparation. You will not maximize your potential if you pursue excellence only once in a while during practice sessions. If you wish to be a success, you must pursue excellence all the time. The "step up" happens every day. ***Excellence is a lifestyle, not an event.***

## **MEASUREMENT = MOTIVATION**

Dave Serrano, the head baseball coach at University of California, Irvine 2005-2007, Cal State Fullerton 2007-2011 and the current head baseball coach at the University of Tennessee, is a true Master of the Mental Game. As head coach of the UCI Anteaters, Coach Serrano implemented mental conditioning as the foundation of the program. One of the keys to Coach Serrano's success with his team was his understanding that measurement equals motivation.

The best way to motivate yourself is to measure your progress. Simply believing that you will give your best without specific measurement of performance is unrealistic. Coach Serrano recognizes this and, with his attention to detail, he measures all the preparation of his team to motivate his players and to instill mental conditioning techniques. His simple utilization of a stopwatch is all it takes. By recording anything from the times running out of the batter's box to first base after a hit to the team's transitions from one drill to another, to the infielders having to make a play at first base with no live runner, Coach Serrano gives his team measurements to gauge their daily efforts compared to their best times on record. In doing so, players on the team are held accountable for their efforts in their daily preparation, which makes the whole team practice harder and at a higher level on a consistent basis.

## **THE POWER OF TIME**

During preparation, a stopwatch or video camera is one of the best accountability partners for a peak performer. The stopwatch is simple to use, unbiased, and blatantly honest about your performance effort. As the last section espoused, measurement equals motivation, and time is one of the great motivators in life. The utilization of a stopwatch is sure to motivate you to constantly improve your times, wherever appropriate, during your preparation routines.

The use of a stopwatch anywhere, from lifting weights to simulating competitive game time scenarios, will draw the excellence out of your performance. By pressuring players to accomplish game-like scenarios in a limited amount of time, if not a shorter time than in during competition, they will learn to cope with uncomfortable situations. This can be applied to baseball by timing how long it takes for the defense to get on and

off the field. Ultimately, this forces players to work faster than they normally would if there were no stopwatch, and as fast or faster than they will need to be in a game.

Utilizing a stopwatch in your performance preparation will immediately increase the game-like speed, intensity, and tempo while you practice. You will also learn to cope with pressure and feel comfortable with uncomfortable situations, because on the edge of discomfort is where learning takes place.

Think about how you can implement a stopwatch in your preparation to help create an environment of pressure and discomfort to enhance your performance development. By keeping track of time and pushing yourself, the game will reward you for your efforts in your competitive performance.



**CAIN'S GAME PLAN:**

**What can you measure to make your preparation process more competitive and to make you train with a tempo faster than you might have to in a game so you can be comfortable with being uncomfortable?**

1) \_\_\_\_\_

2) \_\_\_\_\_

3) \_\_\_\_\_

**RECORD PROGRESS**

One of the most effective methods to measure performance improvement is to regularly record your progress in a peak performance journal. When players take the initiative to record the details of their progress in a journal of some kind, they hold

themselves accountable for their preparation. Such a journal can be used to keep quantifiable measurements of preparation drills, to help remove the emotions from daily preparation and to record factual assessments. Journaling can also be used to record reflections of daily performance, helping to understand how your feelings that day impacted your performance.

For each day of performance preparation, write down notes, important lessons, areas in need of improvement, a goal for the next day based off today's practice, and anything else that applies to your performance. Recording progress grants the opportunity to apply the three steps of performance improvement. It enables you to reflect on the information you record, generates awareness of areas of improvement, and enables you to create and implement new strategies for performance development. When you know what giving your best is and it is on record, you can better judge your effort with objectivity. This speeds up the learning and the improvement process. In sum, when you record progress, you make record progress.

## **HOW TO KEEP A PEAK PERFORMANCE BASEBALL JOURNAL**

The peak performance journal is a tool to help you further develop your mental skills for peak performance. Remember, you must be in control of yourself before you can control your performance. ***The first step in gaining self-control is to develop an awareness of your performance, so that you can recognize when you are distracted from the present moment and the most appropriate mental state for success.***

### **DEVELOP AWARENESS**

Developing awareness is the first step towards consistent levels of performance. Remember the three steps to performance

change taught by Harvey Dorfman: (1) Awareness, (2) Strategy, (3) Implementation of the strategy. This journal provides you with an opportunity to record the different strategies you are working on to maintain and regain self-control.

## **GET IT OUT OF YOUR HEAD AND ON PAPER**

The long-range goal is to develop various strategies you can implement in stressful situations to help you perform at your best when it means the most. If you choose to, the peak performance journal also can be a place where you can record your feelings and the personal knowledge that you are gaining about yourself, the game, your teammates, and any other factors. This is one of the few times in your life that you will ever direct so much energy toward one specific goal. There is a lot to learn from your pursuit of excellence. This journal will give you something to reflect on after your high-level participation is completed.

The journal also can serve as a place where you can express your feelings in writing or drawings. It is beneficial to get these feelings out in some way so that they do not build up and lead to unproductive tension. The use of colored pens is often helpful to express yourself, even if you are not an artist. Research has shown this strategy to be a beneficial stress management technique.

## **CREATE A ROUTINE FOR WRITING**

You do not have to make an entry every day, but should strive to be consistent in your writing routine. ***Remember, to be consistently successful you must be able to describe what you do as a process/routine.*** Make your journal entries as routine as

possible by writing at the same time of day or in a consistent place, such as your locker, desk or next to your bed at home.

The journal is an informal record of your thoughts and experiences as you train for high-level performance. If you choose to have someone read your journal, please feel free to delete or cover up any parts that you think are too personal to share. The objective for someone who is reviewing your writing should be to guide you and to make suggestions that may facilitate your self-exploration in reaching your goals.

I highly recommend that you try the peak performance baseball journal as a strategy to learn about yourself and speed up your learning curve. Remember, it's the start that stops most people, so commit to it for the next 2-3 weeks and feel free to write whatever comes to your mind.

You can invest in a Peak Performance Journal at [www.BrianCain.com](http://www.BrianCain.com) on our Products page or simply use a notebook and pen or a digital-based program like Evernote.

The following section includes suggestions with accompanying questions/descriptors that can help guide your entries. As with all things, you will become more comfortable with the journal process as you develop a routine over time.

### **SAMPLE QUESTIONS TO WRITE ABOUT**

1. **Peak Performance:** What does it feel like when you play and/or practice at your best? Describe some of your most enjoyable experiences playing baseball. What have you learned from these moments when you are playing at your best?

2. **Stressors:** Write down your thoughts about various events outside baseball that are distracting to you. For example, parents, girlfriends, peers, job hassles, financial issues, community (hometown expectations). Do the same for distractions on the field, such as importance of game, location, spectators, etc.

3. **Coaching Style:** What do you need from your coaches? How can you best help them help you reach your goals? What can you do to make your relationship with your coaches more productive?

4. **Teammates:** What do you want from your teammates? What can you give them? How do you relate and work with your teammates? Write about your relationship with other teammates. Any unfinished business you need to work through?

5. **Confidence:** At this time, how confident are you in regard to achieving your goals? What can you do differently to act more confidently? What can you ask of yourself, coach and/or teammates?

6. **Manifestations of Your Stress:** How do you experience high levels of anxiety in performance? Assess your thoughts, physiological and behavioral reactions. What strategies did you use to help intervene with your stress and keep balance?

7. **Awareness and Concentration:** What changes do you observe in your performance when you are aware? What concentration methods are you experimenting with? What are your ABC's or focal points for various skills?

## **TRUST YOUR PREPARATION**

Baseball is clearly a game of preparation. Every single day you get to the field, you have an opportunity to get better. Most teams take a full batting practice before each game, which gives you not only a chance to groove your swing, but to master your craft defensively as well.

Kansas City Royals Major League outfielder Alex Gordon is obsessed with his pre-game preparation. With an extreme dedication and commitment to detail, Gordon has earned a tremendous amount of respect from his teammates and even got many of them to improve their own pre-game preparation. His strict routines give him the consistency and confidence to compete at a high level every single day.

Therefore, preparation is everything to a baseball player. It is taking all the elements necessary for performance excellence and practicing them tirelessly and with a relentless energy to achieve progress. As you read through this book, integrate all the material into your preparation. The constant practice of mental conditioning with your physical conditioning is of utmost significance to reaching the pinnacle of performance excellence. As the great master of preparation, Coach John Wooden, used to say, "Failing to prepare is preparing to fail."

Most importantly, trust your preparation. Placing trust in your performance preparation and taking pride in the fact that you are doing things the right way will make all the difference in your journey. The climb up The Mountain of Excellence will undoubtedly be treacherous at times, but if you trust that you have prepared at a consistent effort of excellence, your preparation is bound to reward you.



## CHAPTER #5 REVIEW

- ❑ "Nothing is better for intense game pressure than countless hours of disciplined effort spent mastering the fundamentals."

***Coach John Wooden***

- ❑ Repetition alone does not bring rewards; it is the quality that matters.
- ❑ Rewarded behavior becomes repeated behavior.
- ❑ Make practices competitive.
- ❑ Utilize a process-based scoring system to reward desired performance.
- ❑ Extra efforts give you the competitive advantage.
- ❑ Practice does not make perfect; practice makes permanent.
- ❑ Attention to details makes the difference.
- ❑ "Be quick, but do not hurry."

***Coach John Wooden***

- ❑ You must learn to be comfortable with being uncomfortable.
- ❑ The "step up" happens every day.
- ❑ Measurement equals motivation; you treasure what you measure.
- ❑ A stopwatch is a great motivator and accountability partner.
- ❑ When you record progress, you make record progress.
- ❑ "Failing to prepare is preparing to fail."

***Coach John Wooden***

## CHAPTER #6

# PERFORMANCE ROUTINES HOW YOU PLAY ONE POINT AT A TIME

"What is difficult becomes habitual, what is habitual becomes easy, what is easy is beautiful."

*Constantin Stanislavski  
Inventor of "Method Acting"*

***The secrets of success are hidden in the routines of our daily lives.*** You can know all the information within the previous chapters, but if you do not implement this information, then what good does it do for you? The purpose of any routine is to build more trust and consistency in performance.

Routines are effective because they give structure by providing a consistent starting point to activate a regular procedure. In baseball, a consistent frame of reference is essential to performance excellence by providing the mind and body a sense of security even under conditions that remain out of your control. The familiarity of routines establishes good performance habits and your investment in cultivating them will pay big dividends on your pursuit of excellence.

This chapter will explore routines that will implement the information you learned in the previous chapters. This chapter will discuss routines that keep you in the present moment and focused on the process of playing one pitch at a time; routines that give you the necessary perspective to maintain a positive mentality; and routines to establish during your preparation,

placing you in a position to give yourself the best chance for success.

## **PRE-GAME & POST-GAME ROUTINES**

Pre-game and post-game routines are important for all coaches and players to develop. The purpose of these routines is to transform your mentality from your “realself” (boy scout) to your “performing self” (bounty hunter) and vice versa.

Most players have pre-game routines. Some individual pre-game routines I've witnessed range from players listening to a particular song or playlist, putting on their uniforms in a particular order, doing a certain set of stretches, and leaving the team to do mental imagery in silence for a couple minutes by themselves. Teams also have routines they follow before going out to perform in games, whether they are team warm-ups, team meetings to cover the scouting report, or batting practice schemes. The purpose of these routines is to make you feel comfortable by giving you a sense of familiarity, which brings confidence, while transforming you into your competitive mentality.

Pre-game rituals are even more important to individuals and teams when you have to go on the road and play in an unfamiliar environment. When you approach each pitch with the same routine, you allow yourself to get comfortable when others are uncomfortable. Whether you are playing at home, on the road, winning or losing, you have the ability to be immersed in the moment and no external factors are important to you.

Post-game routines are a system of steps that allow the coaches and players to decompress after competition. Most players' post-game routines consist of having a brief post-game meeting with

their coach or team, taking off their uniforms, cleaning themselves up, getting dressed, and calling it a day. Post-game routines, however, have the potential to be much more significant than this process of “going through the motions.” Later in this chapter you’ll learn how to create a post-game routine that enhances your pursuit of post-performance excellence so that you can extract as much learning as possible from each experience.

## **IN-GAME ROUTINES**

An in-game routine provides the player and coach with a set of mental checkpoints. Pitchers have a certain routine for getting on the mound, hitters clear the box when they get to the plate, and fielders step into their circle of focus before each pitch. By going through a series of mental checkpoints, athletes place themselves in the present moment and focus on the process at hand. In the heat of competition, these routines serve as a chance for athletes to control themselves and their performances.



### **CAIN'S COACHING POINT:**

**The most important part of your pre-pitch routine in baseball is that you take a deep breath. Taking a deep breath before the pitch as a part of your pre-pitch routine helps you to separate this one from the others; it keeps you in the moment and in control of yourself.**

**THIS IS THE NUMBER ONE, MOST IMPORTANT PART OF THIS ENTIRE BOOK AS IT RELATES TO ON-FIELD PERFORMANCE AND PLAYING ONE PITCH AT A TIME! LEARN TO TAKE A DEEP BREATH AS PART OF YOUR PRE-PITCH ROUTINE.**

Make sure that your coaches and teammates are aware of your in-game routines. This is important because they can act as accountability partners during performance and can remind you to check back into your routines if you are in a funk. You should also learn the in-game routines of your teammates so you can return their focus on a familiar frame of reference. In-game routines are imperative to self-control, giving you the best opportunity to execute with performance excellence.

## **CIRCLE OF FOCUS**

Inside of your in-competition routine, you step into your circle of focus. The circle of focus is an imaginary circle that you step into and engage in a present-moment focus with your energy and attention. For example, the infielders step into their circle of focus when the pitcher starts his motion, the hitter uses the batter's box as his circle of focus, and the base runner uses extending into this lead. Stepping into this metaphorical circle of focus is a critical part of the in-competition routine when you get into the present moment, with your energy and attention going out while competing one pitch at a time.

As part of the in-competition routine, you want to use one to three mental strategies to keep your focus locked into the present:

1. Deep breath on a focal point
2. Visualization/mental imagery of execution of the play
3. Verbalize – self-talk of final thought/ABC's

## **CAIN'S COACHING POINT:**



**Because we cannot see if the athlete is doing mental imagery and we cannot see if he is using his final thought, as coaches, we want our athletes to take a deep breath each pitch so we can see that they are in control of themselves and competing with their routine.**

These strategies will assist your focus on performing in the present moment. Routine use of one or more of the strategies will help you enter that circle of focus and gain control of your mind. Mind control leads to body control, which leads to skill/performance control, and being in control of all aspects of yourself gives you the best chance for performance excellence.

### **MIND CONTROL LEADS TO BODY CONTROL LEADS TO SKILL CONTROL**



### **VERBALIZING YOUR FINAL THOUGHT**

We have discussed how athletes use self-talk during performance, and an athlete's final thought builds upon the self-talk concept in a more baseball-specific manner. As discussed earlier, the final thought is the last thought in an athlete's mind before performing a specific aspect of the game. Before making a pitch, you want to think to yourself a particular positive phrase that intensifies your focus on the accomplishment of that pitch. You want to integrate this final thought into your performance routine to strengthen the mind-body performance connection. Mentally conditioning a final thought will establish a routine

rhythm to your performance, giving you the best opportunity for performance excellence on a consistent basis pitch to pitch.

Your final thought will make a big difference in your performance because a positive and aggressive final thought will give you the best chance to execute at a high level.

## **DRILLS FOR FINAL THOUGHTS**

Practicing final thoughts is important to maximize their effectiveness on a routine basis. With the baseball teams I work with, I have the players verbalize their final fundamental thoughts out loud in a practice setting. I have the pitchers tell me their last thought out loud, and I listen as well as watch the physical execution of the drill. Out loud, they are saying their final thought of "Attack the zone!" We make three pitches with the verbalization of the final thought so that I can hear what their final thought is and see them using it with the rhythm of their body. ***Their final thought is always one of their ABC's for performance as mentioned earlier in this book.***

If you know a teammate's final thought, then give him positive encouragement during the game. If his last thought is "Attack the zone," then you might say, "Let's attack the zone and go after him right here!" after a missed location to help the pitcher refocus on his final thought.

Peak performers also utilize mental imagery as a component of their performance routines. The use of mental imagery is an excellent way to psychologically prepare yourself for performance by visualizing yourself executing a specific performance task within the game.

## **SUPERMAN SEGMENTATION AND SEPARATION**

Segmentation routines are used to help separate yourself from the many different hats you wear. If you are reading this and you are a college or high school athlete, you have school, social activities, and sport to separate in your life; if you are a professional, you have at least the latter two. Inside of those different aspects of your life, you may wear the hat of son, brother, dad, significant other, friend, etc. One of the best techniques to help segment and separate the many hats you wear is to use something physical (perhaps your shoes!) to help you change your mental state. It is here we look to Superman for guidance.

Superman is the ultimate pro at segmentation and separation prior to and after his performances. He walks into the phone booth as Clark Kent, super nerd (student), and comes out as Superman (baseball player and TRUE one-pitch warrior), superhero. His self-transformative process is the perfect example for peak performance segmentation routines. The nearest phone booth is the symbolic equivalent of his locker room: As he changes his clothes, his perspective changes, as he adopts a peak performance mentality.

One baseball team I worked with took this principle so far as to get a Superman logo for the outside of their locker room door to serve as a reminder that when you walked into the locker room to change your clothes, you were also changing your mentality from student (Clark Kent) to athlete (Superman).





As you take off each item of your street clothes and put on that baseball uniform or T-shirt and shorts for conditioning, think about the transformation taking place and the necessary change in mentality. Release the mental bricks from your personal life as you get into your performance mentality, or release the mental bricks of your performance after practice as you return yourself to your personal life. Changing your clothes is a process to help you separate the mentality you need to succeed in the various segments of your life, by breaking down the process into various segments. The establishment of these routines gives you the best chance to be in the present for whatever you are about to perform, and to have a consistent mentality to be where you need to be when you need to be there.

## **MOVE THROUGH THE HOURGLASS**



Another way to think about the process of routines, segmentation and separation is to imagine an hourglass as a visual example of how your pre-performance and post-performance routines will work. The shape of the hourglass reflects the segmentation and separation process, with a definite start point (top of the hourglass) and end point (bottom of the hourglass) with a defined middle section.

This hourglass shape mirrors the self-transformative routine because you begin the process as either your “realself” or “performing self” and end as the opposite. The hourglass transformation is marked by some physical routine actions such as changing clothes, where you strip down from your school clothes to your team uniform. When you are naked during the process of changing, you are in the middle of that transformative process – the middle of the hourglass.

