

2014 NSCAA Convention



Mental Toughness in athletes: IDEAS AND APPLICATION

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Why study mental toughness?

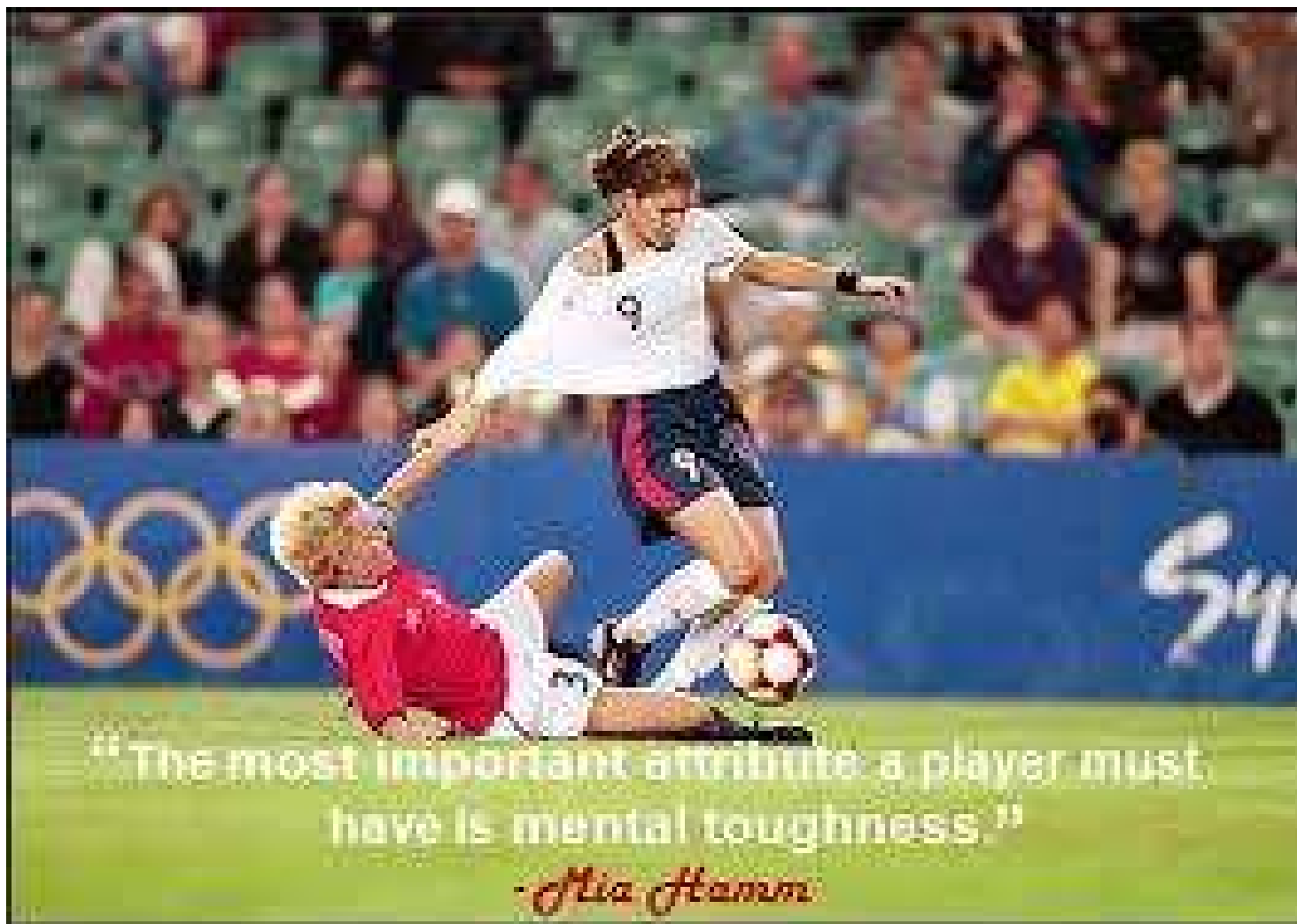
- 82% of wrestling coaches felt mental toughness was the most important psychological attribute in determining success (Gould, 1987)
 - Only 9% of coaches felt they were successful in developing mental toughness
- Mental toughness may have more to do with winning than do such physical attributes as speed and power (Williams, 1998)

What is mental toughness?

