THE MENTAL GAME OF BASEBALL: A GUIDE TO PEAK PERFORMANCE
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BASEBALL IS NINETY PERCENT MENTAL AND THE OTHER HALF IS PHYSICAL
Yogi Berra
IF YOU DON'T KNOW WHERE YOU ARE GOING YOU MIGHT WIND UP SOMEPLACE ELSE

Yogi Berra
GOALS

1. MUST SET PERFORMANCE GOALS

2. MUST SET PROCESS/ACTION GOALS IN ORDER TO ACHIEVE PERFORMANCE GOALS.

3. THESE DIRECT AND DETERMINE OUR BEHAVIOR; CREATE FOCUS.

4. GOALS MAKE US TAKE RISKS; WITHOUT THEM OUR GOALS GET SET BY DEFAULT.

5. NOT SETTING GOALS ALLOWS US TO FLOAT, ELIMINATES RESPONSIBILITY AND WE ARE UNABLE TO HANDLE ANXIETY.

"A great ballplayer is a player who will take a chance."
Branch Rickey
FOCUS AND CONTROL

“I have goals...Sure, it’s important to have goals. That’s where the mental part comes in, because the thought always precedes the act, and your mind has to have something to exercise, along with the body. Train the body, train the mind.”

Steve Carlton
FOCUS AND CONTROL

"A person always doing his or her best becomes a natural leader, just by example."

Joe DiMaggio
FOCUS AND CONTROL

1. FOCUS SHOULD BE ON SELF WITHIN THE FRAMEWORK OF THE TEAM.

2. FOCUS ON SELF IS IMPORTANT SHIFT. IT TRANSFERS THE FOCUS FROM THE OPPONENT (WHO WE CANNOT CONTROL) TO THE PERFORMER (WHO WE CAN CONTROL).

3. GOALS ON SELF REDUCE ANXIETY.

4. WE ARE NOT RESPONSIBLE FOR THE OPPONENT. WE ARE RESPONSIBLE FOR OURSELVES.

5. GOAL IS SELF IMPROVEMENT: SELF CONTROL, POSITIVITY, RELAXATION.

6. PHYSICAL PERFORMANCE IS THE OUTCOME OF A THOUGHT. BAD THOUGHT = BAD PERFORMANCE. GOOD THOUGHTS = GOOD PERFORMANCE.

7. FOCUS ON WHAT YOU DON’T WANT TO HAPPEN (DON’T GOALS) GREATLY INCREASES CHANCES THAT IT WILL HAPPEN.
FOCUS AND CONTROL

SLUMP?
I AIN’T IN NO SLUMP
I JUST AIN’T HITTIN

Yogi Berra
EXPECTATIONS

1. CREATE BURDENS AND REMOVE JOY. GOALS SERVE THE SELF; EXPECTATIONS SERVE OTHERS.

2. EXPECTATIONS TAKE FOCUS OFF SELF AND PUTS IT ON OTHERS WHO WE DO NOT CONTROL.

"Managing is getting paid for home runs someone else hits."
- Casey Stengel
DEDICATION

1. HIGH ACHIEVERS ARE WILLING AND DESIRE TO PLAY HARD.

2. HIGH ACHIEVERS SEE GOALS AS CHALLENGES AND NOT BURDENS.

3. IF SOMETHING IS WORTH DOING IT IS WORTH DOING WELL.

4. SUCCESS IS ALWAYS GUARANTEED WHEN IT IS DEFINED AS GIVING MAXIMUM EFFORT AND CONCERN.

There is always some kid who may be seeing me for the first or last time, I owe him my best.

-- Joe DiMaggio
DEDICATION

5. THE MOST SUCCESSFUL ATHLETE IS THE ONE THAT STAYS LOOSE – IT IS THE SUPER COOL EFFORT THAT ALLOWS US TO ACHIEVE.

6. “SUPER COOL” EFFORTS OF RELAXED PLAYERS COME FROM:

a. PAST SUCCESS
b. CONFIDENCE
c. CONCENTRATION
d. SELF DISCIPLINE
e. WHEN TECHNIQUE BECOMES HABIT

"You decide you'll wait for your pitch. Then, as the ball starts toward the plate you think about your stance; and then you think about your swing; and then you realize the ball that went past you for a strike was your pitch."
- Bobby Murcer
“I never blame myself when I’m not hitting. I just blame the bat and if it keeps up, I change bats. After all, if I know it isn’t my fault that I’m not hitting, how can I get mad at myself?”