Changing your clothes is common routine for segmentation and separation; but a number of other routines, such as turning off the cell phone, putting on your batting gloves or taking a shower, can also mark the self-transformation.



#### **CAIN'S COACHING POINT:**

**I suggest using your cell phone as a tool to help you transform yourself and as a reminder to stay in the present moment. When you turn off your cell phone, it is a sign that you are shifting your mentality from student to athlete, and that you are letting go of the academics, social media, significant other, friends, family and other potential distractions that could keep you from being the ultimate athlete. When you turn off that cell phone, you are going to feel yourself moving through your mental hourglass and becoming a peak performer.**

The athletes I work with hardly ever turn their cell phones off, so when they do, that means they are going to be doing something special. You have got to treat practice and games like they are special opportunities for development, because they are. Let nothing outside of baseball interfere with mentally preparing for performance.

## **CAIN'S COACHING POINT:**



**If you are a coach, I suggest you get practice uniforms for your team, something as simple as the same T-shirt with their numbers. This will help your athletes with the segmentation process as they change into a uniform. You will teach them the importance of the mindset that they need to have when that uniform is on. Invest the time to educate them on the importance of changing the clothes and changing the mindset to get present.**

After you turn your cell phone off, you then start the process of changing your clothes. As you take off your shirt, let go of the test you failed. As you take off your pants, let go of the person who cut you off on your drive into practice. As you take off your shoes, there go the issues you are having at home. As you physically change your clothes, you are ridding yourself of all that mental baggage and turning yourself into the ultimate athlete. As you move toward the middle of the hourglass, you become fully present and fully focused on what you plan to accomplish today at practice.

Then, as you put on your performance gear, you feel yourself getting more energized and more focused. As you lace up your cleats, you feel locked in and prepared to perform to the best of your abilities, striving for performance excellence. Finally, you come out on the other end of the hourglass, mentally prepared to DOMINATE THE DAY! By following this hourglass segmentation and separation routine, you are setting the stage for a quality performance.

**WHEN IS THE GLADIATOR READY FOR BATTLE?**



The last thing you do before performance should be part of a physical routine to signal you are ready to perform. One of the best illustrations of this is in the movie *Gladiator*, when Maximus (Russell Crowe) reaches down for a bit of earth to rub between his hands and then throws the remnants back to the ground. This is his pre-game routine symbolizing he has gathered his battle mentality. It is a sign that Maximus is in the present moment, nothing can distract his focus, and he is ready to perform in war.

Develop your own pre-game routine to collect your performance mentality. I often suggest that you take a moment and retie your spikes to check into your performance state of mind. By doing this, you lace it up and lock it in. NBA superstar LeBron James powders his hands and tosses the remnants in the air, in an act similar to that of Maximus. Many hitters I work with will grab the bat by the barrel and walk to home plate doing the octagon walk (walking like a UFC Fighter going to the Octagon) and will walk to the plate acting confident and with HUGE body language. Whatever the physical act may be, use it to activate your performance mentality and enter your circle of focus. Let yourself know that you are Gladiator ready and going to battle on the diamond as a TRUE one-pitch warrior.

### **FOCAL POINTS, DEEP BREATHS, SELF-CONTROL**

Whenever you perform, it is important to have and utilize focal points. Focal points are mental checkpoints that you go to throughout your journey up The Mountain of Excellence as a part of your in-competition routine. You check in on your mental and emotional state and, when necessary, bring yourself back into the present moment. Baseball players could use a spot on the scoreboard or somewhere in the stadium as a focal point that

they go to and take a deep breath between plays or when the game starts to speed up on them.

In an amazing ESPN *E:60* featuring Evan Longoria, he spoke about using the top of the left field foul pole as his focal point to help him slow down and stay in control. The good thing about using the top of the left field foul pole is that every field and stadium in the country has a foul pole. This technique allows players to have a routine in which they are able to look at their focal point, take a deep breath and get back to a calm, focused and centered place in the present moment ready for the next pitch. ***Remember, you must be in control of yourself before you can control your performance, and the #1 way to get control of yourself is to take a deep breath.***

The routine use of a focal point and a deep breath will put you in control of yourself and in a better place mentally and physically, giving you the best chance for success.



### **CAIN'S GAME PLAN:**

**What is a focal point you can use at your practice field to help you regain control?**

---

---

### **TAKE A DEEP BREATH**

The deep breath is an important part of any performance routine, because the breath connects you to the present moment. Taking a deep breath pulls you right back to the "here" and the "now." The deep breath brings oxygen into your system, slows down your heart rate, clears your mental state and puts you back in control of yourself.



### **CAIN'S GAME PLAN:**

**When, as a part of your pre-pitch routine, can you take a deep breath?**

---

---

As a baseball coach, you want to see your players breathe between each pitch so that you have a visual reference point to identify where your players are at mentally. Having them take a deep breath enables you as the coach to recognize when players are letting the game speed up on them and if they are working a process to help them settle back down and stay in control of their emotions. In pressure situations, often the first thing to break down will be the player's routine. Once a player loses his routine, next goes his mind control, then his physical performance. Make sure to take your deep breaths during performance to keep your head in YOUR game.

### **ROUTINE PERFORMANCE REVIEW**

A routine review of your most recent performance is one of the best post-game routines you can establish on your pursuit of performance excellence. Keeping a peak performance journal chronicles your progress and development in your mental and physical conditioning, providing you with a valuable resource for self-improvement. This gives you the ability to reflect upon past performances and recall how you performed, how you were feeling, what you believe you need to improve, what performance adjustments you must make, whether or not past performance adjustments worked, etc. In the previous chapter I addressed how recorded progress becomes record progress, and making the act of recording performances a routine is the first step in the right direction.

The best time to integrate this performance routine review is directly after performance, while it is fresh in your mind. Record all the information about your performance that is applicable to future improvement. As you push yourself to excellence, challenge yourself to become better by being self-critical and not being merely content with a solid performance. Make sure, however, that you also give some focus to what you did well. Doing this will serve as a reminder to you to continue performing these aspects of the game and will enable you to catch yourself if those aspects of your game start slipping. This is all invaluable information for developing your performance to become a peak performer in baseball.

## **MAKE IT ROUTINE**

A routine is a skill that needs to be practiced regularly so that it becomes, well, routine. You cannot just do a routine once and expect to have it show up for you in the competitive arena of baseball. The routine has to be something you do on a daily basis in practice. Game-like practice is critical to your mental game development because it enhances your ability to stick to your routines in pressure situations. Ultimately, the purpose of routines is to provide something physical to assist us with something mental.

***Remember, practice makes permanent.*** NOT *PRACTICE MAKES PERFECT* OR *PERFECT PRACTICE MAKES PERFECT*. ELIMINATE THE WORD *PERFECT* and get into the reality that NOTHING is perfect and that you must be able to handle the adversity of life and this game if you are going to be a peak performer.

You want to drill these routines during your preparation, making them such a permanent part of your performance process that you unconsciously tune into a predetermined mindset for

performance excellence. It is also worth noting that you should approach your routine in the same manner you approach the entire performance – with quality effort, attention to detail, and present-moment focus on the process.

Breaking down all elements of your performance into routines will ultimately make it a routine performance and give you the structure that will enable you to develop performance excellence and play one pitch at a time. Making performance skills routine ultimately makes the experience of climbing The Mountain of Excellence feel much simpler and gives you a tremendous boost of confidence.

When the game of life throws your routine into a tailspin, shift into the *compensate and adjust* – find a way to get it done routine, which can be very beneficial in the short term but will not provide you with the consistency you need to succeed in the long term.



## CHAPTER #6 REVIEW

- ❑ The secrets of success are hidden in the routines of our daily lives.
- ❑ Pre-game and post-game routines are important to get yourself into and out of your performance mentality.
- ❑ In-game routines enhance self-control.
- ❑ Step into your circle of focus during performance.
- ❑ Establish a final thought for performance tasks.
- ❑ Superman used segmentation and separation techniques, and so should you.
- ❑ Move through the hourglass for performance self-transformation.
- ❑ Lace it up and lock it in to be Gladiator ready.
- ❑ During performance, use focal points to mentally check in.
- ❑ Integrate taking a deep breath into your performance routines.
- ❑ Performance routines must be regularly practiced to maximize their potentials.

## CHAPTER #7

### RECOGNIZE, RELEASE, REFOCUS

"Whether you have a great game or a terrible game, tomorrow's another day and you've got to come out and compete."

*David Wright*  
*Major League 3<sup>rd</sup> Baseman*

Recognizing your physical, emotional and mental state within the context of your competitive environment is critical to staying in control of yourself, thereby giving yourself the best opportunity for success.

The development of a routine in which you recognize where you are at mentally, emotionally and physically and have a release to use when you are in a negative place so that you can refocus on the next pitch is an essential part of playing the game one pitch at a time.

This chapter will give you the skills to develop your own one-pitch-at-a-time mental management system to keep your state of mind active and engaged in the moment as you journey up The Mountain of Excellence.

#### **RECOGNIZING YOUR SIGNAL LIGHTS**

The most challenging aspect of the mental game is learning to recognize when your performance is taking a turn for the worse and then developing a system to make the necessary corrections to return to a place of performance excellence.

The recognition that you are having a performance breakdown is the primary and most crucial step in the process of playing one pitch at a time. Recognizing where you are – mentally, emotionally, and physically – is called your Awareness To Win. Nobody is perfect. All baseball coaches and players lose control of themselves on occasion, but it is the performer who can correct himself the quickest who tends to perform consistently and, ultimately, has more success.

## **SIGNAL LIGHTS FOR BASEBALL EXPLAINED**

If you are driving a car and you come to a green light, you would naturally GO! If you are driving a car and the light turns yellow, some of us would slow down while others would speed up, depending on where we are in relation to the light. When you come to a red light, however, you must stop or you are going to crash and burn. Now, if you are reading this chuckling to yourself about the time you ran a red light and didn't cause an accident or get caught by the police, then I am with you. However, we must caution against such consistent action – because you might run a red light once and live, but do it routinely and you will crash and burn.



### **OFFICER CAIN'S COACHING POINT:**

***"Be aware of your signal lights in baseball. If you run through red lights, you will crash and burn. Play as many pitches as you can in green lights to give yourself the best chance for success."***

Performance awareness in baseball is similar to driving a car on the road. When you have green lights (positive, confident, specific, and aggressive thoughts and feelings), you are in control of yourself. In performance, you encounter yellow lights (hopeful,

uncertain, vague, and timid thoughts and feelings), which occur when something negative happens to take you out of a green light mentality. If your yellow lights are not recognized and addressed, then you will often find yourself in red lights (negative, dejected, apathetic, and destructive thoughts and feelings). Playing in yellow or red lights is a recipe for beating yourself with a poor performance.

The easiest way for you to think about your signal lights is this:

**Green** – You are giving yourself the best opportunity for performance excellence.

**Yellow** – You are starting to lose the mentality conducive to peak performance.

**Red** – You are totally out of control and it is reflecting in your performance.

The goal of all peak performers is to play the game of baseball with green lights as much as possible, while focusing on the next 90 feet of the journey.

## **CAUSES OF YELLOW & RED LIGHTS**

One thing that makes baseball such a unique and special game is the amount of failure every player experiences. One of the most common causes of yellow and red lights for baseball players is compounding mistakes. You must be able to release your poor at-bats and not take them to the field with you, or vice versa. Your performance routines give you a place to go when you are not playing well. Nothing will remove you from your green light mentality faster than fear of failure. When competition begins, yellow and red lights could result from making a mistake, an

umpire making a bad call, a coach's criticism, fans getting on your nerves, your opponent talking trash, or any number of other things that can become stuck in your head.

Adversity comes in all forms, physical and mental, and does not have to involve events within your performance environment. The world outside of your performance arena also can affect your performance if you are not in control of yourself. These might include that grudge against your coach, an embarrassing family member in the stands, the schoolwork you must accomplish or your latest love interest. Do not let these things distract you from your present-moment focus and peak performance mentality of competing one pitch at a time. Focusing on what you are trying to avoid, instead of what you are trying to accomplish, is a recipe for disastrous performance and a signal that you are in a yellow or red light.

In baseball, if your mind is illuminated by the red lights of a negative mentality, you are nearly guaranteed to be on the losing end of your competition. Focusing on what you are trying to avoid instead of what you are trying to accomplish is a recipe for disastrous performance in baseball and in life.

### **THREE WAYS TO RECOGNIZE YOUR SIGNAL LIGHTS**

There are three major areas in which you can develop your performance awareness and learn to better recognize your signal lights. The three areas in which you can often recognize where you are at mentally, physically, and emotionally are these:

1. Self-talk – What you are saying to yourself
2. Physical feelings – How you are feeling, physically

3. Situations – Circumstances which arise in performance that will trigger particular signal lights



**CAIN'S COACHING POINT:**

**The purpose of routines is to maintain self-control and get into a green light performance mentality as often as possible.**

**GREEN LIGHTS – THE CAT MENTALITY**

Green lights are an easy concept to comprehend. They represent the mentality of peak performance; where you are feeling positive, aggressive, and confident; focused on the present process at hand; and in control of your performance thoughts and actions. Green lights are performance movers and confidence builders. One baseball player I worked with referred to the green light mentality as the CAT mentality – Confident, Aggressive and Tough.

When you are confident, aggressive and tough, you are locked into the moment and moving forward with green lights. Staying in the green light zone, you give yourself the best opportunity to have an excellent performance on this play.

In order to recognize when you are not in a green light state of mind, you must first recognize what signs indicate that you are in the green. The next three sections will help you use the three major areas of signal light recognition to identify your green light mentality.

**GREEN LIGHTS – SELF-TALK**

When you have green lights, what are you saying to yourself?

Some examples could be:

1. You cannot touch me – bring it!
2. I am the man – bring me the gas.
3. I own this field; this is my house.
4. Hit me the ball, baby.

Green light thoughts are much like your confidence conditioning statements, but they are shorter and very specific to your athletic performance. They are usually aggressive, external, specific and confident thoughts.



**CAIN'S GAME PLAN:**

**Write down your green light thoughts - what do you say to yourself when you are playing at your best?**

---

---

**GREEN LIGHTS - PHYSICAL FEELINGS**

When you have green lights, how do you feel physically?

Most baseball players report:

1. I feel light on my feet.
2. My muscles are relaxed and I have good energy.
3. I feel strong and I have big body language.

**CAIN'S GAME PLAN:**

**Write down your green light feelings - how do you feel about yourself when you are playing at your best?**

---



---

---

## **GREEN LIGHTS – SITUATIONS**

What situations or actions in competition, practice, the weight room or academic settings put you into green lights?

Most baseball players report:

1. When I have a great batting practice
2. When I have had a good night's sleep
3. When I practiced my presentation over and over, so I knew the content forward and backward
4. When I stick with my routine



### **CAIN'S GAME PLAN:**

**Write down the situations in performance that will place you into your green light – the situations where you know you will play at your best.**

---

---

## **RED & YELLOW LIGHTS**

Baseball players I have worked with in the past have occasionally become caught up in trying to identify whether they were in a red light or yellow light. As an athlete, I want you not to get hung up on that distinction because it is counterproductive to peak performance. This distinction is more relevant for coaches because they must discern which measure will help you get back into your green light mentality – coaching you on taking a deep breath, making a mound visit, or making a substitution.



As an athlete, the distinction does not matter as much. Red lights are negative thoughts, confidence cutters, and performance stoppers – and yellow lights are a sign that you are on your way to red. Green is where you want to be.

**All you need to identify is whether or not you are giving yourself the green light. If you are not in the green, then recognize, release and refocus on the performance at hand. The next three sections will help you use the three major areas of signal light recognition to identify whether you are in red/yellow lights.**

### **RED/YELLOW LIGHTS – SELF-TALK**

When you have red/yellow lights, what are you saying to yourself?

Most baseball players report:

1. I cannot believe the umpire called that a strike.
2. Why is coach saying that?
3. Why can't I square the ball up?
4. Why do I play this stupid game?
5. I suck.



#### **CAIN'S GAME PLAN:**

**Write down your red/yellow light thoughts – what do you say to yourself when you are struggling on the field?**

---

---

## RED/YELLOW LIGHTS – PHYSICAL FEELINGS

When you have red/yellow lights, how do you feel physically?

Most baseball players report:

1. I do not feel good; I feel tired and slow.
2. I feel like I cannot catch my breath.
3. The bat feels heavy.
4. The ball looks like a golf ball.
5. I feel like the game's speeding up on me.



### CAIN'S GAME PLAN:

**Write down your red/yellow light feelings – what do you feel physically when you are struggling on the field?**

---

---

## RED/YELLOW LIGHTS – SITUATIONS

What situations or actions in competition, practice, the weight room or academic settings put you into red/yellow lights?

Most baseball players report:

1. When I make an error
2. When an umpire makes a bad call
3. When a teammate makes a potentially costly error
4. When I know I could have prepared better



### CAIN'S GAME PLAN:

**Write down what situations in performance will put you into a red/yellow light and what happens when you are playing at your worst. What removes you from your green light mentality?**

---

### SIGNAL LIGHTS = PERFORMANCE CHANGE

Once you have identified your self-talk, your physical feelings and the situations that put you into your green and red/yellow lights, you immediately give yourself a better chance to recognize your signal lights in performance. If you have green lights, refocus on the next play. If you have red/yellow lights, you must release before you refocus.

Remember the three steps to performance change:

1. Develop awareness of what needs to change.
2. Develop a strategy for change to happen.
3. Put that strategy into action.

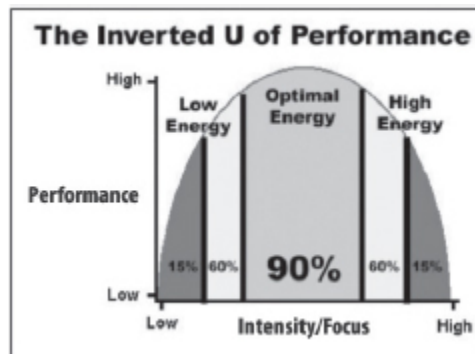
Most athletes do not know how to make necessary performance adjustments because they have not developed performance awareness. Performance change is all about understanding your internal signal lights. ***Mentally, what you are aware of you can control; what you are unaware of is going to control you.*** This is why understanding and practicing the signal lights concept gives you the best opportunity to effectively exercise the three steps of performance change.

### INVERTED U OF SIGNAL LIGHTS

Peak Performance 101 is about understanding the Inverted U.

On the North-South axis we have performance, and on the East-West axis there is intensity or focus.

How excited are you?



When you are not intense or focused enough, performance is low. Conversely, when you are overly intense or are too focused and trying too hard, performance is still low. This is why it is important for peak performers to maintain a consistent mental state of excellence to compete with optimal energy and perform at their best on a consistent pitch-to-pitch basis. The pre-pitch routine and, most importantly, your deep breath allow you to manage your mental, emotional and physical self to stay in the moment and at your peak of optimal energy on the Inverted U of Performance.

