

ARE YOU PREPARED TO WIN?

By Ty Hillman

Why don't the best athletes always win? How can someone compete at the best of their ability all day and then fall apart moments before they clinch the victory? Why do some people execute the fundamentals flawlessly when practicing, but are unable to execute during the game or competition? These are questions that have fascinated me for several years, as a competitor myself, as well as a coach. I have studied continuously to gain a better understanding of all the factors that effect human performance and to answer the questions posed above.

Obviously, there are numerous factors that affect our behavior and performance, but according to a study done by Professor of Psychology, C.R. Snyder, the author of

"The Psychology of Hope", there are two major predictors of success in any endeavor. After analyzing numerous variables including personality, physical traits, attitude, and IQ, Snyder concluded that goal orientation and mental toughness were the two most important predictors of success. If individuals have a clear focus of what they want to achieve and they have adopted the attitude that nothing will stop them from achieving it, Snyder concluded that those people have the greatest probability to be successful.

Mental toughness is synonymous with emotional mastery. Mentally tough individuals control their emotions, think disciplined thoughts under pressure, are emotionally resilient after a setback, and can control their state of mind on command. These are the people who compete ferociously when all of the chips are down. They do



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not back away when the stakes are high, but instead, they attack as if they couldn't lose. They bounce back after a disappointing loss. They do not waste any time worrying about the past, but rather learn from it so they can improve their game. They relax and let their talent out on game day rather than being tense, anxious, and nervous. They love pressure because it is an opportunity for them to see how good they can be. Most importantly, they have the confidence that they can do anything, not because they have done it before, but because they know they are capable.

Mental toughness has to be developed as it is not a trait we pick up at birth. Much like building a muscle, building mental toughness, takes inten-

tional focus and practice. In future articles, I will be discussing many aspects of mental toughness, as well as providing steps to help readers condition themselves to become stronger mentally. My goal for readers to become tougher is not only so they can compete to the best of their ability, but to also take what they learn into every part of their life. There is no doubt that someone who can control their emotions and state of mind regardless of the circumstances surrounding them make better spouses, parents, children, employees, leaders, competitors, teammates and the list goes on and on. I look forward to meeting with you again soon.

Ty Hillman

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