YOGI BERRA
RESPONSIBILITY

1. WE ARE THE CAUSE OF OUR OWN SITUATION. EXCUSES ARE ATTEMPTS TO HIDE OUR HONESTY ABOUT OUR SITUATION.

2. WE WANT TO BE LOVED AND HAVE THE APPROVAL OF OTHERS. WE AVOID RESPONSIBILITY IN ORDER TO PROTECT THIS LOVE WE WANT FROM OTHERS. BUT WE ARE NOT PERFECT AND MUST BE WILLING TO ACCEPT CONSEQUENCES.

3. WE ARE RESPONSIBLE TO OTHERS, BUT NOT RESPONSIBLE FOR OTHERS. BIG DIFFERENCE. WE CANNOT CONTROL OTHERS.

4. BECAUSE OUR THOUGHTS DETERMINE OUR PERFORMANCE, WE MUST DEFINE WHAT WE CAN CONTROL AND WHAT WE CANNOT CONTROL.
ATTITUDES

1. OUR ATTITUDE IS ALWAYS WITHIN OUR CONTROL. THEREFORE, WE ARE RESPONSIBLE FOR IT.

2. ATTITUDE IS BUILT BY OUR THOUGHTS – NOT EMOTIONS. THOUGHTS GIVE DIRECTION AND CONTROL; EMOTIONS DO NOT.

3. A GOOD ATTITUDE IS ONE WHERE WE BELIEVE AND HAVE HOPE WHEN OTHERS QUIT. WE CAN ACKNOWLEDGE DEFEAT AS POSSIBLE, BUT WE MUST NOT BE WILLING TO BE DEFEATED BEFORE THEN, BECAUSE IT LETS DEFEAT IN THE DOOR.

4. GIVING UP IS SIMPLY AN EFFORT TO RELIEVE TENSION AND FRUSTRATION. GIVING UP IS THE LOSS OF A POSITIVE ATTITUDE.

5. BEING COMPETITIVE MEANS BEING AGGRESSIVE AND GIVING IT OUR ALL.
ATTITUDES

IT AIN'T OVER TILL IT'S OVER

Yogi Berra
CONFIDENCE

1. CONFIDENCE INFLUENCES OUR SUCCESS OR FAILURE.

2. WE MUST NOT BE AFRAID TO FAIL. WE MUST BE WILLING TO RISK, ATTEMPT AND ATTACK.

3. EACH SUCCESS ENCOURAGES US TO TAKE THE NEXT STEP AND TO TAKE RISKS.

4. A FOCUS ON SPECIFIC GOALS EVERY DAY ALLOWS US TO ACHIEVE AND GAIN CONFIDENCE. WE MUST FOCUS ON THE MEANS AND NOT THE ENDS.

5 GREATEST OBSTACLE TO CONFIDENCE IS FEAR. IT COMES FROM UNCERTAINTY WHICH COMES FROM A LACK OF CONFIDENCE. WE FEEL OUR SELF WORTH IS A STAKE. BUT FAILURE IN BASEBALL IS NOT CATASTROPHIC. WE MUST ADJUST OUR PERSPECTIVE.
CONFIDENCE

6. FEAR AND FAILURE NEED OUR CONSENT. THEY ARE IMAGINED PROBLEMS.

7. WE MUST RELAX, ENJOY EACH CHALLENGE AND FOCUS. FEAR MAKES US SLOW AND IS A FOCUS ON THINGS OTHER THAN OURSELVES.

8. FEAR IS A LIAR. IT TELLS US SITUATIONS ARE HARDER THAN THEY REALLY ARE AND THAT THE CONSEQUENCES OF FAILURE ARE TERRIBLE; THEY ARE NOT. FEAR IS A FOCUS ON CONSEQUENCES AND THE FUTURE. WE CAN ONLY CONTROL THE PRESENT.