This mental state of performance excellence is maintained through the adoption of performance routines that create a mental management. A mental management routine takes you from falling anywhere on the inverted U and gives you a much better chance of consistently falling in the center, which is your optimal energy and arousal area for a peak performance, the area that some people refer to as "the zone." This routine-based mental maintenance system gives you the best chance of

performing at the peak of the Inverted U and in the state where you give yourself the best chance for success.

## **PERFORMANCE ROUTINES**

Performance routines are the life jacket of peak performance. When the pressure is on, as it usually is in baseball, you turn to your routines so that you can stay in the present moment and increase your chances of achieving performance excellence on the next pitch. The importance of routines to performance is a simple formula: Routines lead to consistency, consistency leads to confidence, and confidence leads to success.



### **CAIN'S COACHING POINT:**

**To be consistent over time, you must be able to describe what you do as a process/routine.**

The best baseball programs I have worked with as a mental conditioning coach have specific systems and structured performance routines that help players perform consistently over the course of the game and the season. These programs often stress the importance of having a focal point to turn to during pressure performances. When you get distracted or you have red/yellow light thoughts and start beating yourself up, your focal point is your box of positive thoughts; they represent your checkpoint to help you slow down and get back into green lights.

## **RELEASE**

Once you have learned to recognize your signal lights, the next step in the process is developing a release routine to help you rid yourself of the negative emotion that will slow you down.

The purpose of your release/physical routine is to help you get back in control of yourself and back into your green lights.

This release routine facilitates your transition back to a green light mentality. When you are in red/yellow lights, you must develop some sort of physical routine to help you mentally release the negative frustration. This physical action should be an expressive release to get control of your mental state and return you to the pursuit of performance excellence on the next pitch.



### **CAIN'S GAME PLAN:**

**Examples of common releases are to take a deep breath, or undo and redo your batting gloves. What are physical releases you can use to help you get from red/yellow lights and back to green?**

---

## **RELEASE YOUR MENTAL BRICKS**



The reality is that at one point or another, we all make errors and mistakes or fall prey to unrealistic expectations. There is a common tendency to continue to carry mistakes and poor performances with us, resulting in a buildup of negative mental energy. Instead of beating yourself up over a poor performance, you must learn to release these “mental bricks” that weigh on your mind.

If, every time you make a mistake, you were to grab a physical brick and carry that brick with you, it would weigh you down both physically and mentally. This would invariably inhibit you from performing to the best of your ability.

Now, visualize a mistake you are bitter about as a mental brick. When you carry this mistake with you, this mental brick takes the same toll as carrying a physical brick. The difference is you cannot see it because it is a weight within your mind.

In your quest for excellence, you must train yourself to release the mental bricks that threaten to weigh you down. Releasing your mental bricks relies on a process of reflection and realization followed by the release. After a mistake or a poor performance, you must thoughtfully reflect on the experience and consider how you can improve. Once you have realized what improvements can be made in your performance, you can then release the error from your consciousness and move on to the next pitch. The release process should happen in between pitches and happen as quickly as possible. ***Releasing a negative pitch and getting to the next is a skill that must be developed through repetition.***

## **EXAMPLES OF IN-GAME RELEASES**

In-game releases should be directed at a consistent focal point. Your focal point could be an object somewhere in the stadium or on a part of your equipment. Whatever that focal point may be, when you look at it, you should take a good deep breath, push out your chest, get big and put all of that red/yellow light, negative energy and self-doubt into that focal point and let it go.

As you transfer that energy, remind yourself to get back to the next play and what's important now (#WIN) and return to your green light thoughts and green light/refocus routine.

As an infielder or outfielder, you can take your glove off, take a deep breath, and put it back on. This physical action allows you to make a mental connection to the next pitch. Pitchers can walk off

the back of the mound, take their hat off, take a deep breath and get back on the mound. In the process, they get rid of the last pitch and refocus on the most important pitch of the game...the next one!

***Some coaches want their players to all have the same release, such as taking their hat off and taking a deep breath, so that they only have to watch for one release from everyone. Whether you have each player come up with his own, do it by position or have the entire team use the same release, that is up to you as the coach. Each release should consist of the three parts of a release.***

- 1. A physical movement***
- 2. A cleansing deep breath on a focal point***
- 3. A verbal cue to get back to the next pitch***

Here are some more examples of release routines:

You can shake your hands to shake off the red/yellow light thoughts.

You can make a fist, and as you release your fingers, release the last pitch.

You can take your hat and/or glove off and move on to the next pitch.

You can spit the red/yellow lights away.

There are hundreds of different releases you can use. The important part of the release is to be sure that you have something physical that you do, that you are taking a cleansing deep breath on a focal point and have a verbal cue, all as a part of your release.



## FLUSH IT

A fun way to think about releasing mental bricks is by conjuring the image of a toilet. When you have a mental brick that is in danger of putting you in red lights, you want to take this mental brick and “flush it.” Once you are relieved of that mental brick, you are ready to return to the present moment in your performance.

You may have seen a miniature foam toilet in dugouts of high school, collegiate or professional teams around the country. Another way that some players “flush it” is by actually going into the bathroom in their team’s dugout and flushing the toilet.



It is inevitable, as you climb The Mountain of Excellence, that you will face forms of adversity that weigh on your mind. Do not carry these mental bricks with you on your journey. Stop routinely at your mental toilet to relieve yourself of their weight. Perform your release routine to flush away the negativity built within those mental bricks. Your mind will feel lighter and clearer, and you will be more mentally agile when you get back to your climb of playing the next pitch.

## REFOCUS ON THE NEXT PLAY

Once you recognize your signal lights and release your red/yellow lights with your release routine, it becomes critical that you refocus back into the present moment and on the next pitch.

Refocusing returns your mind to the next pitch and pushes you towards performance excellence. One of the best ways you can refocus is to talk out loud with your teammates during competition. ***When you talk out loud, you are external and***

**present.** When you are quiet, you can easily get lost in your own head, thinking about the past or the future. Refocus back to the present moment – you will give yourself the best chance to perform at your best by talking out loud and being an energy giver.

## **SO WHAT, NEXT PITCH! MENTALITY**

Let me ask you this. Are you that bad that every call and every bounce has to go your way to win? If the answer is no, why do you get so angry when an umpire makes a bad call or a play doesn't go your way?

Keep in mind that great plays are as much of a pitfall for players and coaches in terms of refocusing. It is critical that you flush away the excitement and thrill of the exciting play you just made – or that pitch you called from the dugout – and get in the moment as soon as possible.

Refocusing, just like all mental conditioning skills, requires that your mind and body work together. If your body is trying to play the game in the moment and your mind is still analyzing a previous pitch or thinking about the possibility of a ball hit at you in the future, your mind and body are working against each other and you lose.

***You want to live in the big picture and compete in the moment.***

When things aren't going your way, you have got to embrace adversity. Say "So What, Next Pitch!" (**#SWNP**) Let go of the past, and get back to competing in the present moment and executing on the next pitch.

"So What, Next Pitch!" is a verbal key that you can use to help refocus you and your teammates back into the present moment.

This key helps you bridge from the past by saying “So What” and returns you where you want to be in the present by saying “Next Pitch.”



You cannot just say “So What, Next Pitch!” with your mouth; you have to say it with your body as well. By using your physical release routine to return to the present, regardless of how you feel about the past, saying “So What, Next Pitch!” refocuses your mind. You can then actively engage in the most important part of your performance – the next 90 feet.

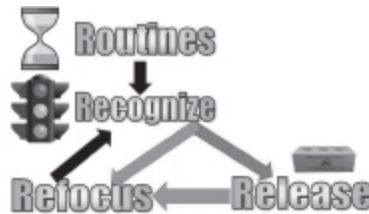
In life and baseball, negative things happen. Adversity is going to strike and there is nothing you can do to stop it. And why would you want to stop adversity? Adversity is a positive. Adversity is what causes you to grow. Adversity and success are neighbors on the highway to excellence; you can’t get one without the other.

Some tragedies and some of life’s unfortunate circumstances are simply outside of your control. What you cannot do is allow yourself to get caught up in a moment that has already passed. You must constantly move on to the next pitch. This “So What, Next Pitch!” mentality is the hallmark of a peak performer on the diamond.

## **REFOCUS SIGN**

When I go in the dugouts of top baseball teams, I often hang up a sign that says “REFOCUS.” I teach the players that when they recognize their minds starting to wander, they only have to look at the sign and refocus. Using the sign as a focal point gets them back into the next pitch. This is another very simple yet highly effective tool to help you get back into the present moment.

## THE RECOGNIZE – RELEASE – REFOCUS CYCLE



The process of the recognize-release-refocus cycle is an important one to master in your pursuit of performance excellence in baseball. This process is founded on an internal awareness of your signal lights, especially the ability to recognize when you are out of your green light mentality. Upon recognizing your yellow or red light state of mind, you must make a present-moment performance change by performing your release routine in order to refocus for the next pitch.

This process is conceptually simple and highly effective, yet it is amazing how many athletes neglect this cycle to maximize their performance potential.

This is one of the mental conditioning systems that separates the good and the great performers. If you want to consistently perform at a high level of excellence, you must learn how to recognize your signal lights, release frustration from previous innings, and refocus on the present moment in competition.



### **CAIN'S COACHING POINT:**

**When you have adversity and bad calls that go against you, use the verbal for release & refocus, which is "So What, Next Pitch!"**

**A REALISTIC LOOK AT "THE ZONE"**

I do not think you will ever be in green lights for an entire game. If you find yourself in “the zone,” with that relaxed intensity and your green lights on steady, then enjoy the ride, baby,’ cause it does not happen often!

It is an experience you may have once – maybe never. Over the careers of the greatest performers on the planet, this kind of “zone” may happen only a handful of times.

***Peak performance is not about being in “the zone” all the time and having everything in the game go your way.*** Adversity is built into the fabric of baseball, making every competition unique and full of new variables and situations for players to overcome.

Peak performance is about playing your best when you need it the most, each and every pitch. It is about compensating and adjusting your performance to the present-moment conditions of performance. It is about handling and managing pressure better than the opposition. It is about rolling with the punches until you get the job done. The better your routines and the more systematic your approach, the better your chance to stay in the green lights and perform on the level of excellence one pitch at a time.

Great athletes embrace adversity. They welcome it and they starve for it, because they know their ability to overcome adversity is what makes them great. The more adverse the conditions that day for both teams, the better they play because they know they are better equipped to handle adversity than the opponent.

**KNOW YOUR 4R CYCLE**

You want to work on your release and refocus routines every day just like you do your swing and mechanics in baseball. It may be for only two minutes. As part of your in-competition *Routine*, you want to work on your ability to *Recognize* your physical and mental state, *Release*, and *Refocus* on the next pitch every day in practice.

If you know what your red/yellow lights are and you fail to make a performance change by implementing release and refocus routines to return to your green light mentality, then you are not maximizing your performance potential. You are no better off than your competitor who has not invested the time to read this book and has not cultivated a deeper understanding of the mental game of baseball.

Knowing what to do but not doing what you know means you are no better off than the person who has no idea what to do. ***Be a "Do-er", not a "Know-er."***

## **SHADOW WORK**

Just like a boxer or an MMA fighter does shadow work where they throw punches on air visualizing their opponent, you want to do shadow work on your routine as a pitcher, hitter, defensive player and base runner and simply work on your deep breath and releases in each of those situations.

If you visit [www.BrianCain.com/Baseball](http://www.BrianCain.com/Baseball) and sign up for the free bonuses, I will send you the links to some videos that demonstrate top college baseball players using shadow work as a critical part of their preparation process.

## CHAPTER #7 REVIEW

- ❑ The ability to recognize your physical, emotional and mental state within the context of your competitive environment is absolutely necessary.
- ❑ Green signal lights – you are giving yourself the best opportunity for performance excellence.
- ❑ Yellow signal lights – you are starting to lose the mentality conducive to peak performance.
- ❑ Red signal lights – You are totally out of control and it is reflecting in your performance.
- ❑ Mastery of performance awareness is developed by understanding your self-talk, physical feelings, and how you deal with common situations during performance.
- ❑ A routine-based mental maintenance system keeps you at the peak of the Inverted U of Performance and in your best state for peak performance.
- ❑ To be consistent over time, you must be able to describe your routines as a process.
- ❑ The purpose of your physical routine and release is to help you get back in control of yourself and back into your green lights.
- ❑ Release your mental bricks by doing something physical, such as taking a cleansing breath, and having a verbal cue that you go to.
- ❑ All releases should be directed at a consistent focal point.
- ❑ Be sure to take a deep breath during your release.

- ❑ When you have a mental brick, relieve your mind and “Flush It.”
- ❑ Refocus on WIN (What’s Important Now).
- ❑ Develop a “So What, Next Pitch!” mentality to refocus when adversity strikes.
- ❑ Use a refocus sign as a focal point.
- ❑ Peak performance is not about being in “the zone.” It is about making the necessary adjustments to perform consistently at a level of excellence and to be able to compensate and adjust.



# CHAPTER #8

## RESPONSE-ABILITY

"The difference between average people and achieving people is their perception of and their response to failure."

*John Maxwell*  
*World-Renowned Leadership Trainer*  
*Best-selling Author and Speaker*

The most powerful ten-word sentence in the English language consists of only seven short two-letter words. That sentence is: **If it is to be, it is up to me.** This encapsulates response-ability.

Response-ability is taking ownership of your past, commanding your present and taking charge of your future. It is being accountable for your perspective and controlling how you choose to respond to adversity. Too many people are negatively affected by outside influences they cannot control. They respond by becoming a victim of outside factors, rather than responding to adversity by holding themselves responsible for their actions. ***Choosing your response in any situation is the greatest of all personal powers we possess as human beings.***

In this chapter, the importance of response-ability will be made clear. You will learn how response-ability makes a difference in performance and how to begin disciplining your mind to respond to events in order to produce productive outcomes.

### **MAN FREEZES TO DEATH LACK OF RESPONSE-ABILITY**

In the February 1978 issue of *Success Unlimited*, psychologist Dr. Dudley Calvert tells the story of a railway employee in Russia who

accidentally locked himself in a refrigerator car. Inside the car, he could not unlock the door nor could he attract the attention of those outside. Unable to escape, here signed himself to his fate. As he felt his body becoming numb, he documented his story and his approaching death in sentences scribbled on the wall of the car.

"I am becoming colder now," he wrote. "Still colder, now I can hardly write..." and, finally, "these may be my last words." And they were.

When the car was opened upon arrival at its destination, other railway employees found him dead. Yet, the temperature of the car was 56 DEGREES! The freezing apparatus had been out of order in the car and was inaccurately stuck on 28 degrees.



There was no physical reason for his death. There was plenty of air – he hadn't suffocated. What happened was he gave away his personal power and defeated himself by not responding appropriately to the challenges in front of him.

He let the power of his mind negatively affect his reality.

***Remember, perspective is reality and you are response-able for choosing any attitude and any perspective you want in any given situation.*** His own lack of response-ability led to his demise, a victim of his own delusion.

## **MAN OVERCOMES HELL ON EARTH RESPONSE-ABILITY**

In *Man's Search for Meaning*, Viktor Frankl talks about his unfathomable experience and survival of the Nazi concentration camps in World War II. Frankl, a psychologist, knew he was response-able for his mental state and only chance at survival in his hell-on-earth conditions. He chose to search for something of value and meaning every day of his struggle.

Living in the concentration camp, Frankl discovered the Nazis could take away his family, his freedom, his food and health, but they could not take away the last of the human freedoms: one's ability to choose his/her own attitude. Frankl realized that his ability to determine how he responded to his environment was psychological and that his human spirit was still free. With this in mind, he found daily existential meaning and purpose in aiding other prisoners by sharing the little food he did have and offering comforting words.

Unlike our man in the boxcar who went down the path of negativity, Frankl chose a path of positive empowerment. Both men had response-ability. If Frankl could find meaning in and survive the horrific experience of the concentration camps, and a man can freeze to death in a non-freezing boxcar, imagine what your response-ability can do for you. Imagine what you can endure.

Have you seen the movie *The Lone Survivor*? That movie shows what the human will can endure. Navy Seal Marcus Luttrell demonstrates what human beings are capable of enduring and how we can be trained to do almost anything. Can you survive the perceived challenges of your everyday life and maintain a positive attitude? Absolutely! To be a peak performer, a sense of response-ability is a must.

### **EVENT + RESPONSE = OUTCOME**

There is a simple math equation that I want you to learn and, more importantly, implement on a daily basis.

$$E \text{ [Event]} + R \text{ [Response]} = O \text{ [Outcome]}$$

In life, it is not what happens to you; it is how you handle what happens to you. It is your ability to respond (response-ability) that is going to determine your outcome when adversity is thrown your way.

As a human being, YOU have the ability to respond to an event in the manner you deem appropriate. The response is your choice. Humans have the unique ability to socialize their innate responses to events with the three steps of performance improvement: (1) awareness, (2) strategy and (3) implementation of the strategy. We have previously discussed this process, and it provides an essential foundation for full comprehension of  $E+R=O$ .

We often do not have much control over the Events in our lives, but we do control our Responses. This is an empowering notion, because once you realize that you control half the equation, you recognize that you control half the outcome. If a negative event occurs and you keep a positive present-moment focus with a big-picture mentality and a "Compared to what?" perspective as your response, then you will significantly influence the outcome in your favor.

This is the process of mental conditioning that you prepare for thoroughly establishing mental routines. The practice of mental conditioning will teach you how to be responsible by accepting the events, formulating responses and, therefore, perceiving the outcomes.

We are all capable of using this process to our benefit in life because we all have the ability to control our responses. We all have personal power. I refer to personal power as the ability to control one's focus, attitude and response to adversity – to choose one's own path in life.

## THE HUMAN PAUSE

As was briefly mentioned, humans have the unique ability to become internally aware of their responses to external stimuli. The famous psychological study known as Pavlov's Dog Experiments represents groundbreaking research investigating conditioned and unconditioned responses to unconditioned and conditioned stimuli. Without going into all the details of classical (Pavlovian) conditioning, the takeaway relevant to mental conditioning is that when there is a stimulus, there is a response.



Humans are no different, except for our ability to become aware of our responses. This recognition of how we respond is vital to mental conditioning, because we can train ourselves to pause in between the stimulus and our response, again giving us personal power to choose our response. Once we are aware of our innate responses to certain stimuli, we have the power to control and change them. Most people are unaware of this unique human ability, and these are the people we say have poor self-control skills. ***What they have is a non-trained pause to adversity and negative events.***

Start becoming aware of how you respond to certain stimuli. To gain awareness and challenge yourself to catch that pause in between the event and your reaction, reflect on how you react to particular events. Those trained in discipline and response-ability face adverse stimuli with poise. They control their pause by

taking a deep breath and responding in a manner conducive to the attainment of excellence. Developing control over that pause is what separates those who stay in control under pressure and those who crack.