- Being able to perform consistently at the upper range of one's abilities regardless of competitive circumstances (Loehr, 1986)
- Having a psychological edge that enables an athlete to cope consistently with the pressures and demands of sport during competition, training, and life; being more consistent and better than your opponent in remaining determined, focused, confident, and in control under pressure (Jones, 2002)



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Not mental toughness



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General sport findings

- Sheard & Golby (2006)
 - Studied swimmers
 - Administered a 7 week Psychological Skills Training (PST)
 - Skills addressed included Mental Toughness
 - Post-intervention saw increases in performances as well as psychological skills



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Soccer specific findings

- Coulter, Mallett, & Gucciardi (2010)
 - Interviewed Australian players, coaches, and parents
 - All 3 groups cited the following as characteristics of mental toughness:

Work ethic	Resilience
Physical toughness	Self-belief
Personal values	Coping under pressure
Sport intelligence	Winning mentality
Competitive effort	
Tough attitude (i.e., commitment, professionalism, sacrifice, discipline)	



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Soccer specific findings

- Coulter, Mallett, & Gucciardi (2010) con't.
 - Sport-specific components may not warrant inclusion in conceptualization of mental toughness (MT components across sports)
 - It is important recognize the components and behaviors of mental toughness when providing feedback to athletes
 - Unique situations call for unique blends of the components of mental toughness attributes



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Soccer specific findings

- Crust, Nesti, & Littlewood (2011)
 - Coaches and athletes differed on assessing mental toughness
 - Players displayed higher mental toughness self-ratings than coaches
- Gucciardi, Gordon, & Dimmock (2008)
 - Reported 7 major characteristics
 - Confidence
 - Concentration and focus
 - Motivation
 - Commitment
 - Positive and tough attitude
 - Resilience
 - Enjoying and handling pressure
 - Quality preparation



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Soccer specific findings

- Gucciardi (2009)
 - Coaches and experience were strong factors in developing mental toughness
 - Achievement goals and a task mastery orientation were important to mental toughness development



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Soccer specific findings

- Gucciardi, Gordon, Dimmock, & Mallett (2009)
 - Examined the role of the coach in developing mental toughness
 - Coach-athlete relationship: needs to address personal as well as sport-specific issues
 - Coaching philosophy: “coaches prioritizing athletic and personal development above coaching success” (p. 1490)
 - Training environment: coaches need to create an environment where each player is continuously challenged; the value of hard work, self-motivation, and physical toughness is emphasized
 - Over-emphasis on weaknesses was felt to negatively affect mental toughness; addressing weaknesses while emphasizing strengths was better for development



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Mental toughness attributes

- Having an unshakable self-belief in your abilities to achieve your competitive goals
- Having an unshakable self-belief that you possess unique qualities and abilities that make you better than your opponent
- Having an insatiable desire and internalized motives to succeed
- Bouncing back from performance set-backs as a result of increased determination to succeed
- Thriving on the pressure of competition



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Mental toughness attributes

- Accepting that competitive anxiety is inevitable and knowing that you can cope with it
- Not being adversely affected by others' good or bad performances
- Remaining fully focused in the face of personal life distractions
- Pushing back the boundaries of physical and emotional pain while maintaining technique and effort under distress (in training and competition)
- Regaining psychological control following unexpected, uncontrollable events in competition (Jones et al., 2002)



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Mentally tough all the time

- Pre-competition
- Competition
- Post-competition



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Mentally tough all the time

- Pre-competition = training
 - Role definition
 - Role expectations
 - Challenges
 - Proper preparation



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Mentally tough all the time

- Competition
 - Handling adversity
 - Handling success
 - Emotional control
 - Directed forgetting



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Mentally tough all the time

- Post-competition = lifestyle
 - Possess long-term goals
 - Believe in an ability to do things
 - Get along well with others
 - Reflective learning



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Can we develop mental toughness?

- Coach training programs influence the development of mental toughness (Gucciardi et al., 2009)
 - Gould (1981, 1987) – wrestlers (mixed results)
 - Sheard and Golby (2006) – swimmers
 - Gordon (2012) - cricketers
 - Steffen (in press) – coaches
- Don't we have to try?



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Four C's of mental toughness

- Control
- Commitment
- Challenge
- Confidence

(Clough, Earle, & Sewell; 2002)



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How do we develop mental toughness?

- Evaluate
 - Coach's/players' ratings

Name	Control	Commitment	Challenge	Confidence	Sum
J. Doe	4	4	3	2	13
J.Q. Public	4	1	4	2	11
X.Y. Zee	3	3	3	3	12
J. Pele	5	4	5	5	19
M. Jordan	5	5	5	5	20
A. Iverson	4	2	3	4	13
A. Beecee	2	1	1	4	8
J. Bunning	3	3	4	4	14
M. Schmidt	4	5	4	4	17
N.E. Body	3	2	4	2	11
total	37	30	36	35	138
total average	3.4	2.7	3.3	3.2	12.5



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How do we develop mental toughness?