9. HOW DO WE DEFEAT FEAR?
   a. FOCUS ON THE NOW. VISUALIZE; BREATHE.
   b. PUT IT IN PERSPECTIVE
   c. CATASTROPHIZING – IT WILL NOT DESTROY US.
   d. ASK OURSELVES, WHAT IS IN OUR CONTROL?
   e. PREPARATION

10. WE BUILD CONFIDENCE THROUGH IDENTIFYING OUR GOALS AND PREPARATION. WE CAN CONTROL PREPARATION.

Every great batter works on the theory that the pitcher is more afraid of him than he is of the pitcher.

(Ty Cobb)
LEARNING

1. WE MUST BE WILLING TO ASK:

a. WHAT DO I NEED TO DO DIFFERENTLY NEXT TIME?
b. WHAT DOES THE RIGHT WAY LOOK LIKE? VISUALIZE IT.

That's his style of hitting. If you can't imitate him, don't copy him.

(Yogi Berra)
1. PREPARATION IS WITHIN OUR CONTROL. THEREFORE WE ARE RESPONSIBLE FOR IT. IT SEPARATES THE GREAT PLAYER FROM THE AVERAGE PLAYER.

2. LEARNING AND SAYING AND DOING THE RIGHT THING OVER AND OVER LEADS TO CONFIDENCE AND THE EXPECTATION THAT GOOD THINGS WILL HAPPEN.

3. DON’T “THINK” YOU ARE READY; “KNOW” YOU ARE READY.

IT'S LIKE DEJA-VU ALL OVER AGAIN
Yogi Berra
1. IMAGINATION - THE ABILITY TO SEE AND RECALL IMAGES AND INFORMATION IN PHYSICAL FORM - IS THE ULTIMATE GUIDE AND TOOL. A CLEAR PICTURE PROGRAMS THE BODY AND INCREASES THE CHANCE FOR SUCCESS.

2. VISUALIZE YOURSELF IN THE SITUATION. YOU MUST BE THE PARTICIPANT. HEAR THE SOUNDS AND FEEL THE OBJECTS. CREATE THE SCENE. ADD PRESSURE.

3. IF WE HAVE EXPERIENCED THE SITUATION IN OUR MINDS BEFORE THEN WE HAVE ENDURED. WE HAVE CONFIDENCE AND KNOW WHAT TO EXPECT. WE HAVE CONFIDENCE BECAUSE WE KNOW WE HAVE ALREADY FACED IT AND WON.

IT'S LIKE DEJA-VU ALL OVER AGAIN
Yogi Berra
CONCENTRATION

1. IT IS THE GREATEST LINK TO OUTSTANDING PERFORMANCE.

2. IT IS THE ABILITY TO REMOVE DISTRACTION. IT IS THE FOCUS ON THE NOW - CONCENTRATION IS WITHIN OUR CONTROL.

3. FEAR OF FAILURE OR THE FOCUS ON EXPECTATIONS RUIN OUR CONCENTRATION. CONCENTRATION IS WITHIN OUR CONTROL.

4. CONCENTRATE ON THE MOST DETAILED AND SPECIFIC TARGET (SEAMS ON A BALL; CATCHERS MITT) FOCUS ONLY ON THE POSITIVE COMMAND. PRACTICE BY BUNTING, NARROWING FOCUS ON A PART OF THE GLOVE.

5. ABILITY TO CONCENTRATE PUTS US IN CONTROL OF THE SITUATION; IT REMOVES ALL DISTRACTION.

6. KNOWING THAT YOU HAVE SUPPORT AND LOVE AND THAT THE CONSEQUENCES FOR FAILURE ARE NOT FATAL, WE CAN FOCUS ON THE PRESENT AND NOT DWELL ON THE PAST OR WORRY ABOUT THE FUTURE.

“HOW CAN YOU THINK AND HIT AT THE SAME TIME?”
YOGI BERRA
MENTAL DISCIPLINE

1. THIS IS THE ABILITY TO CONCENTRATE AND CONTROL OURSELVES. WE DO NOT CONTROL ALL THINGS BUT WE CAN CONTROL OUR REACTION TO THEM.