Remember it this way: When the dog of adversity threatens with his dangerous jaws, control yourself with your human pause... and deep breath.

### **EMOTION CLOUDS REALITY**

In the heat of competition, it is easy for your mind to become clouded by adversity. When umpires make poor calls, the opposition seems to be catching lucky breaks, or you are just not performing to your full potential on that day, it is easy to let your emotions get the best of your performance. As a baseball player in pursuit of excellence, do not let your emotions cloud the reality of performance.

When you take emotion out of the picture, you tend to respond much more clearly. What does emotion do? Emotion clouds reality. In my work in the mental game of baseball, I see frustrated people fire off at officials, coaches, players and athletic directors. These people often approach minor and trivial situations as if they were life or death, not baseball. Most times after the outburst, there is regret that emotions overpowered sensible response-ability.

It is important to use the mental conditioning skills we've discussed in this book to maintain response-ability. This comes back to self-control – recognizing what is within your control and emotionally letting go of everything else. Rely on the “3P’s” of peak performance (present, process, positive) as the conscience that reminds you of your ability to respond with excellence rather

than emotion. Act out of routine and conditioned/trained response, not emotion.

## **RAVIZZA'S RULES OF CONTROL**

The greatest coach I have ever had was my mentor at Cal State Fullerton, and he is an icon in the field of sport psychology. Dr. Ken Ravizza introduced me to his three rules of mental conditioning that I believe truly reflect the significance of response-ability as it relates to baseball.

I believe a peak performer on the diamond must understand those rules of response-ability to give himself the personal power to reach the summit of The Mountain of Excellence:

- 1. Before you can control your performance, you must be in control of yourself.**
- 2. You have very little control of what goes on around you, but you have total control over how you choose to respond to it.**
- 3. What you are aware of you can control; what you are unaware of will control you.**

Staying in control of yourself and recognizing what you can and cannot control will allow you to mentally stay in a calm, centered and grounded place. Staying in control of yourself in the face of adversity is a skill set that must be repetitively practiced for its proper development and will allow you to perform in pressure situations.

Understanding what you can and cannot control, and choosing to focus on what you can control while letting go of what you

cannot, gives you the personal power to focus your time, energy and attention to achieve excellence.

The first step to self-control is having an awareness of what is going on around you and, more importantly, what is going on inside of you. Ultimately, the development of self-awareness will place the power of response-ability in your head and in your hands.



**CAIN'S COACHING POINT:**

**Early on in this book, you learned the importance of forcing yourself to act differently than how you feel, shouldering that personal response-ability, and choosing to act how you would if you were confident and knew you were going to succeed regardless of the situation. How have you been doing at acting differently than how you feel? Where in your life can you act differently than how you feel, choosing your response, and giving yourself a better chance for success?**

---

---

---

**PRAYER, PRIMAL, PERFECT?**

In his book *Heads-Up Baseball*, Dr. Ken Ravizza points out that when baseball players get emotionally out of control, it usually manifests through their performance in three general ways. They become a Prayer, Primal, or Perfect player, all of which lead to a decreased level of performance.



**PRAYER:** When you become the prayer player, you look to some higher power to help you perform. You resign to faith in fate and simply hope for the stars to align and present you with the desired result. You hope to make a



pitch or get a pitch to hit vs. forcing contact with your best pitch and hunting the pitch you want to hit.



**PRIMAL:** When you become a primal player, you resort back to the days of the caveman. You begin to perform in a desperate and erratic manner that often leaves you out of control and emotionally frustrated, and the desired result remains elusive. You rear back and try to throw harder and your ball goes up in the zone; you lose fluidity and velocity and movement and get hit harder. Most hard-throwing college pitchers (85+) were primal when they were in high school because when they got into red lights they would “Go Harder” – and since the competition was not very good, they got guys out. That approach does not work in college or beyond.



**PERFECT:** When you become the perfect player, you attempt to make everything perfect. You strive for performance perfection and little mistakes prevent you from appreciating the beautiful imperfections of the game. As we have discussed, performance oriented around perfection is a sure path to failure because nothing is perfect. Remember, performance is not about perfection; it is about progress. Trying to make the perfect pitch will keep you from making the one good enough to get the ground ball you are looking for. As a hitter, waiting to get your perfect pitch will give you a one-way ticket back to the dugout.

As a performer, you DO NOT want to fall under any of these three categories of Prayer, Primal or Perfect.

The defining question at the highest levels of competition is not who has the most physical talent, because physical talent is, for the most part, similar at the highest levels of performance. Instead, the question pertains to who is able to bring his mental

talents to the table on a consistent basis and who has the ability to respond appropriately under the pressures of adversity.

As a baseball player, you want to move away from Prayer, Primal and Perfect and into PREPARED and PRESENT. Mental preparation will assist you in the development of appropriate response-ability, giving yourself the best opportunity for performance excellence, one pitch at a time.

### **TRAIN YOUR RESPONSE-ABILITY**

Peak performance is contingent on personal response-ability in daily excellence. Excellence is largely about being accountable for your perspective and controlling your response to the adverse events that will inevitably occur during performance. Use the equation  $E + R = O$  as a reminder that you control half of the equation and the outcome is a result of your perspective. When you train your response-ability, you place the power in your head.

All peak performers learn to take ownership of their past, command the present, and take charge of their future. Once you instill these values within your performance, you will gain the self-control necessary for performance excellence. Do not become a victim to events. Become a champion by developing the ability to respond appropriately to adversity. Say, So What, Next Pitch!

We all have the ability to respond appropriately, and the material throughout this book gives you the resources to do just that.

The Mountain of Excellence and the game of baseball call out to many performers, but the ones who reach the peak are those who have the response-ability to master the journey and stick to

the process and overcome the adversity that makes this game so great. The Mountain of Excellence will put obstacles in your path and will humble you at times, just like baseball and just like life.

## CHAPTER #8 REVIEW

- ❑ If it is to be, it is up to me.
- ❑ Response-ability is taking ownership of your past, commanding your present and taking charge of your future.
- ❑ Event + Response = Outcome.
- ❑ When the dog of adversity threatens with his dangerous jaws, control yourself with your human pause... and breathe.
- ❑ Emotion clouds reality; learn to control it.
- ❑ Develop self-control by learning the three rules of response-ability.
- ❑ Prayer, Primal and Perfect are all undesirable states of performance mentality.

## CHAPTER #9

# RELAXATION, RECOVERY & MENTAL IMAGERY

"The mind and body often cannot distinguish between real and imagined experiences. They are processed with the same psychoneuromuscular patterns."

*Brian Cain*

Most baseball coaches and players I work with have a hard time relaxing. This is often due to the competitive demands and mentality it takes to play this game at a high level. As a peak performer, you spend a lot of time acting differently than how you feel and forcing yourself to keep on grinding, lifting the weights, getting out of bed early in the morning and working to take your performance to the next level.

Another reason why many baseball coaches and players have a hard time relaxing is that a large part of their lives is spent making themselves do the things they may not feel like doing but that are instrumental to peak performance on the field. This shows their necessary dedication and resolve to being the best; however, quality time devoted to relaxation and recovery is also necessary to maximize performance potential. ***The harder you work, the more important recovery is so that you can continue to work and train at a high level.***

The ability to relax and turn off the competitive beast inside of you is essential to peak performers, and it is fundamental to developing peace of mind away from the field. ***When it comes to your ability to relax, you cannot make yourself relax; you must***

***let yourself relax, and this is where baseball players and coaches often find the challenge.***

This performance state seems diametrically opposed to the intense focus demanded for performance excellence on the field and is therefore difficult for most to achieve. When you are in a relaxed state, however, your heart rate is lower, your breathing becomes deeper, and this kick-starts the recovery/repair process for the body and brain. The more relaxed you are, the quicker you recover from the demands you place on yourself and the quicker you can get back to performance and preparation at the highest level.



**CAIN'S COACHING POINT:**

**Relaxation is a skill that must be practiced and is a skill that can be developed with proper training, just like the fundamental physical skills of playing baseball. Relaxation starts with controlling your breathing.**

**THE ABILITY TO RELAX IS INSIDE YOU**

Everything you need to relax is already inside you. The world's most powerful tranquilizers already reside within your body. You have the ability to use these tranquilizers to put yourself to sleep at night, and you can train yourself to tap into one of the most powerful resources of your body and mind throughout the day when you experience stress, pressure and anxiety.

Baseball players have reported to me that if they could relax, it would help their performance. Knowing they need to relax is not the problem; the problem is that they often do not know how, because they have never been taught the simple strategy for relaxation.

Let's face it. When a coach or teammate says to you, "Hey, Jacob, just relax!" (which I heard my entire career as an athlete) it does nothing to help your performance. In reality, it often makes you more tense, because now you know that your teammate or coach has picked up on the fact that you are stressed out and full of anxiety. As a player or coach, instead of telling someone to relax, ask him to take a good deep breath. Taking a deep breath is the single most valuable and effective exercise the athlete must learn to use to enter a more relaxed and present state.



### THE CALMING OF CAIN

When I was a college baseball player at The University of Vermont, the part of my game that held me back the most was my inability to relax and keep my mind productively focused in the present moment, one pitch at a time. My mind would get moving so fast that I could not keep it on the one thought that mattered, the execution of that particular pitch. My mind would be thinking about how this was my opportunity to make up for my previous mistakes; to finally show my coaches, teammates, and myself that I was good; that I was worthy of the scholarship or the playing time I had been given; and that, if I could perform at the level of my expectations, I could be one of the best.

As you can tell, the gears would begin to move faster and faster until I could hardly breathe; and before I knew it, I was ready to come out of the game before it even started.

My senior year of college I took a stress management class with the University of Vermont gymnastics coach Gary Bruning. Luckily for me, it was more of an applied stress management class than a theory-based class. He taught the class **how** to mentally and physically relax instead of teaching textbook theories of stress

management and all the physiological effects of stress that I had experienced. I was very aware of the fact I did not know how to relax, so I embraced the opportunity for self-improvement as Coach Bruning taught us all how to relax.

He had us lie down on the floor and talked us through a deep-breathing exercise. I put my hand on my stomach and focused intently on breathing in through my nostrils and out through my mouth, while feeling my stomach rise with the inhalation and lower with the exhalation of each breath. After about 5 minutes of feeling weird just lying there and feeling like I should be doing something else, with my mind racing 100MPH, I finally experienced my mind slowing down and my body and mind relaxing.

I was 22 years old, a senior in college, and I can still vividly remember experiencing the ability to relax for the first time in my life. It was a revolutionary mind-body experience, and utterly unfamiliar to me. I could slow my mind down and focus into the present through my newfound ability to relax. I could now also speed up my recovery process simply by focusing on my breathing. To this day, I am grateful that I enrolled in that course and for Coach Bruning's applied method of teaching.

## **MAXIMIZING OXYGEN IN THE OCTAGON**



As a mental conditioning coach, nowhere have I seen relaxation and deep breathing serve a more vital function for performance excellence than in the Ultimate Fighting Championship. The world's most combative, most competitive sport of mixed martial arts is a ballet of violence by nature. Some people may find it too brutal for their liking, but this cannot discredit the fearless mentality it takes to step inside of the Octagon and go to battle. As athletes and coaches, we can



learn a lot from what happens mentally inside the Octagon that can assist peak performance in baseball. In my work with college and high school baseball programs, I teach a lot of the very same mental skills that I train the best MMA fighter on the planet like Georges St. Pierre to have in their mental game arsenal.

In mixed martial arts, it is often the fighter who can relax first and move the fight into his specialty who wins. While the fighters work on bringing the fight to them, some of the greatest coaches in the game can be heard reinforcing the importance of breathing to help their fighter athletes relax. As a coach, the verbal cue for an athlete to take a breath is a reminder of what the athlete must do to calm down and perform at a more relaxed state. The more an athlete practices his breathing exercises to relax and quiet his mind outside of the Octagon, the more the brain and body know how to respond when he takes the deep breath inside the Octagon. As with everything in peak performance, you must learn to be in control of yourself physically and mentally before you can control your performance, and the most crucial practice to gain self-control is deep breathing.

***I see getting an MMA fighter to take a deep breath in his corner between rounds the same as a baseball player taking a deep breath between pitches and a coach getting his team to take deep breaths during intense situations of a game.***

## **RELAXED INTENSITY – CONTROLLED RAGE**

The best baseball players perform with a relaxed intensity. These players become so immersed in their present-moment focus of execution on that one pitch that they are simultaneously calm and poised, yet fully engaged and energized. Their competitive concentration appears unbreakable. Nothing can distract them;

no adversity fazes them. They are “locked in” and it is as if they are playing on another level. Well, they ARE on another level; this is performance excellence! Now it is time for you to join them on that level.



### **CAIN'S COACHING POINT:**

**This peak performance state of excellence is different than “The Zone.” Personally, I believe “The Zone” to be a place of quiet mind and quiet body where you are performing at your best.**

**I think “The Zone” is a place that we waste too much time talking about and trying to get to. I do not believe you can recreate “The Zone,” but I do believe that you can get much closer to the state of peak performance through mental conditioning of distraction control, battling and dealing with adversity, acting differently than you feel, and competing all out, every day. I invest my time in coaching how to mentally persevere and have good bad days; I do not focus on getting into “The Zone.” Remember, you cannot always control how you feel, but you can choose how you act. Think of confidence as an ACTION more than a feeling.**

### **RELAX FOR RESULTS**

Many coaches will ask me to teach them the secret of performance when the pressure to produce results is at its highest. They want me to teach their team how to produce when it is the 9<sup>th</sup> inning and the game is on the line. What they fail to understand, however, is that there is no secret key to unlock performance when you need it the most. The best way a player or team can respond to the situation is to relax and trust in his mental and physical conditioning. This gives him the best chance

to execute on the next pitch – and executing on the next pitch is ALL THAT MATTERS!

So when coaches ask me this question, they are usually surprised when I lead the team away from their performance arena to a quiet and controlled environment and instruct them in methods of breathing and relaxation. The baseball player must be able to relax in a quiet and controlled environment before he will ever be able to relax in the face of adversity on the field. The deep breath and ability to relax is the most powerful tool in the peak performance toolbox and is critical to unlocking your potential so that you can become “locked in” during performance.

## **RELAXATION IS A SKILL ANYONE CAN DEVELOP**

As with all mental conditioning techniques, relaxation is a skill that can be learned and developed through training. Relaxation is a skill that requires mastering all the material previously covered in this book. The ability to relax is founded upon a present-moment focus on the process of what you can control, along with a perspective of positivity that has been practiced over and over so that it has become routine.

I want you to think of the ability to relax as a skill just like the physical skills you use in baseball. If you can throw, hit or catch a baseball, your ability to execute that skill is because you have trained yourself to perform it. You have practiced and you have conditioned that skill, investing time and effort into improving it. I want you to do the same for the mental conditioning skill of relaxation.

## **THE 5-4-3-2-1 RELAXATION/FOCUS EXERCISE**

I want to walk you through a relaxation and focus exercise called the 5-4-3-2-1 exercise. By understanding how to breathe properly and practicing the process of a 5-4-3-2-1 relaxation technique until it becomes a routine relaxation procedure, you give yourself the best opportunity to relax under pressure and perform at your best.



### **CAIN'S COACHING POINT:**

**I have created a 5-4-3-2-1 relaxation training audio that you can download for free by subscribing to my podcast at [www.BrianCain.com/Podcast](http://www.BrianCain.com/Podcast) or by signing up at [www.BrianCain.com/Baseball](http://www.BrianCain.com/Baseball).**

### **TWO TYPES OF BREATHING**

There are two types of breathing: diaphragmatic breathing and shoulder breathing. Diaphragmatic breathing is deep breathing, using your diaphragm and abdominal muscles. To identify this type of breathing, place your hand upon your stomach and feel your abdominal muscles expand as you inhale and contract as you exhale. During this deep breathing, air entirely fills your lungs and maximizes oxygen intake. Shoulder breathing, on the other hand, only reaches the top of your lungs. Often referred to as shallow breathing, shoulder breathing is often the result of a performer's inability to relax, resulting in tight muscles that exacerbate this tight breathing. As a performer, you must learn the proper method of deep breathing.

It is also important to know where to breathe. For proper relaxation, one should inhale through the nose, because the nose acts as a natural air filter, and exhale out your mouth, giving you a more forceful release. As you inhale, I want you to think about a count of 8; and then as you exhale, think about a count of 10, making your exhalation a little bit longer than your inhalation.

## **SCRIPT FOR THE 5-4-3-2-1 RELAXATION SESSION**

This is a script that you can read to your team to help them practice and develop the skill of relaxation. You will want to read it slowly and in a monotone voice. Or you can simply play the audio for them that is available at [www.BrianCain.com/Baseball](http://www.BrianCain.com/Baseball).

The first thing you want to do is put yourself in a quiet, comfortable environment. Sit up straight in your chair, hands in your lap or on the desk in front of you, feet flat on the floor. Please look at a spot on the wall in front of you, and focus on that spot.

Now, let your eyes gently close as you inhale, breathing deeply through your nose. As you inhale, your shoulders and chest should not move. Focus on breathing steadily and deeply through the nose, pushing out all your abdominal muscles as your diaphragm expands and air fills the bottom of your lungs. Now, exhale through your mouth, as your abdominal muscles and diaphragm contract and the air exits your lungs.

As you continue to focus on your breathing, having a count of 8 on the inhalation and 10 on the exhalation, realize that everything you need to relax is already inside you. The world's most powerful tranquilizers lay within. The ability to relax is a skill that needs to be developed and you are doing that now. You need to train to relax just like you do for the skills required to play baseball.

Answer the following three questions as you continue to focus on your breathing. Answer these questions in your mind and notice how the answers just pop into your head:

1. What is  $3 \times 3$ ?

2. What is your middle name?

3. What street did you grow up on?

Notice how easily and effortlessly the answers popped into your mind. The ability to relax is a skill that can be trained, developed and called upon just as easily as answering those three questions.

We will now go through a short body scan in which you are to focus your awareness into the body parts that are mentioned.

When you hear the number 5, let your toes, the balls of your feet, arches, heels, your ankles, your Achilles tendon, your calves and your shins release, relax and let go.

When you hear the number 4, let your knees, your quads, your hamstrings, your gluteus maximus, your groin, your hips, your whole lower body release, relax and let go, sinking further and further into the chair that you are sitting on.