- Evaluate
 - Paper and pencil instruments
 - Mental Toughness Scale
 - 11 items
 - Designed for elite and sub-elite athletes
 - MTQ48
 - 48 items
 - Addresses the 4 C's directly



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Control

- The belief that an individual can remain influential (as opposed to being powerless or helpless) during confrontations with stress (Crust, 2007)



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Control

- How do we develop a sense of control?
 - Structured training
 - Simulated game situations
 - Artificially imposed pressure
 - Numbers down
 - Time restriction
 - Pre-set score



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Emotional control

意志力



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Control

- How do we develop a sense of control?
 - Imagery
 - To control ourselves
 - Internal
 - » Seeing things as we while executing the task
 - To control our environment
 - External
 - » Watching ourselves on screen



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Commitment

- The tendency to become deeply involved in what one is doing



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Commitment

- Establish long term goals
 - S – specific
 - M – measurable
 - A – adjustable
 - R – realistic
 - T – timely
- Coach and player agreement
- Get buy-in



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Challenge

- The belief that change rather than stability is normal in life

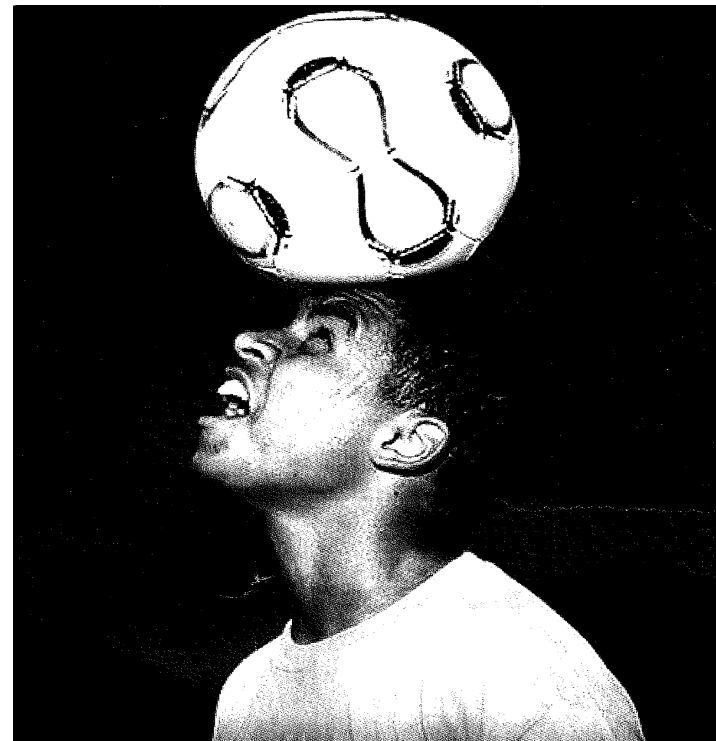


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Challenge

- Continuous short term goals

- Physical
 - Fitness
- Competitive
 - Results-oriented
- Technical
 - Task mastery



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Confidence

- The belief you can successfully perform a desired behavior or activity (Weinberg & Gould, 2011)
- Benefits
 - Confidence arouses positive emotions
 - Confidence facilitates concentration
 - Confidence affects goals
 - Confidence increases effort
 - Confidence affects game strategies
 - Confidence affects psychological momentum
 - Confidence affects performance



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Confidence

- Four factors (Bandura, 1976)
 - Mastery performances
 - Vicarious experiences
 - Verbal persuasion
 - Optimal arousal



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Confidence

- Mastery performances
 - Just do it....right
 - Reps
- Vicarious experiences
 - Modeling
 - Demos



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Confidence

- Verbal persuasion
 - Coaching points
 - Questioning
- Optimal arousal
 - Physical
 - Mental



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Confidence

- Can the coach design training sessions to positively produce:
 - A high number of successful reps?
 - A good visual representation of the task desired?
 - A good flow of correct technical and tactical information?
 - A proper physical and emotional state?



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Mental toughness

- We desire it on our athletes
 - Better performances
 - Consistent performances
 - Better lifestyle
- We desire it in ourselves



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Take home points

- Mental Toughness
 - Hard to define
 - We know it when we see it, so look for it!
 - 4 C's
 - Measure/evaluate players in each of the 4 C's



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Take home points

- Mental toughness
 - Develop training sessions to improve desired characteristics
 - Personalize it
 - Apply your own blend of the 4 C's
 - Team-wise
 - Position specific
 - Allow for personalities



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I am the greatest. I said that even before I knew I was.
- Muhammad Ali



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