2. MENTAL GAMES ARE WON KNOWING THE GOAL, WHAT IT TAKES TO ACHIEVE IT THEN DEDICATING OURSELVES TO THAT END.

3. WE ARE RESPONSIBLE FOR WHO WE ARE AND WHAT WE THINK AND DO—THINGS WE CONTROL. FOCUS ON MATTERS BEYOND OUR CONTROL IS MISDIRECTED ENERGY.

4. OBSTACLES TO FOCUS ARE:
   a. FOCUS ON CONSEQUENCES
   b. NEED FOR APPROVAL OF OTHERS
   c. FEELING YOU NEED TO PRODUCE EVERYTIME
   d. NEGATIVE THOUGHTS.

5. CLUTCH PLAYERS ALWAYS MAINTAIN CONTROL. THEIR TOUGHNESS LIES IN THE ABILITY TO STAY EVEN KEEL AND CONSISTENT IN APPROACH. CLUTCH PLAYERS ERASE ALL EXCEPT THE FACTORS OF IMMEDIATE PERFORMANCE.

“It’s not that you walk around with tunnel vision all your life. It’s just that when something starts taking away from your focus of attention, you eliminate it. ~Steve Carlton
MENTAL DISCIPLINE

6. OUR THOUGHTS INFLUENCE OUR ACTIONS.

7. WE NEED A SOURCE TO RETURN TO. A PATTERN. A MANTRA. A BATTLE CRY THAT WE CAN ALWAYS RELY TO REDIRECT FOCUS.

8. WE MUST TIME OUR MENTAL FOCUS BECAUSE OUR MINDS CAN ONLY FOCUS FOR 6 SECONDS BEFORE IT MUST REFOCUS.

9. STEPS FOR GOOD METAL FOCUS:
   a. EVALUATE SITUATION;
   b. ANTICIPATE
   c. GIVE YOURSELF POSITIVE INSTRUCTION
   d. VISUALIZE
   e. NARROW ATTENTION TO IMMEDIATE FOCUS (SEE THE BALL)
   f. RELAX AND RELY ON AUTO PILOT
   g. PERFORM

10. REAL PROBLEMS CAN BE HURDLED. IMAGINED ONES CANNOT B/C THEY DO NOT EXIST.
MENTAL DISCIPLINE

11. PRESSURE IS AN IMAGINED OBSTACLE. IT IS A SIGN OF A LACK OF FAITH AND PREPARATION. IT IS A BELIEF THAT PERFORMANCE IS EQUAL TO LOVE; THAT THERE ARE BAD CONSEQUENCES FOR FAILURE. IT IS AN INVENTION OF AN UNDISCIPLINED MIND.

12. WE HAVE A CHOICE: IS IT A CHALLENGE OR A THREAT? TO BE RESPONSIBLE WE MUST SEE IT AS A CHALLENGE; AN OPPORTUNITY TO SUCCEED.

13. FOCUS ONLY ON THE RELEVANT. FANS, OTHER PLAYERS, COACHES, UMPIRES ARE ALL IRRELEVANT. THINK ABOUT WALKING THE PLANK OVER GATORS.

14. WE MUST FIND A WAY TO RELAX. BE LOOSE. BE CLUTCH.

15. WE ARE AT OUR BEST WHEN WE ARE RELAXED, EFFORTLESS AND FLUID. THEN WE HAVE A FREE RANGE OF MOTION.

16. WHEN STRESSED:

a. STEP AWAY; STRETCH; YAWN;
b. VISUALIZE YOURSELF RELAXING;
c. CONTROL BREATHING.
d. TALK ALOUD.
MENTAL DISCIPLINE

“I knew I was just like an ordinary pitcher (in) the early part of my career until I started keying in on the mental power. (Often) the game comes down to one pitch. You don’t make it, the game’s over. To be able to make that pitch in a situation, you have to be more than a physical individual. I recognized at an early age that I had to learn to tap into this inner strength, this concentration, this ability to make the key pitches under that type of so-called pressure. I never recognized pressure because recognizing it gives it credibility.
MENTAL DISCIPLINE

17. MENTAL TOUGHNESS = MASTERING OURSELVES THROUGH DISCIPLINE AND HABITS AND CONSISTENT APPROACH.

18. THE GOAL IS NOT TO GET A HIT; IT IS TO SEE THE BALL AND FOCUS ON IT.

19. WE MUST REMAIN COOL. ANGER GETS IN THE WAY OF PERFORMANCE.

"The ball player who loses his head, who can't keep his cool, is worse than no ball player at all."