When you hear the number 3, let your lower back, your mid back, your upper back, your abs, your obliques, your ribs, your pectorals, your whole torso release, relax and let go.

What you will find is that the more relaxed you become, the better you might feel; and the better you feel, the more relaxed you will want to become.

When you hear the number 2, relax your traps, your shoulders, your biceps, your triceps, your forearms, your hands, your fingers – just release, relax and let go.

When you hear the number 1, relax the back of your neck, the back of your head, the top of your head, your forehead, your

eyes, your cheeks, your jaw; let your lips gently part and your tongue hang in your mouth as a complete and total body of relaxation takes over.

What you will realize is that the more relaxed you become, the better you will feel; and the better you feel, the more relaxed you will want to become.

Take another deep breath.

Now, gently open your eyes and bring yourself back to this moment, right here, right now.

This concludes the 5-4-3-2-1 relaxation session.

Once you have this audio recording readily available to you, you should do this once a day. I give you three different variations at [www.BrianCain.com/Baseball](http://www.BrianCain.com/Baseball) for free.

## **CONTROL THE ENVIRONMENT**

In order to properly condition your relaxation, you must begin training in a controlled environment. Initial relaxation training should occur in a quiet and controlled environment where you can relax in peace. This enables you to focus on the process of relaxation in that moment, ignoring all other stimuli and emptying the mind of unnecessary thoughts.

After you have practiced in this controlled and quiet environment for a few weeks, slowly integrate adversity to simulate a more chaotic or competitive environment similar to a baseball game.

Introduce crowd noise or music in the background of your controlled setting and practice your relaxation response to this adversity by focusing on your breathing. Audio simulates

adversities that will become distractions if you let them get into your head. Do not let them get in your head; instead, focus on the next breath. Use your relaxed state of mind to push distractions far away by locking into what you want to focus on, going one breath at a time.

Once you have trained your ability to relax under simulated adversity in a controlled environment, the next step is to perform your relaxation technique in performance practices, and then pressure-packed scenarios in game-like practices. During these preparation sessions, you will further practice the execution of your relaxation techniques, and eventually this will translate to an execution and peak performance during games.

## **CONTROL YOURSELF**

As I am sure you have gathered by now, breathing is the foundation for relaxation. Simultaneously, breathing is the basis for emotional state management, aka self-control. Relaxation conditions self-control by teaching you how to become grounded within the self. Your mind and body become one in the present moment as you focus on your breathing. The relaxation process is proven to reduce stress levels and alleviate anxiety, giving you control of your emotional state. Good breathing makes all the difference in self-control, and thus in the achievement of performance excellence.

## **CONDITIONING THE RELAXATION RESPONSE**

If you have never trained your breathing and you try to relax by taking a deep breath in a pressure situation, the body and the brain will not be conditioned to respond by gaining control of yourself. If you condition yourself to relax through the routine practice of deep breathing, first in the quiet, controlled



environment and then in more disruptive scenarios, by the time you call upon it in competition on the diamond it will be a skill you have developed and it will be there when you need it.

When you practice the 5-4-3-2-1 technique, you will feel more connected to the present moment, more relaxed and more in control of yourself. The more you train with the 5-4-3-2-1 technique, the more you focus on your breathing and the more you do your relaxation training, the more this relaxation preparation is going to help in practices and games. The goal is for this technique to become so routine that when you take a deep breath to help you relax, your body will be conditioned to respond by relaxing and getting you in a place of self-control. When this occurs, you will know you have a properly conditioned relaxation response.

The other two audios you will get at [www.BrianCain.com/Baseball](http://www.BrianCain.com/Baseball) are the Inhale 8/Exhale 10 audio and the Triangle/Tactical breathing audio. Both of these will help you train your ability to be in control of your breath and your emotions, which will then help you be in control of your performance.

## **RELAXATION IN THE RECOVERY PROCESS**

For baseball players to take their performance to the next level, they must constantly put their bodies and minds in uncomfortable and stressful situations where they are challenged to adapt and evolve. To consistently bring a high level of energy and effort to these situations, players must be able to recover outside of the competitive arena.

Relaxation is a tremendous facilitator of recovery. The more relaxed you are, the greater the recovery process, thus assisting

your physical and mental regeneration so that you can continue to compete and train at your highest level.

“Tension is who you think you should be. Relaxation is who you are.”  
*Chinese Proverb*

### RECOVERY PROCESS

As you are probably well aware, there is a physical recovery process after physical performance in which the body goes to work repairing the damage done to muscle tissue. After a weight lifting session, it is this physical recovery process that builds the muscle you desire for performance. Not surprisingly, there is a mental recovery process of releasing performance stress and anxiety that is equally important. In the process, these two forms of recovery often converge, blending similar practices and exercises to maximize both forms of recovery. All athletes should be aware of the significance of recovery on performance and understand that both your physical and mental recoveries are enhanced when in a relaxed state.



**CAIN’S GAME PLAN:**  
**If you were to grade your ability to relax on a 1-10 scale, with 10 being the best, you would give yourself a grade of ?**

**1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10**

To help me move one number closer to 10, I will do the following:

---

---

### THE MAGIC 20-MINUTE WINDOW OF RECOVERY

Dr. Declan Connolly is a world-renowned exercise physiologist, sports nutritionist, and strength and conditioning coach. He is a professor at The University of Vermont and a consultant to the New York Rangers, among other professional teams and Olympic organizations. He also was my college undergraduate advisor at The University of Vermont and remains to this day a close personal friend and mentor on the physiological aspects of performance. Dr. Connolly speaks of the importance of the sports nutrition magic 20-minute window.

The magic 20-minute window of sports nutrition indicates that you want to have food in your system, whether it is a protein shake, a peanut butter and jelly sandwich or even a Snickers bar, within the 20-minute period after finishing a workout to help speed up the recovery process.

The recovery benefits of getting food in your system within 20 minutes after the completion of a workout will be greater than if you had steak and potatoes 45 minutes to 1 hour after a workout. Physically and mentally, the recovery process is kick-started when you can get these much-needed proteins, carbohydrates, and fats into your system within that window. Developing the discipline to bring food with you for post-performance snacks is important to enhance your recovery process. It is equally important that you force yourself to act on your knowledge of recovery, because many athletes report they do not feel like eating after performance. If you let your feelings dictate your actions, you lose in baseball and in life.

## **DISCIPLINE IS THE KEY TO RECOVERY**

The hardest part about eating inside of the magic 20-minute window after completing a workout is having the discipline to bring food with you to the gym or the field. Establishing a

disciplined routine of bringing yourself a simple peanut butter and jelly sandwich on wheat bread, or a piece of fruit or a protein shake, and getting that food in your system within that 20-minute window will dramatically speed up your recovery process.

## **ONE-THIRD OF YOUR LIFE – INVEST IN A BED**

If you knew you were going to spend one-third of your life performing a sport, you would want to gather all the information you could and educate yourself on how to achieve performance excellence in that sport. If you knew you were going to work a specific job for one-third of your life, I bet you would also want to become as knowledgeable and proficient as possible to achieve job performance excellence. So why would sleep, which you will do for approximately one-third of your life, be any different? Unfortunately, you probably know very little about what goes on physiologically when you sleep, so let's get you started with some general knowledge about the importance of sleep for your recovery. It is the #1 most important factor and place that you can get a competitive advantage.

## **POWER SLEEP**

Dr. James Maas is a professor at Cornell University and one of the world's leading authorities and experts on sleep. In his book *Power Sleep*, he breaks down the information you need to know about sleeping and how much you need it to perform at your peak. As a scholar, he has addressed the physiological benefits of sleep and the issue of severe sleep deprivation that plagues most college and high school athletes, resulting in performances that represent about 80% of their potential. If you don't like to read, check him out on YouTube. This might be the missing link to your performance. I am getting sleepy as I type this... :)

An individual is considered to be sleep deprived if he or she sleeps four hours or less per night, while eight hours constitutes normal sleep. The National Sleep Foundation's sleep guidelines recommend seven to nine hours for the average adult. Dr. Maas suggests in *Power Sleep* that you get 9 hours and 15 minutes of sleep a night so that you will receive your five REM (Rapid Eye Movement) cycles, thus maximizing the physiologic benefits of your recovery time in sleep. One night of missed sleep will probably do little harm, but the cumulative effect of poor sleep will have a negative impact on your performance.



Sleep is an active physiological process, one in which your body is busy carrying out vital activities while you are unconscious. While asleep, your body alternates between two forms of sleep: rapid eye movement (REM) and non-REM sleep. This cycle repeats several times throughout the night. The stage of REM sleep provides the brain with the energy to support it during waking hours and is necessary for restoring the mind to function at a level of peak performance. These physiological processes are significant for your psyche, because mental conditioning is most effective when an individual's psychological state is in sync with an optimum physiological state.

## **10 TIPS FOR SOUND SLEEPING**

- 1. Relax Before Retiring** – Take some time for a pre-sleep ritual to break the connection between stress and bedtime. Try listening to the 5-4-3-2-1 relaxation session, listen to relaxation music, do some light stretching or take a hot shower.
- 2. Watch the Caffeine** – Caffeine is the stimulant present in coffee (100-200 mg), soda (50-75 mg), tea (50-75 mg), and various

over-the-counter medications. Caffeine should not be consumed for at least four to six hours before bedtime.

**3. Watch the Alcohol** – Although alcohol is a depressant and may help you fall asleep, the subsequent metabolism that clears it from your body when you are sleeping causes a withdrawal syndrome. This withdrawal causes awakenings and is often associated with nightmares and sweats. To help reduce some of these effects, try drinking one glass of water for every alcoholic beverage consumed. And stop all liquid consumption at least two hours before bedtime so that you are not waking up in the middle of the night to urinate.

**4. Exercise at the Right Time** – Regular exercise relieves stress and encourages good sleep. However, if a little exercise really gets your blood pumping, it would be wise to avoid working out in the evening or just before bedtime.

**5. Cut Down on Noise, Light, and Extreme Temperatures** – Try earplugs, a night-light, an eye mask or drape clip. The best temperature for sleep is 65-69 degrees.

**6. Eat Right and Sleep Tight** – Avoid eating a large meal just before bedtime or going to bed hungry. It is about balance. Also, whenever possible, opt for foods that promote sleep, such as milk, tuna, halibut, artichokes, oats, asparagus, potatoes and bananas.

**7. Understanding Jet Lag** – Before you cross time zones, try waking up later or earlier to help your body adjust to the time difference. It takes approximately one day for each hour you fly to adjust to a new time zone. Many people are affected more severely by West to East travel than East to West. Anticipate that it may take a few days for your body to catch up, and you can

speed up that process by easing yourself on the new time zone schedule before you leave.

**8. Respect the Purpose of the Bed** – Avoid TV, eating, and emotional discussions while in bed. The mind and body associate bedtime activities with being in bed. Do not let a bad habit keep you awake.

**9. Nap Smart** – A power nap early in the afternoon can really refresh you. Make it brief – no more than 20 minutes. Sleep too much and you may spend the night staring at the ceiling.

**10. Pet Sleepers** – Does your pet sleep with you? This, too, may cause arousals from either allergies or their movements in the bed. Thus, Yotie and Cypress (my two French Bulldogs) may be better off on the floor than on your sheets.

***Be sure to invest in the best mattress you can afford. How you spend the eight hours a night you invest in bed will determine how you are able to invest the other 2/3 of your life that day.*** Invest in yourself. Invest in your rest and recovery. Invest in the best mattress you can buy.

## **OLYMPIC SLEEP TRICKS**

The USA Olympic organization will often go into the Olympic Village ahead of the games and put in extended-length beds and blackout curtains in the rooms of all its athletes. This is because the organization recognizes how important sleep is to its athletes' peak performance. The USOC wants to give our athletes the best opportunity to bring home the gold and so it invests wisely in sleep.

You probably cannot travel with blackout curtains, but you can get a pair of earplugs and an eye mask for under \$10.00. If you are a high school or college student and you are living in a dorm where people come home late at night slamming doors, roommates make noise and there is a constant commotion, make the investment in your sleep time by getting earplugs that will block much of that noise and an eye mask to shut out the excess light. Both items will help with your ability to get an excellent night's sleep. You may also want to try one of the many sleep noise apps on your phone.

### **CAIN'S EXPENSIVE EXPERIENCE ON RECOVERY**

When I was an athlete, I always thought I was capable of more than was requested of me and that the longer and harder I worked, the better I would become. I was constantly working out and running, doing more than was expected. What I failed to realize was the significant difference between working harder versus working smarter, and that the more I worked, the more I needed to recover.

I never had a plan for recovery or for a great sleep routine, and I probably slept around 4-6 hours a night in college. As a result, I broke down physically and mentally, and I was injured all the time. I was the guy who pulled all-nighters, thinking I could cram all my studying into one or two days and then regurgitate it on exam day. I would either take course exams so jacked up on caffeine that I would crash in the middle of it, be thinking too fast and be jumpy, or I would walk in and simply not recall any of the information because I was so tired. If you are a casualty of poor recovery habits, *Power Sleep* can help you with its review of the physiological and psychological problems that come with pulling all-nighters.



## **YOGA AS A MENTAL CONDITIONING EXERCISE**

Again, it was my course with Coach Bruning that turned my life and recovery routines in a productive and progressive direction. Coach Bruning taught yoga to the class as a source of both physiological and psychological relaxation. Practicing and understanding the benefits of yoga have really helped me become more familiar with my body and in managing my emotional state. During that course, I improved my flexibility and learned how to breathe and find my center of balance, both physically and mentally. Ironically, before the 2013-2014 NFL season there was a fantastic article on ESPN.com about the Seattle Seahawks and how they used yoga as a part of their pre-practice routine to gain better control of their breath and their physical/mental/emotional self. Many Major League Baseball teams have hired yoga teachers for their players as well.

## **RE-CENTER YOURSELF**

Relaxation and recovery are both critical elements within a peak performer's mental conditioning program. Training your relaxation response through deep breathing will help you stay locked into the present moment, think more clearly, and perform more fluidly during competition. Relaxation outside of the competitive arena will help you speed up the recovery process, enabling you to return and perform harder, longer and smarter as you take your baseball performance to the next level.

Throughout life, it is important to use these relaxation and recovery practices to constantly re-center yourself, because internal balance leads to the performance consistency necessary for all peak performers. As you climb The Mountain of Excellence, remember to pause, take a deep breath and re-center yourself.

This will keep you climbing at your most productive pace and playing baseball one pitch at a time.

## **MENTAL IMAGERY**

At this moment, imagine standing on a stage that is situated in an enormous stadium. As you look around, you suddenly realize the air is being filled by thunderous applause reverberating around the arena. The stadium is full of people and they are standing up out of their seats. As you remain on the stage, taking in the sights and the sounds, you realize this standing ovation is for you.

It is a trophy ceremony at the championship parade and you are the MVP! You turn to your right and left and high five and hug your jubilant teammates. You seek out your coach for more celebration and then you look out into the stands for your family. It is a moment like no other!

A voice over the loudspeaker announces the beginning of the trophy presentation. The trophy is handed over to the head coach, who passes it to his assistants, and then it makes its way to the players.

As you get your hands on the trophy, you raise it above your head, the crowd responds with another great wave of applause, and you return the acknowledgement with a smile. As you stand there with the physical manifestation of the title, a final and total comprehension of your achievement washes over you. This is it. In this moment, you have reached the mountaintop.

There on the stage, you stand at the pinnacle of baseball at your level. You stand a champion. With utmost satisfaction, you know you have given your best when you needed it the most and that your performance has been simply superior to the competition.

Your PRIDE – that Personal Responsibility In Daily Excellence, your making all of your todays count and not counting them over all those years of training – has culminated in this. The game has rewarded that PRIDE. Now, all the world watches and recognizes you as the ultimate peak performer, the epitome of performance excellence when it comes to baseball.

This imaginary scenario is your introduction to mental imagery. Now, let's make that vision a reality.



### **CAIN'S COACHING POINT:**

**Everything happens twice: First in your mind, then in reality. Mental Imagery is one of the most well-researched mental skills that is NOT being used in baseball on a consistent basis. That means Mental Imagery is a place where you can get a competitive advantage and take your game to the next level.**

### **HEAD REHEARSAL**

One of the most underutilized mental conditioning skills in all of baseball is mental imagery. Mental imagery, often referred to as visualization, is the process of creating mental experiences that resemble actual physical experiences, similar to watching a highlight video of your best performance in your mind.

This process is similar to the stimulation of the imagination when you read an excerpt in the second-person narrative, such as the introduction to this chapter. The difference is that the script is not on a piece of paper in front of you; it is all in your head.

In mental conditioning, mental imagery is used to enhance performance preparation and build confidence. It is a technique employed to exercise the mind by mentally creating the

environment of performance competition and mentally performing the competitive tasks required in baseball in your mind. Mentally, you rehearse how you want to feel and how you want to perform, imagining the integration of your physical conditioning and your mental conditioning within your mind to see your best performance before you step out on the field of battle.

## **THE MIND-BODY CONNECTION**

Mental imagery has the potential to make a HUGE impact in your baseball performance. Whether you vividly imagine or you physically execute your performance, the brain processes those two experiences with similar psychoneuromuscular pathways. Made simple, that means you are hardwiring your brain and body for peak performance.

Mental imagery is physiologically creating neural patterns in your brain in the same manner as the performance of a physical action. Essentially, if you are lying in bed at night and you practice mental imagery, you are imprinting the blueprint of your performance in your mind, further embedding those pathways and enhancing your capacity to achieve what it is you see in your mind when you step onto the field.



### **CAIN'S COACHING POINT:**

**Before you get carried away, however, let's get one thing clear: Mental imagery is not a substitute for physical preparation. This is not some shortcut or fast track to peak performance. Putting in the physical time is necessary. The mental conditioning technique of mental imagery enhances your physical abilities by deepening those psychoneuromuscular pathways in your brain. Mental imagery is utilized to**

**maximize the efficiency and effectiveness of your physical preparation.**

## **YOU ARE “THE ARCHITECT” OF YOUR VISION**

In order to emphasize how an individual practices mental imagery, I've drawn a parallel to it and a concept from the Warner Brothers blockbuster movie *Inception*. In the film, a complex plot revolves around dreams and characters' movements in and out of the dream world. There are particular characters in the movie called “architects,” who build infinitely detailed dream worlds that mirror reality. This movie is one of the ultimate mind-benders in cinema, and if you haven't seen it, I apologize for using this particular analogy. However, this concept of “architects” is exactly what you want to emulate in your process of mental imagery.

When you perform the mental conditioning technique of mental imagery, you create a mental world. You construct in your mind a psychological replica of your sport's competitive arena (locker room, baseball field, stadium, etc.), placing you and your opponent within that arena and taking the field. When you perform mental imagery, you want to build in the sense of sight, the sense of sound, and the sense of touch. You want to mentally experience the appearance of where you will be playing, the field, the pitchers you will be facing.

You want to experience the energy in the stadium. If you are playing away from home, imagine the opponent's field and atmosphere. You want to experience yourself delivering walk-off doubles in the gap and making defensive web gems to save the game. Some athletes even integrate the familiar smells of their venue or the locker room into their mental imagery. The more details you construct as the architect of the video in your mind,

the greater you enhance the effectiveness of the mental imagery experience.

## **PHYSIOLOGICAL BENEFITS FROM PSYCHOLOGICAL STIMULUS**

If you are still a little skeptical about mental imagery, then I want to give you a little taste of the mind-body connection. I want you to experience the physiological response to the psychological stimulus of mental imagery. Before telling you to just go off and practice mental imagery, I will walk you through a scenario.

Whenever you perform mental imagery, recall and practice the techniques of relaxation to help you focus more clearly on the mental imagery process.

So sit back and focus on your breathing. Go through the process of relaxation and practice your deep breathing as you read the passage below, or have someone read it to you.

I am going to walk you through a scenario where you go into your kitchen, reach into your refrigerator, pull out a lemon, cut lemon wedges, and take a bite out of one of those lemon wedges. Read slowly and imagine the scenario in all its detail. Practice utilizing all your senses in this passage, because you want to make this scenario feel as real as possible in your mind.

## **THE LEMON EXPERIMENT**

Start by taking 3 good breaths on an 8-count on your inhalation and on a 10-count on exhalation. Breathe in nice and deep through your nose and release out through your mouth.

Now, imagine walking into your kitchen at home. Feel what the floor feels like on your bare feet.

You are now standing in front of your refrigerator. See the refrigerator in front of you in all its detail. Now, extend your hand outward, reaching for the refrigerator door, and clasp its door handle.

As you open that refrigerator door, notice a nice big, bright yellow lemon on the top shelf.

Reach for it and grab it. As you hold it in the palm of your hand, see the skin and feel the coolness and texture of that lemon as you feel its weight in your hand.

Put that lemon on the counter, take a knife lying there, and use it to cut the lemon in half the long way. See the juice and the body of that lemon as the knife slices through. Smell the slightly sour scent released into the air. Take half of the cut lemon and cut it again, so that you have two equal wedges. See and feel the sting of the lemon juice on your wet fingertips. Breathe in that lemon scent swelling in the air.

Now gently place your fingers, wet with lemon juice, on either side of a lemon wedge and lift it off the counter. Bring it up to your mouth and close your lips around the wedge before sinking your teeth along the lemon rind and squeezing the lemon juice into your mouth. Feel the lemon juice squirt onto the back of your tongue and the back of your mouth. Feel that sensation at the back of your teeth as you press your tongue against them to get all the lemon juice.

Remove the lemon and place the deflated wedge back on the counter.

## **A TASTE OF THE IMAGE**

Did you have a bit of a puckering sensation? Did your mouth salivate at the thought of the lemon taste? Could you smell that lemon or feel the sour juice sting your taste buds? Just thinking about the process of eating lemon made me salivate while I wrote this passage.

If you did receive any of those sensations as you read the passage, then you have now consciously experienced a physiological response (the body responding) to a psychological stimulus. This is a simple firsthand experience that emphasizes the shared psycho-neuro muscular pathways of the brain and body. Remember this experience and try to simulate the realness of eating the lemon in your mental imagery when you visualize yourself playing your best baseball.

If you did not experience a physiological response, then you probably read the passage too fast and didn't immerse yourself in this psychological scenario... or maybe you just did not eat enough lemons as a kid! But seriously, in order to properly utilize mental imagery, you **MUST** use the techniques of relaxation that you have learned. You must become absolutely immersed in the present mental rehearsal you are performing, releasing all mental bricks and deflecting all distractions.

## **MENTAL REHABILITATION & MENTAL REPS**

One of the best ways to maintain your edge while recovering from an injury is to use mental imagery to take mental reps. If you cannot physically practice on a particular day, there is no reason why you cannot mentally prepare yourself for physical performance. Often called mental reps, players use mental imagery to imagine themselves doing all of the physical skills they would be doing that day in practice – simulating at-bats, getting a clear picture in your mind of pitches that will be thrown to you,



and then driving the ball into the opposite field gap. This mental rehabilitation really provides a huge psychological advantage in the physical rehabilitation process by keeping the performance-specific psychoneuromuscular pathways in your brain active and as sharp as possible.

When a player is finally physically ready to perform, those psychoneuromuscular pathways are as close to game-ready as they can possibly be. By maintaining active psychoneuromuscular pathways, there is no dusting off the mental cobwebs and there is no regaining your mental edge. Your brain has been mentally preparing during the whole process of rehab and is fit and ready for performance on the field. By knowing how to practice mental imagery, there is absolutely no reason to lose your mental edge and confidence of knowing the plays or what your alignment and assignment are for that play.

## **VIDEO ENHANCEMENT**

I cannot emphasize enough that, when you are doing mental imagery, you want to make the experience as game-like as possible. You want to utilize all of your mental capacity to make the images appear vivid and clear. A technique sometimes used to assist mental imagery is watching video of yourself performing before you do mental imagery. Witnessing yourself play on tape is not only good for understanding how you perform, but also can aid the practice of mental imagery since using past performances to conjure images helps provide details to mentally rehearse future performances.

I encourage the athletes I work with to create a personal highlight video that they watch before they do mental imagery. This enables them to relive their best performances and then re-

imagine their feelings in those scenarios through mental imagery.

## **PRACTICING ADVERSITY**

A great way to utilize the benefits of mental imagery is to create a list of situations in your sport that make you uncomfortable and represent some form of adversity. Once you have made this list, use it as a checklist and use mental imagery to perform under each adverse scenario, executing exactly the way you want to in performance. This is similar to the favorite physical practice of children acting out a last-second scenario, where their team is down one and they hit the game-winning home run in the bottom of the ninth inning. Both practices deal with adverse situations and both imagine a desired outcome.

## **IMAGINE YOUR EXCELLENCE**

Mental imagery is one of most basic and fundamental of all mental conditioning strategies; however, it is widely underused. Remember that actions speak louder than words. You now have a greater understanding of the power of mental imagery; you just need to DO mental imagery in order to increase your performance preparation and confidence.

## **4 STEPS OF MENTAL IMAGERY**

Doing mental imagery is as easy as you closing your eyes and watching your human highlight reel in your mind. It does not need to get more complex than that. When I train coaches to take their teams through mental imagery the night before games, I outline four steps so that they have a rhythm and routine to follow.

1. **Relaxation** – Take them through the 5-4-3-2-1 technique.

2. **Confidence Conditioning** – Take them through the positive affirmations you want them to hear and that you want to embed into their mental game. Say each statement three times with enough time between statements so that the players can repeat them to themselves.

3. **Mental Recall** – Have the players recall and revisit their best baseball games of all time. They replay those big hits and great plays in their minds as if the past were happening now.

4. **Mental Rehearsal** – Have the players go forward to their next performance and visualize how exactly they want to perform. You can talk them through very specific situations that you have been preparing for your next game.

## **MENTAL IMAGERY WHILE WATCHING FILM**

A great way to utilize imagery is by watching yourself execute at a high level. When you see these images, your body triggers the same physiological response and begins to create a foundation of unshakable confidence!

Hitters can create a video with a sequence of their best swings, while pitchers can do the same with a variety of quality pitches.

## CHAPTER #9 REVIEW

- ❑ We all possess the ability to relax.
- ❑ Aim to perform with a relaxed intensity.
- ❑ Relaxation is the secret to results under pressure.
- ❑ Relaxation is a skill one must develop like any other physical skill.
- ❑ Diaphragmatic breathing is superior to shoulder breathing.
- ❑ Practice the 5-4-3-2-1 technique to build a relaxation response.
- ❑ Begin training your relaxation response in a controlled environment and progress under simulated adversity.
- ❑ Emotional state management is all about self-control and breathing.
- ❑ Relaxation is instrumental to recovery process.
- ❑ Invest in your sleep – it is the most important part of the recovery process.
- ❑ Relaxation before bed facilitates productive sleep, benefiting physiological and psychological recovery.
- ❑ Mental conditioning is most effective when an individual's psychological state is reflective of an optimum physiological state.
- ❑ Internal balance leads to the performance consistency necessary for all peak performers.
- ❑ You cannot make yourself relax; you must *let* yourself relax.

- ❑ Mental imagery is the process of creating mental experiences that resemble physical experience.
- ❑ Mental performance physiologically creates neural patterns in your brain in the same manner as the performance of physical action.
- ❑ As a mental architect, you want to build experiences of all the senses within your mental performance.
- ❑ Mental imagery enhances psychoneuromuscular pathways to assist physical rehabilitation.
- ❑ Practice mental performance before beginning physical competition.
- ❑ Watching videos of your best performances benefits your mental imagery by giving you a positive visual.
- ❑ Practice handling adversity in mental imagery as you do during preparation.

# CHAPTER #10

## INSPIRATION & MOTIVATION

"When you walk up to opportunity's door, don't knock. Kick the door in and introduce yourself!"

*Dwayne "The Rock" Johnson*

I was in Dallas, Texas, at a fair and on a stage was a big, muscular strongman performing some amazing feats of strength. He was ripping phone books in half and bending crowbars with his hands to the thunderous applause of his audience.

In one of his acts, he pulled out a lemon and squeezed all the juice out of that lemon and said: "Ladies and gentlemen, I am a strongman. I've squeezed all the juice out of this lemon. I will give \$1,000 to anyone who can come up and extract one more drop."

In response, two giant Dallas Cowboy-like guys went on stage to give it a try. The first guy grabbed the lemon and gave it a good, hard squeeze. No drop! The crowd laughed in amusement as he stepped back to let his friend give the lemon a squeeze. The crowd went silent and watched the second guy give the lemon a squeeze, contorting his face in grimaced concentration. He suddenly released his grip with a gasp for air, but still not one drop of lemon juice.

The crowd laughed and applauded as the two men exited the stage. The strongman was left on stage holding his arms in the air with the lemon in his hand when he saw an old lady, who looked to be in her seventies, walking up the stairs onto the stage.

The strongman said: "Ma'am, for the sake of time, can we move on? You are not going to squeeze any juice out of the lemon. I mean, c'mon. The guys who just tried couldn't do it and they looked like professional football players."

"Sir, just give me a chance," the old lady said politely.

"Okay. Here you go. One chance," said the strongman, who handed her the lemon as the crowd cheered in support.

The old lady took the lemon within her hands and began to squeeze. Her face became contorted. Her jaw set. Her veins began popping out of her forehead. Her glasses fell off her face. Her entire body shook back and forth from her intense struggle with the lemon as she squeezed it with all her might.



**BOOM!!**

***Out popped one drop of lemon juice!!!***

The audience erupted in applause! The sounds of clapping, whistles and cheers rang throughout the fair. The strongman was blown away as he was compelled to show the audience the plate on which the drop of lemon juice had fallen. The old lady stood there onstage with her hands on her knees as she collected her breath. It was a scene to behold.

Then the strongman walked over with a check he had just written out for \$1,000 and handed it to the lady as he said: "Ma'am, you have got to tell us. I've never had anyone squeeze an extra drop of juice out of that lemon How did you do it?"

She replied: "Sir, I have to tell you. I am 74 years old. I just lost my husband. I've got three grandchildren that we're raising and I just lost my job. I needed that money."

The old lady was inspired. She was motivated. She had a reason WHY she needed to squeeze that juice out of the lemon. ***With a big enough reason why, you will always find a way how.***

***Your reason why is the fuel that burns the fire of inspiration and motivation inside of you.***

So what is your “why”? Why do you do what you do? Why are you reading this right now? What do you want to accomplish in your life, in baseball, this season, this week, today? What is your process for making those dreams a reality?

Most people think inspiration and motivation are things that you can do once in a while by reading a book, watching a movie or hearing a motivational speaker. Most people think that is all it takes for you to stay motivated. Realistically, that could not be farther from the truth. Although those experiences may spark a flame, in order to fan the flame and make it burn with a passion, you must have a BIG reason why.

“When your why is big enough, you will find a way how.”

***Tony Robbins  
Success Strategist  
World-Renowned Speaker & Author***

## **MOTIVATION IS A DAILY DECISION**

Imagine only brushing your teeth once a week. I hope, for everyone’s sake, that you are disgusted by the thought of brushing your teeth only once a week! Your teeth would become yellow, feel hairy and would develop cavities and/or rot. In addition, nobody would want to hold a conversation with you because your breath would blow them away. My point is that you

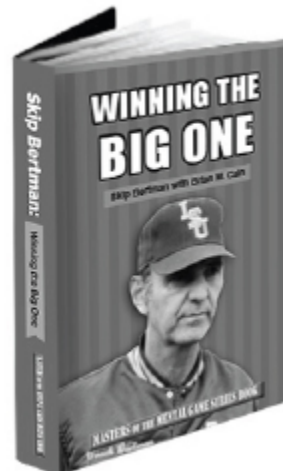
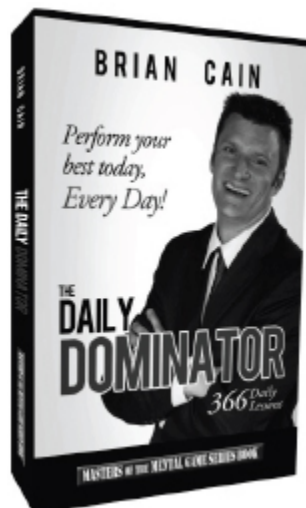


cannot brush your teeth once a week or take a bath once a week and expect your teeth to look good or you to smell good.

Inspiration and motivation work the same way as dental hygiene, except they are not for your oral health but for your mental performance health. You should mentally absorb some form of inspiration daily to motivate you in your preparation and performance. Do not read something inspiring once a week. Do not motivate yourself or your team once or even a couple times a week. Inspiration and motivation must be performed every single day.

## **THE DAILY DOMINATOR & BASEBALL**

This is why I wrote the book *The Daily Dominator*. With The DOMINATOR you get to read one page a day of mental conditioning material so that you can do a little a lot, not a lot a little, and maximize your mental game. Having everyone in your program read the same page each day and then breaking it down at practice or in your positional meetings takes the guesswork out of having to create your own mental conditioning program. Your “do a little a lot” each day is already done; you just have to break it down with your team.



This is also why I was in pursuit of getting legendary LSU Head Coach Skip Bertman to put his strategies for success onto paper for you to use. You can tap into his amazing mental game in the 500+ pages we did together for the book entitled *Winning The Big One*. Available at [www.BrianCain.com](http://www.BrianCain.com). Personally, this is the highlight of my career; working with Skip on this was truly an enlightening process into a world of excellence that was totally next level compared to anything that I had experienced up to that point.

## **ADVERTISE TO YOURSELF**

Have you ever wondered why companies are willing to pay three million dollars for a thirty-second commercial during the Super Bowl? The common response to this question is that tens of millions of people watch the Super Bowl. This is true, but the real reason that advertising works is that advertisements create lasting images within the mind, so that when people go out to consume products, those products from the advertisements jump to the front of their minds.

The same tactics of advertising apply to inspiring peak performance. Advertising to yourself will enhance your preparation and competition by inspiring your performance. Similar to any marketing consultant, before creating sporadic marketing pitches you must know what message or product you are trying to advertise and the most effective methods for marketing that product.

With mental conditioning, the product is the mindset of a peak performer and how that mindset leads to your baseball success. Advertising to yourself through various strategies will help you to create the peak performance mentality you desire and help you to win more games on the diamond.

## KEVIN YOUNG – OLYMPIC ADVERTISING

The current world record holder in the 400-meter hurdles, with a time of 46.78 seconds, is the 1992 Summer Olympics gold medalist Kevin Young. When Young got to the Olympic Village in Barcelona, he advertised his Olympic goal to himself by writing it down, everywhere. When asked about his preparation in an interview after his world record performance, Young responded by saying: “My goal this year was to run 46.89. I wrote that everywhere in my room, even here up at the Village. I took a pencil and wrote it all on the wall. I integrated it into a lot of things I do at home. I just got into the habit of writing the number around, everywhere I go.”

Young used the power of self-advertising his goals by putting his goal in writing, where he could see it often for motivation. As an aspiring peak performer, you too should advertise your goals to yourself by putting them everywhere you can see them. If you truly desire something, you should be able to visualize it as you go through your day at every turn. Self-advertising helps you to focus on what you want, not what you are trying to avoid.



### **CAIN'S COACHING POINT:**

**What goals can you write out and post around your room?**

---

---

### **SIGNS OF SUCCESS**

An excellent habit to develop is collecting inspirational phrases, pictures and images to create “signs of success” to hang around your living space. This provides you with visuals for motivation that you will see on a daily basis. When you see these signs of

success every day, it becomes a part of your everyday thought process. After a few days or a week seeing a particular sign, your goal will be to commit this sign of success to memory and, more importantly, to have it effectively motivate you to action.

Players most often self-advertise signs of success by hanging photos, quotes and other images all around their bedroom and locker. Pictures of athletes or coaches who inspire them, quotes that motivate them to continuously check in on their perspective, and mental conditioning statements such as ***“Don’t count the days, make the days count”*** are reminders of the importance of today. Whenever you need them, these inspirational advertisements catch your eye and keep you inspired and motivated on your journey up The Mountain of Excellence.

The signs of success are simple ways to advertise the peak performance mentality and mental conditioning principles you want to adopt in sport and life.

## **MAKE YOUR OWN SIGNS OF SUCCESS**

Draw from the material and information you have acquired from this book and make your own signs of success. By creating your signs of success, you put your knowledge of peak performance to use and enhance the process of mentally conditioning the habit of excellence.



### **CAIN’S GAME PLAN:**

**Based on the content within this manual, what are three captions for signs of success that you will hang in your room to stay inspired?**

---

---

---

## **EXAMPLES OF SELF-ADVERTISEMENT**

Now that you know the importance of the signs of success and have created mental game marketing campaigns for yourself, let me share with you what other players have reported hanging in their rooms as signs of success. Remember, at all levels of competition, you are never too young, too old, too bad or too good to stay inspired.

1. A vision board collage of all your goals and what you want to accomplish.
2. A picture of your national or state championship stadium where that event will be held.
3. A poster of Muhammad Ali or other athletes who inspire the mentality that you want to develop.
4. A poster of the college baseball national champion dog piling at TD Ameritrade Park or other great baseball venues that motivate you to do the work it takes so that you too may experience a similar great moment.
5. An inspirational quote from your favorite piece of literature.