Lou Gehrig
THE WINNING WAY

1. ONLY 15–20% OF PEOPLE DO THINGS THE RIGHT WAY ALL THE TIME. THE REST SEEK SHORT CUTS, CHEAT OR LOOK FOR THE EASY WAY.

2. A WINNER MAKES EVERY POSSIBLE EFFORT ALL THE TIME TO WIN AND DO THINGS THE RIGHT WAY – WITHOUT CHEATING OURSELVES.

3. A WINNER HAS GOALS, BLOCKS OUT EXPECTATIONS OF OTHERS, IS DEDICATED, RESPONSIBLE, HAS A GOOD ATTITUDE, CONFIDENCE, PREPARES, FOCUS AND THINKS POSITIVELY.

“That’s why I don’t look back on any of the records, because it has a tendency to belabor what you’ve done. Whatever is behind you is behind you. Keep striving, keep at it.” Steve Carlton
HITTING

1. THE ENTIRE FOCUS IS ON THE BALL. WE HAVE BROAD FOCUS FOR 4 SECONDS; FINE FOCUS FOR 2 SECONDS.

2. PREPARE TO SEE THE BALL THROUGH:
   a. VISUALIZATION
   b. ALL THINKING IS OUT OF THE BATTERS BOX
   c. ESTABLISH A PATTERN
   d. FIND THE RELEASE POINT
   e. TRACK THE BALL
   f. APPROACH: I AM SWINGING UNLESS IT IS A BALL
   g. KEEP HEAD DOWN THROUGH CONTACT

3. BE A TOUGH AT BAT, THE PERSON THE OTHER TEAM HATES TO SEE AT THE PLATE
I was such a dangerous hitter I even got intentional walks in batting practice. ~Casey Stengel, 1967

4. BE THE INTIMIDATOR

Every great batter works on the theory that the pitcher is more afraid of him than he is of the pitcher.

(Ty Cobb)
PITCHING

1. SELF TALK DIRECTS FOCUS; TELL YOURSELF WHAT YOU ARE GOING TO DO.

2. BATTER DOES NOT MATTER; FOCUS ONLY ON SELF AND TARGET; YOU PITCH THE SAME REGARDLESS OF WHO IS AT THE PLATE. STRIKE ZONE DOES NOT CHANGE.
   "Just take the ball and throw it where you want to. Throw strikes. Home plate don't move."
   ~Satchel Paige

3. RELAX AND LET THE BALL THROW ITSELF

4. THROW A FIRST PITCH STRIKE; HITTERS THAT SWING BAT .190.

5. HITTERS ARE MORE LIKELY TO SWING AT LOW PITCHES THAN OUTSIDE PITCHES.

6. WE ARE ALWAYS BETTER WHEN WE ARE RELAXED

7. CHALLENGES ARE OUR OWN - NOT THE HITTER. THE CHALLENGE IS TO FOCUS ON YOURSELF AND NOT THE HITTER. CONTROL OUR OWN THOUGHTS AND STAY DISCIPLINED.

"[Steve] Carlton does not pitch to the hitter, he pitches through him. The batter hardly exists for Steve. He's playing an elevated game of catch." - Tim McCarver, Carlton's catcher
FIELDING

1. PRACTICE WITH A PURPOSE

2. PRACTICE WITH MENTAL PICTURES; VISUALIZE

3. BE SOFT AND EASY, QUICK AND LOOSE. BEING STIFF AND TENSE LEADS TO POOR PERFORMANCE.

"My best pitch is anything the batter grounds, lines, or pops in the direction of (Phil) Rizzuto." - Pitcher Vic Raschi