## **BATHROOM MIRROR – DRY ERASE MARKER**

Another great technique worth revisiting so you can stay inspired is to write your goals on your bathroom mirror with a dry erase marker. Whenever you enter the bathroom, you will see your goals and be reminded of the mindset you want to develop to become a peak performer. Essentially, your mirror becomes a goal-oriented sign of success.

I have worked with professional mixed martial arts fighters who, immediately upon arriving in Vegas at their hotel room, take out a dry erase marker and write their mental game reminders on the mirror. Writing on their mirror sets the tone for their peak performance mentality; whenever they enter the bathroom, they are reminded of their desired mindset and the need to focus on that mindset and process for performance excellence.

## **GOAL CARDS CARRIED ALL THE TIME**

Another strategy you can use is to carry a card in your wallet with your personal goals displayed on it. Carrying a goal card will make you 35% more likely to make those goals come true because you have constant reinforcement whenever you open your wallet. Whenever you do open your wallet, take a look at that card and mentally check in with how you are moving forward to achieve your goals. This form of self-advertising will go wherever you go.



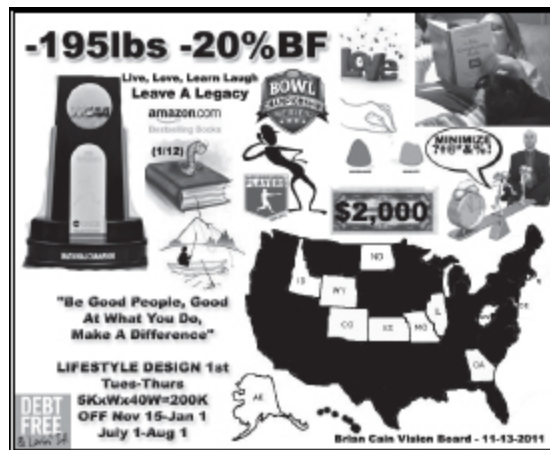
## **ATHLETIC TAPE & WRIST BAND ADVERTISING**

During preparation or in competition, a great method of self-advertising is to write inspirational messages on wrist tape or other accessories. Wrist tape and wrist bands are effective places for self-advertising because you constantly see the messages in front of yourself. Many baseball players will write their goals on their wrist tape so they are reminded of what they must work on or are trying to accomplish.

## VISION BOARDS

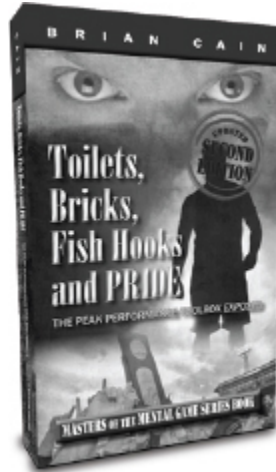
One of the best motivational exercises you can do as an individual and as a team to help with inspiration and motivation is to create a vision board. A vision board is simply a collage of your goals and what you desire to accomplish. I strongly encourage you to create a vision board for yourself, and if you are on a team, I highly recommend you create one together as a team-building and team-focusing exercise.

***You will never outperform your self-image.*** Making a vision board of images will inspire you to accomplish your goals. Place it where you will see it every day. This will keep your goals in the front of your mind and motivate you to achieve them. I personally started using vision boards in 2007 and annually revisit my own board the first week in July. Below is a picture of my personal vision board.



As you can see on my vision board, I want to speak in every state in the country. The ones that are white are the ones where I have not had a chance to speak YET. I want to help teams win national championships (accomplished in 2012, 2014 2X). I want to spend more time fishing and hiking in the mountains. I want to read at least one book every month. I want to be a better listener. I want

to keep my weight under 200 pounds. I want to have better balance in my life between work and relaxation, and I want to live the core values of being positive, disciplined, progressive and committed to others. I also wanted to be a #1 Best-selling Author (which has been accomplished with my first book *Toilets, Bricks, Fish Hooks and PRIDE*).



I keep my vision board with me in my binder and I look at it multiple times each week. I have a copy of my vision board on my desk at home and on my desk at the office. The vision board serves as a reminder for me to constantly ask myself: *Is what I am working on right now helping me get to where I want to go?* The vision board is great for helping create the awareness you need to constantly check in on your progress towards achieving your goals and to refocus you on what you want to accomplish.

## **WORK TO MAKE "IT" WORK**

Here's the significant difference between peak performers and the rest of humanity: Peak performers understand that you must work to make "it" work. Whatever that "it" is, it's all about investing time and energy into a process of development that will make you excellent at what you do, and thus will bring you success. The vision board process has worked for me, it has



worked for Jack Canfield (author of *Chicken Soup for the Soul*) as he talks about in the documentary *The Secret*, and it has worked for thousands of other people. It will work for you when you work it.

## **WATCH OUT FOR THE NEGAHOLICS**

If you are an unenthusiastic, pessimistic cynic, often referred to as a “Donnie Downer” or a negaholic, and you believe that ***“This mental conditioning stuff is bogus, I just want to play”*** or ***“This stuff is never actually going to improve my performance,”*** well, you are right!

***Whether you think you can or think you can’t, you are right and you are stuck in the first two of the four stages of acceptance.***

## **THE FOUR STAGES OF ACCEPTANCE**

The four stages that we all go through to accept something new are as follows. Where are you?

1. This ain’t for me.
2. This is OK for others.
3. I will try it.
4. I can’t believe I did it any other way.

Everyone starts in stage one or two. If you have filled out the CAIN’S COACHING POINTS – actually filled them out with a pen in the book – then you are at stage three and will get to stage four.

The sad part about reality is that less than half of the people who read this book will ever put pen to paper and answer the questions in the book. If that is you and you are reading this... STOP! Stop reading and stop wasting your time. Go find something that you actually care enough about to put pen to

paper. Obviously, you are reading this because someone asked you to and not because YOU want to be the best you can be. If you want to truly be the best you can be, STOP. Go back and answer the questions in the book and then come back to this point.

If you actually did go back and answer the questions with pen to paper, my hat is off to you. You are pursuing excellence. If you did not and kept reading, so be it. However, I challenge you to get off the average train and head to station excellence.

There will be skeptics that think the mental game is a crutch or a magic pill. What the skeptics do not understand is that ***you have to work to make it work***. The reason mental conditioning exercises will not work for them is a result of their refusal to try and make it work. It is not rocket science – if you do not attempt to make something work, of course it will not! It is the same logic as the old saying, “You miss 100 percent of the shots you do not take.” You must believe in the benefits of mental conditioning for your performance to improve, and there are real, tangible payoffs.

The use of signs of success and vision boards will help you stay focused on your goals, and they will help you to get motivated and stay inspired to DO THE WORK that it takes to be successful.



#### **CAIN'S COACHING POINT:**

**If you noticed anyone on your team who has openly dismissed mental conditioning and stopped reading this book, reflect on how his attitude and actions affect the team. If his mentality is adversely affecting team chemistry, I'd suggest confronting that teammate or making your coach aware of the situation as an expression of genuine concern**

**for the well-being of the team throughout the season. Sometimes these moments can make all the difference in an athlete's career or even the person's life, because someone took the time and cared enough to step up, maybe more than that person cares about himself.**

## **MOTIVATIONAL MOTION PICTURES**

Motivational videos, inspirational movies, and highlight reels are another tremendous tool for peak performers. Similar to the video enhancement in mental imagery, there is no debating that watching some form of motivational motion picture or video before a practice or a game will inspire your performance on that day.

Watching a personal motivational video clip every morning as part of your morning routine also provides great reinforcement for the kind of person and player you want to be today. Regardless of how you feel when you wake up, the video clips you watch will get you fired up to DOMINATE that day and do the work necessary to advance further up The Mountain of Excellence.



### **CAIN'S GAME PLAN:**

**I challenge you to make your own personal highlight video. You can use footage of yourself or of others on YouTube to inspire your performance. Then watch this video on a routine basis.**

### **INSPIRE YOUR DAILY DOMINATION**

Whether you read a chapter in this book, watch an inspirational movie clip or use any number of the various methods for inspirational motivation, you must build motivation into your

daily routine to become inspired to take action. You will have more success spending 3-5 minutes a day getting inspired and motivated than you will if you spend one hour once a week. Remember, if you get inspired a little a lot, you will have more success than if you get inspired a lot a little.

By the end of using this book, you will possess the information necessary to transform yourself into a peak-performing baseball player or coach. It is thus imperative that you motivate yourself to master the mental game in your daily preparation and performance ACTION, not just understand what you should do. Be the one who DOES IT!

Remember, intelligence is acting on the knowledge you have acquired. Use the strategies for motivation and inspiration from within this chapter to inspire your climb up to the summit of The Mountain of Excellence.

## CHAPTER #10 REVIEW

- ❑ Have a big reason “why” and you will always find a way how.
- ❑ Make yourself inspired daily by reviewing motivational material.
- ❑ Advertise your goals to yourself.
- ❑ Make signs of success for motivation.
- ❑ Write daily goals on your mirror and make longer-term goal cards.
- ❑ Self-advertise during performance by writing on athletic tape.
- ❑ Create vision boards for performance goals.
- ❑ Work to make your goals a reality.
- ❑ Watch motivational video clips for inspiration.
- ❑ If you get inspired a little a lot, you will have more success than if you get inspired a lot a little.

# CONCLUSION

## PURSUING EXCELLENCE

“The quality of a person’s life is in direct proportion to their commitment to excellence, regardless of their chosen field of endeavor.”

*Vince Lombardi*  
*Legendary NFL Head Coach*

Excellence is being at your best when it means the most – every single day and every single pitch.

This concept rules supreme in peak performance, transcending and penetrating all other aspects of mental conditioning. It is assuming personal responsibility in your daily pursuit of excellence that will make you a champion, because consistency of effort wins. Excellence is about the cultivation of superior mental strength through the process of establishing the proper routines, positive self-talk and a champion’s mentality in preparation for inevitable battles through adversity in the game and in life.

After all the mental conditioning material we have covered in this book, you should be both informed and well on your way to achieving your goal of performance excellence in baseball. We have outlined the fundamental principles of mental conditioning and discussed how to adapt these principles and apply them on your journey to the summit of The Mountain of Excellence. This conclusion explains the purpose of necessary devotion to excellence within performance.

**EXCELLENCE IS A LIFESTYLE, NOT AN EVENT**

Truly excellent individuals recognize that excellence is not something you do once in a while; you must strive to be excellent all the time – that is, twenty-four hours a day, seven days a week, and three hundred sixty-five days a year. Excellence is a stain you can't wipe off. I hope this book has stained you with excellence.

### **THREE DOORS & THE LAW OF AVERAGES**

You have three doors you can choose to open. You can open the door called WIN, you can open the door called LOSE, or you can open the door called EXCELLENCE. The pursuit of excellence is about more than winning; performance excellence transcends winning. Excellence is a lifestyle; winning is an event that takes place at a moment in time.

Remember that the law of averages says that if you play your best, you give yourself the best chance to win, but you are not guaranteed to win. As a peak performer, you cannot control the outcome; all you can do is work the process to the best of your ability and give yourself the best opportunity for success on that day and on that pitch. The daily pursuit of excellence is the only way to get there.

### **THE EXCELLENCE OF BLUE ANGELS**

Excellence is about preparing more than other people are willing to and working smarter than other people think is necessary. It is paying close attention to detail within the process in order to give you the results you desire. The Blue Angels are a group of United States Navy Fighter Pilots that perform aerial shows all over the country. What their audiences witness is excellence in motion. What the audience does not see is that the entire performance process demands precision and a commitment to excellence before, and after, they take to the skies.



As some of the most dedicated and excellent performers on the planet, the Blue Angels use mental imagery, video analysis, and a routine brief and debriefing process. Each of these takes about twice as long as the flight itself to prepare for and then learn from each event they perform.

The Blue Angels are known for their tight diamond formation in the air, where only 36 inches (just longer than the bat you swing) separate a plane from its wingtip to the canopy of the other planes (36 inches is about how far your head is from your feet when you sit down and read this). They perform aerial maneuvers at a speed of one mile every 9 seconds or a closure rate, two planes flying directly towards each other at one mile every 4-½; seconds – almost 1,000 miles per hour. There is no room for error, and team excellence in their performance is critical.

## **PURSUIT OF EXCELLENCE OVER PERFECTION**

The Blue Angels understand that their pursuit of excellence is different than the pursuit of perfection. They know that there has never been the perfect flight. They are constantly evaluating performance on video, looking for areas of improvement, paying close attention to the details of their flights, and even evaluating the way they march to their airplanes. The Blue Angels team is a model of excellence, and these pilots are truly dedicated to progress and making the team better in their pursuit of excellence TODAY!

When you see the Blue Angels or other peak performers like Derek Jeter, Albert Pujols or Matt Carpenter, they make what they do look very easy and we think they are gifted. Do not be fooled by their grace and proficient performance. Although they may have been blessed with a few faster twitch muscle fibers than Joe



Normal, even they have climbed The Mountain of Excellence one step at a time, and they would be the first to tell you so.

## **A WORLD CHAMPION STATE OF MIND**



Whether you have the physical talent of a world champion or not is irrelevant. Physical skill makes these champions visibly impressive, but more important is their mental toughness. The story behind their physical prowess is the story of their mental prowess – because it is their incredible work ethic, their capacity to embrace adversity, and their insatiable desire to improve to which they owe their success. One of the most beautiful aspects of the mental game is that, regardless of physical skill, you can become a master of the mental game.

Most people believe that you must be great before you can practice like the great ones. Well, most people have got it all wrong. Anyone can execute this program to cultivate the mindset of a champion. You may not lift the same amount of weight or have the same swing mechanics, but anyone can prepare and practice with the same mental intensity of a world champion. All physical performance programs should necessarily be tailored to the physical capabilities of the individual, but mental performance programs may be adopted universally. The fundamentals of mental conditioning may be practiced by anyone willing to actively pursue the summit of The Mountain of Excellence.

## **THE CLIMB IS THE DISCOVERY**

As we have discussed throughout this manual, performance, in baseball and in life, is comparable to that of a journey up a mountain. The journey is yours and you alone have the ability to

set the tone of your performance to conquer the climb. The mountain you set your sights on is your choice and the journey is your discovery.

Each mountain you approach will require different physical skills that you must master, but the mental skill will remain the same. There will be some mountains that serve as pleasure climbs, while others will challenge your very existence by demanding every ounce of your physical and mental abilities. Sometimes you will be climbing a mountain and you will realize you no longer wish to reach the summit. Sometimes you will need to return to base camp, take a break and return to conquer the summit at a later date. Each journey up a mountain is a journey of self-discovery, and through each experience you learn a little about yourself and you learn a little bit about the journey. At the end of the day, it is the journey to the summit, not the summit itself, that makes reaching the summit worthwhile.

## **THE JOURNEY IS THE REWARD, THE DESTINATION IS THE DISEASE**

My hope is that by the end of this book you will have learned how to be an independent, peak performance mountaineer on the baseball field and in life – one who understands that although you may reach the summit of the mountain you are climbing, there is no summit in life and there is no summit to your excellence.

You are on a journey in which the journey is the reward and the destination is the disease. You must understand that every climb is a process and that proper preparation is imperative. You must create a mental road map, detailing where you want to go and who you must become to be worthy of reaching the summit. Remember, if you want more, you must become more.

Becoming more will give you the best chance to reach the summit of any mountain. Once you reach the summit and have thoroughly enjoyed the view, it is time to return to base camp and start climbing another.



**CAIN'S COACHING POINT:**

**There will always be another mountain to climb. Throughout your journeys up the Mountains of Excellence, recognize there is no final summit; there is no finish line. You are on a journey called life and your best bet is to DOMINATE THE DAY, every day, and enjoy this amazing ride.**

**SUCCESS = THE RESULT OF EXCELLENCE**

I have said this before, and I will repeat myself for emphasis. There is no shortcut to performance excellence; there is no easy way to the summit of your mountain. ***You don't get the same satisfaction of helicoptering to the summit as you do from climbing.***

Excellence is something you cannot purchase or be gifted, just as success is not something you simply randomly discover. Excellence is the result of a self-transformative journey to becoming more. A journey that you choose to actively endure, and once you develop a strict adherence to personal excellence, you are bound to discover the success you are looking for in ***ALL ASPECTS OF YOUR LIFE!***

**CAIN'S COACHING POINT:**

**If you have found value in using this book and if it has helped you in any way, consider giving a copy to five people whom you care about and want to see take their performance to the next level.**



**By giving this book to others, you are helping them find the ideas and mental keys that will unlock their potential.**

**You will help them live a more fulfilled and excellent journey as they climb their Mountain of Excellence. This book could forever alter the course of someone's life. It could be you who provides the push as a great teammate. Without you, they might never even start hiking.**

Write down five people to whom you wish to give a copy of this book:

- 1) \_\_\_\_\_
- 2) \_\_\_\_\_
- 3) \_\_\_\_\_
- 4) \_\_\_\_\_
- 5) \_\_\_\_\_

## **THE MENTAL CONDITIONS FOR EXCELLENCE**

Through this book you have learned many mental conditioning strategies and peak performance principles to help you proceed on your journey to the summit of The Mountain of Excellence. Regardless of your sport or profession, the utilization of these mental conditioning principles and fundamentals are necessary to help achieve an elite and excellent performance state of mind.

At the conclusion of going through *Mental Conditioning for Baseball*, you have learned how to:

- Live in the present moment and maximize your time
- Act differently than how you feel and start having good bad days
- Focus on the process over the outcome
- Identify what you can control and what you cannot
- Have your own personal philosophy and core values for life
- Challenge your limiting beliefs and your perspective
- Stay positive in the face of adversity
- Develop preparation and performance routines for consistently high-level performance
- Take responsibility for your performance and life
- Relax, recover and gain control of your thoughts, feelings and emotions
- Recognize your signal lights and develop the awareness to win
- Release negative thoughts and refocus back to the present when you get distracted
- Move from intelligence and thinking to action and results
- Use mental imagery to help you prepare and be more confident in your performance
- Inspire and motivate yourself to make the impossible possible
- Take action steps to make excellence a lifestyle, not an event



## **CONCLUSION REVIEW**

- ❑ Excellence is being at your best when it means the most – every single day.
- ❑ Excellence is a lifestyle, not an event.
- ❑ You have three doors you can choose to open. You can open the door called WIN, you can open the door called LOSE, or you can open the door called EXCELLENCE.
- ❑ Excellence is about preparing more than other people are willing to, and working smarter than other people think is necessary.
- ❑ The pursuit of excellence is constructive; the pursuit of perfection will destroy you.
- ❑ Anyone can develop a world champion state of mind.
- ❑ The journey makes reaching the summit worth while.
- ❑ The journey is the reward and the destination is the disease.
- ❑ Success is the result of excellence.
- ❑ When you take PRIDE (Personal Responsibility In Daily Excellence) in your performance, everything else will take care of itself.

**DOMINATE THE DAY!**

# ABOUT THE AUTHOR

## WHO IS BRIAN M. CAIN?



Brian M. Cain, MS, CMAA, is a #1 best-selling author, speaker, trainer and expert in the fields of Mental Conditioning and Peak Performance. He has worked with coaches, athletes and teams at the Olympic level and in the National Football League (NFL), National Basketball Association (NBA), National Hockey League (NHL), Ultimate Fighting Championship (UFC), and Major League Baseball (MLB).

Cain is baseball's premier mental conditioning coach and has worked with more teams at the collegiate and high school level than any other. He is the trusted authority and expert that coaches, players and parents turn to when they want to take the mental game to the next level.

Some of the athletic programs around the country he has worked with include the University of Alabama, Auburn University, Florida State University, the University of Iowa, the University of Maryland, the University of Mississippi, Mississippi State University, Oregon State University, the University of Southern California, the University of Tennessee, The University of Michigan, Vanderbilt University, Washington State University, Yale University, Texas A&M, TCU, Baylor, the University of Georgia, East Carolina University, The University of North Carolina Wilmington, Coastal Carolina University and The University of Notre Dame.



He has delivered his award-winning seminars and presentations at coaches' clinics, leadership summits and athletic directors' conventions all over the World. As a high school athletic director, he is one of the youngest ever on record to receive the Certified Master Athletic Administration Certification from the National Interscholastic Athletic Administrators Association.

A highly sought-after Peak Performance Coach, clinician, and keynote and motivational speaker, Cain delivers his message with passion and enthusiasm, in an engaging style that keeps his audiences energized while being educated. As someone who lives what he teaches, Cain will inspire you and give you the tools necessary to get the most out of your career.

Please visit [www.BrianCain.com/Monday](http://www.BrianCain.com/Monday) to sign up for his weekly newsletter. Also, be sure to subscribe to his podcast on iTunes and at [www.BrianCain.com/Podcast](http://www.BrianCain.com/Podcast).

Visit [www.BrianCain.com/Baseball](http://www.BrianCain.com/Baseball) to take advantage of his free giveaways and visit [www.BrianCain.com/Calendar](http://www.BrianCain.com/Calendar) to see when Cain will be in your area so you can experience the benefits of having him come in and work with your team.



[www.BrianCain.com/Monday](http://www.BrianCain.com/Monday)

[www.BrianCain.com/Calendar](http://www.BrianCain.com/Calendar)

# ABOUT THE AUTHORS

## WHO IS MATT MORSE?



Matt Morse is a former NCAA Division 1 student-athlete at the University of Alabama at Birmingham, where he played 5 years for head coach Brian Shoop and trained extensively with Brian Cain Peak Performance. During his 5-year career at UAB, Matt graduated with a bachelor's degree in Marketing and a Master's degree in Business

Administration.

Additionally, while playing at UAB and learning from Brian Cain and other mental conditioning and peak performance coaches, Matt hosted a series of interviews with some of the great masters of the mental game. These interviews included Ken Ravizza, Brian Cain and 19 others, which Matt then compiled, transcribed, sorted by topic, and built into Mental Game VIP. If you haven't already, go get this 375-page book & 12-hour audio program at [MentalGameVIP.com](http://MentalGameVIP.com) and follow @MentalGameVIP on Twitter!

Matt brings his knowledge and experiences in the mental game to *Mental Conditioning for Baseball*. He adds a tremendous perspective gained throughout his playing career, and offers simple strategies to maximize performance and master the mental side of the game.

To learn more about what Matt is doing now, visit [MattMorse.com](http://MattMorse.com) and follow him on Twitter @MattMorse\_17!

## **ADDITIONAL RESOURCES**

### **HOW YOU CAN CONTINUE TO BECOME A MASTER OF THE MENTAL GAME**

**Cain offers a range of training materials to get you and your team to the top of your game.**

**Available at [www.BrianCain.com](http://www.BrianCain.com)**

**MASTERS OF THE MENTAL GAME SERIES BOOKS  
MENTAL CONDITIONING RESOURCES**

**Champions Tell All:  
Inexpensive Experience From The World's Best**

Cain provides you with all access to some of the World's greatest performers. Learn from mixed martial arts world champions and college All-Americans about mental toughness.



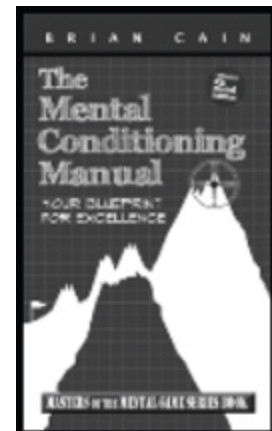
**The Daily Dominator:  
Perform Your Best Today. Every Day!**

You get 366 Daily Mental Conditioning lessons to help you start your day down the path to excellence. Investing time each day with Cain is your best way to become your best self.



**The Mental Conditioning Manual:  
Your Blueprint For Excellence**

This is the exact system Cain uses to build champions and masters of the mental game. It has helped produce NCAA and High School champions, MMA world champions, and more.



**So What, Next Pitch!  
How To Play Your Best  
When It Means The Most**

A compilation of interviews with top coaches and players where Cain teaches you their systems and tricks. Learn from the insights of these masters of the mental game.



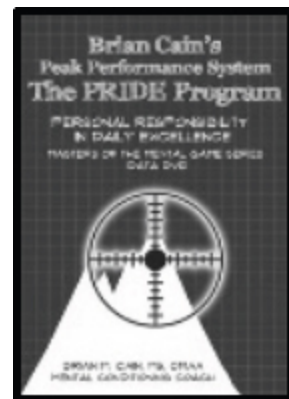
### **Toilets, Bricks, Fish Hooks and PRIDE: The Peak Performance Toolbox EXPOSED**

Go inside the most successful programs in the country that use Cain's Peak Performance System. Use this book to unlock your potential and learn to play your best when it means the most.



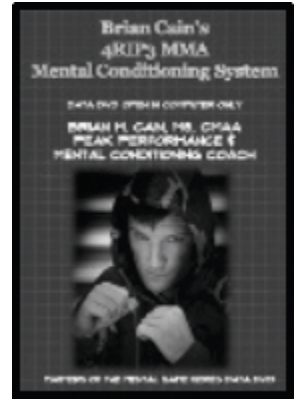
### **The Peak Performance System (P.R.I.D.E.) Personal Responsibility In Daily Excellence**

This big, video-based training program is Cain's signature training program for coaches, athletes and teams. It will take you step by step to the top of the performance mountain.



### **4RIP3 MMA Mental Conditioning System**

Get the techniques used by the best fighters in the world and start bringing the fighter you are in the gym into the cage. It will help you unlock your potential, teach you drills to sharpen your focus and give you the confidence of a champion.



**And More at [www.BrianCain.com](http://www.BrianCain.com)**

## CONNECT WITH CAIN

### YOUR LINK TO DOING



[www.twitter.com/briancainpeak](http://www.twitter.com/briancainpeak)



[www.facebook.com/briancainpeak](http://www.facebook.com/briancainpeak)



[www.linkedin.com/briancainpeak](http://www.linkedin.com/briancainpeak)



[www.youtube.com/wwwbriancom](http://www.youtube.com/wwwbriancom)



[www.briancain.com/itunes](http://www.briancain.com/itunes)

### SIGN UP FOR BRIAN CAIN'S MONDAY MENTAL CONDITIONING MESSAGE




Cain's Monday Message is full of information to help you unlock your potential and perform at your best when it means the most. Subscribe for FREE and get a bonus audio training disk: [www.BrianCain.com/Monday](http://www.BrianCain.com/Monday).




# CONCENTRATION GRIDS

## ONE NUMBER/POINT AT A TIME



**Brian Cain Peak Performance, LLC**  
Concentration Training Grid  
[www.BrianCain.com](http://www.BrianCain.com)

86	54	04	72	20	05	34	79	52	17
73	43	50	70	44	12	28	59	94	35
45	62	63	97	51	95	91	67	84	75
27	69	23	00	08	83	09	41	65	78
80	39	68	47	29	93	36	30	38	42
61	53	19	48	49	74	40	18	15	21
60	01	14	22	64	07	58	02	32	16
13	31	26	71	66	33	06	85	10	89
76	46	98	37	99	24	57	11	55	82
92	25	81	96	87	88	77	03	56	90



**Brian Cain Peak Performance, LLC**  
Concentration Training Grid  
[www.BrianCain.com](http://www.BrianCain.com)

86	54	04	72	20	05	34	79	52	17
73	43	50	70	44	12	28	59	94	35
45	62	63	97	51	95	91	67	84	75
27	69	23	00	08	83	09	41	65	78
80	39	68	47	29	93	36	30	38	42
61	53	19	48	49	74	40	18	15	21
60	01	14	22	64	07	58	02	32	16
13	31	26	71	66	33	06	85	10	89
76	46	98	37	99	24	57	11	55	82
92	25	81	96	87	88	77	03	56	90



**Brian Cain Peak Performance, LLC**

Concentration Training Grid  
[www.BrianCain.com](http://www.BrianCain.com)

86	54	04	72	20	05	34	79	52	17
73	43	50	70	44	12	28	59	94	35
45	62	63	97	51	95	91	67	84	75
27	69	23	00	08	83	09	41	65	78
80	39	68	47	29	93	36	30	38	42
61	53	19	48	49	74	40	18	15	21
60	01	14	22	64	07	58	02	32	16
13	31	26	71	66	33	06	85	10	89
76	46	98	37	99	24	57	11	55	82
92	25	81	96	87	88	77	03	56	90



**Brian Cain Peak Performance, LLC**

Concentration Training Grid  
[www.BrianCain.com](http://www.BrianCain.com)

86	54	04	72	20	05	34	79	52	17
73	43	50	70	44	12	28	59	94	35
45	62	63	97	51	95	91	67	84	75
27	69	23	00	08	83	09	41	65	78
80	39	68	47	29	93	36	30	38	42
61	53	19	48	49	74	40	18	15	21
60	01	14	22	64	07	58	02	32	16
13	31	26	71	66	33	06	85	10	89
76	46	98	37	99	24	57	11	55	82
92	25	81	96	87	88	77	03	56	90



**Brian Cain Peak Performance, LLC**  
Concentration Training Grid  
[www.BrianCain.com](http://www.BrianCain.com)

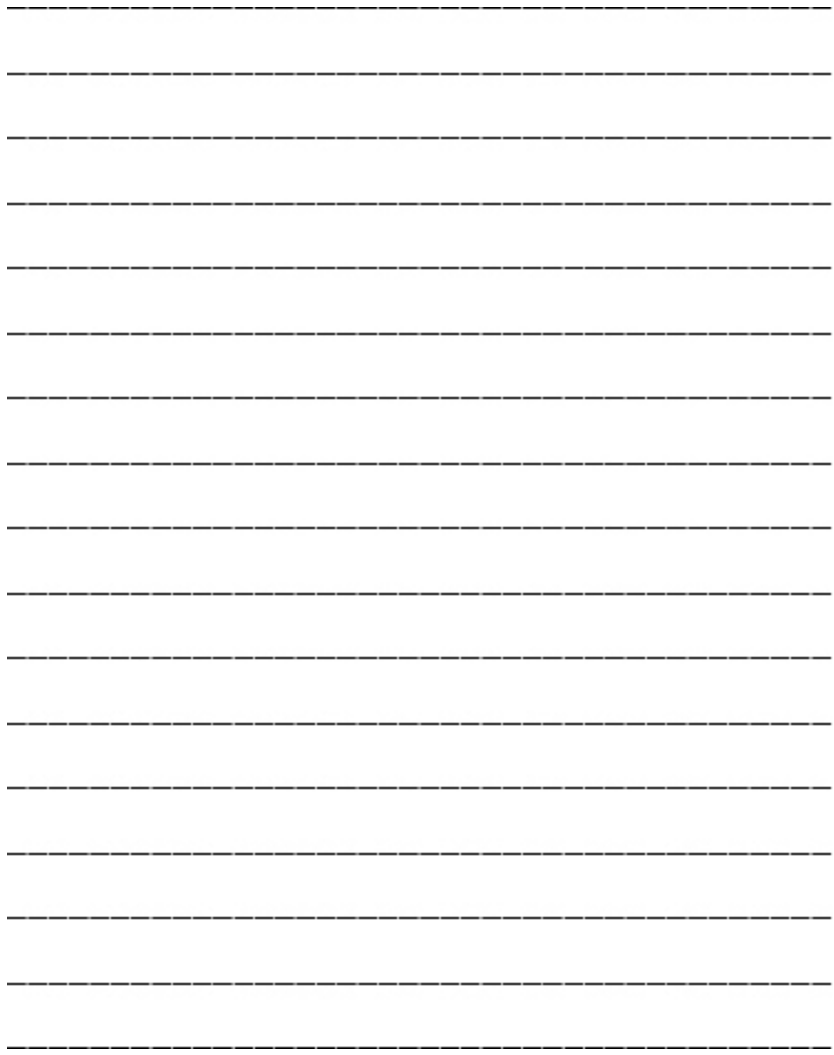
86	54	04	72	20	05	34	79	52	17
73	43	50	70	44	12	28	59	94	35
45	62	63	97	51	95	91	67	84	75
27	69	23	00	08	83	09	41	65	78
80	39	68	47	29	93	36	30	38	42
61	53	19	48	49	74	40	18	15	21
60	01	14	22	64	07	58	02	32	16
13	31	26	71	66	33	06	85	10	89
76	46	98	37	99	24	57	11	55	82
92	25	81	96	87	88	77	03	56	90

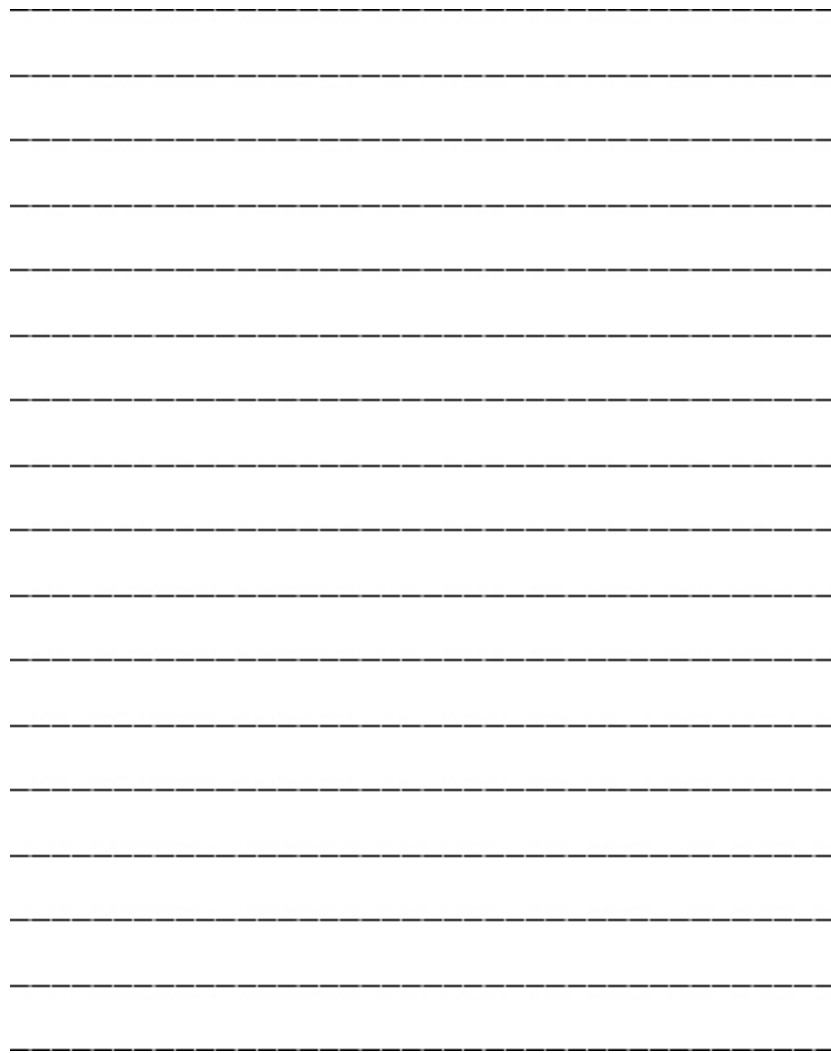


**Brian Cain Peak Performance, LLC**  
Concentration Training Grid  
[www.BrianCain.com](http://www.BrianCain.com)

86	54	04	72	20	05	34	79	52	17
73	43	50	70	44	12	28	59	94	35
45	62	63	97	51	95	91	67	84	75
27	69	23	00	08	83	09	41	65	78
80	39	68	47	29	93	36	30	38	42
61	53	19	48	49	74	40	18	15	21
60	01	14	22	64	07	58	02	32	16
13	31	26	71	66	33	06	85	10	89
76	46	98	37	99	24	57	11	55	82
92	25	81	96	87	88	77	03	56	90







“

Mental Conditioning for Baseball gives you incredible understanding and insight into the minds of the players you coach and human nature in general. I have worked with Cain at Ole Miss and can't wait to get back on the diamond and coach up our guys between the ears using the simple strategies for success Cain shares in this book. Every coach should have a copy.

”

Cliff Godwin, Head Baseball Coach | East Carolina University

“

Brian Cain knows the rhythm of success. He is an incredible source of inspiration, and his methods have proven to get results. This book will change the way you coach and will change the way you live.

”

Gary Gilmore, Head Baseball Coach | Coastal Carolina University



In *Mental Conditioning for Baseball*, Brian Cain, the foremost authority on mental toughness on the court, takes you through the process of developing mental toughness in yourself, your players and your program as you learn how to truly play one play at a time.



Matt Morse, former NCAA D1 baseball player and student of Brian Cain Peak Performance, brings his experiences in the mental game to *Mental Conditioning for Baseball*. He adds a tremendous perspective gained throughout his playing career, and offers simple strategies to maximize performance and master the mental side of the game.

#### JOIN CAIN AND MORSE AS THEY TRAIN YOU TO:

- ✓ Compete one pitch at a time and live in the present moment.
- ✓ Become a machine of consistency by implementing routines into what you do each day.
- ✓ Build Championship Character and redefine who you are as a program.
- ✓ Enhance your skill of Self-discipline and live a lifestyle of Excellence.
- ✓ Gain Emotional Control and become master of your mental game.
- ✓ Implement a step-by-step process to take you from where you are to where you want to be.

“

I have been in baseball my whole life and this is the best book on the mental game I have ever read.

”

Eric Milton  
1996 NY Yankees 1st Round Pick  
2001 MLB All-Star, Minnesota Twins  
Head Baseball Coach, Severna Park, High School, MD