Setting Goals for SUCCESS: THE SMARTEST SYSTEM

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motivated and focused on something that may be months or even years into the future can be difficult. Short-term goals, though, help by acting as daily or weekly stepping stones toward the long-term goal. They are the markers toward which you can evaluate your progress toward your long-term goal.

Measurable Goals – goals need to be specific and measurable as opposed to vague and ambiguous. Everyone wants to "do well" or "win a lot" but such goals make it difficult to evaluate performance and make needed improvements. Instead, make your goals specific and measurable, such as "run a 4:30 mile" or "shoot 85% at the free-throw line," so you can accurately gauge your progress.

Achievement Strategies – without achievement strategies, a goal is almost meaningless. Achievement strategies represent the specific behaviors in which you need to engage to actually reach your goal, such as staying after practice for one hour each day to do analysis, working on corner shots or adding one weight workout per week to improve your leg strength by 20%. As Tom Landry, Football Coaching Legend, has noted "Setting a goal is not the main thing. It is deciding how you will go about achieving it and staying with that plan.

Realistic Goals – goals need to be challenging, but realistic in chance of being attained. Goals that are too difficult or too easy may lead to decreases in motivation and confidence. Thus, always set goals within the context of what would be challenging yet realistic for that individual or team.

Time-Bound Goals – setting a time-frame for completing a goal is important.

For helping you stay motivated and focused. Although many goals have a built-in timeframe, such as a competitive season, other goals do not. Without a timeframe, athletes may procrastinate and put off their goal until some undetermined point in the future. Whenever possible, make sure that you know by when you want to achieve your goal. Exhibit Your Goals – writing down and keeping your goals visible can increase motivation and accountability. Goals that are left only in your mind can easily be forgotten or changed. When setting goals, find a place to exhibit your goal so you have a daily reminder of what you want to achieve. Seek Support for Your Goals – staying focused and motivated as you work toward your goals can be difficult and lonely at times. So share your goals with friends, family or teammates who are supportive. These individuals can offer support and encouragement and listen when you are feeling down or unmotivated. They can help you remain focused and energized even when faced with seemingly insurmountable obstacles.

Target Obstacles to Achieving Your Goals – even with well-developed goals, obstacles may still exist. You can't plan for all of them, but you can identify in advance and develop strategies for overcoming them developed. Whenever possible, plan for the obstacles that may interfere with you making progress toward your goals.

By using the SMARTEST system for setting goals, you increase your chances of attaining what you want. Whenever you set goals, apply the eight guidelines outlined in the SMARTEST system. When you do, ask yourself the following questions to make sure you are setting the SMARTEST goals possible:

• Do my short-term goals lead me toward my long-term goal?
• Would another person know when I reached my goal? If not, how might I change how my goal is stated?
• Have I identified all the behaviors I need to implement to actually reach my goal?
• Does my goal challenge me to work beyond my current capabilities? What percentage chance do I have of reaching my goal?
• Have I identified a clear and specific timeframe for completion of my goal?
• Have I made my goal visible so I am reminded each day of what I want to accomplish?
• Have I told a supportive person about my goals? If not, who might I tell?
• What might interfere with my being able to reach my goals?


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Performance Excellence
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• Membership form

Please contact us at http://www.sportpsych.unt.edu or by phone at (940) 369-SPORT if you have questions.

Editor's Note
Courtney Allison, M.A.
Welcome to the new academic year and to the fall issue of our newsletter! Inside, you will find information on important topics such as goal setting, motivation, and developing a winning program. This issue is the first of three issues we will be producing this year – by becoming a Center member, you can look forward to future issues coming this winter and spring.

The Center's inaugural year was filled with activity as our sport psychology consultants gave presentations and consulted with local college teams, high school programs, and athletic clubs. The Center's staff members have also been actively involved with some interesting research projects. Most recently, Center members traveled to Myrtle Beach, SC (at the Dupont World Amateur Handicap Tournament) to study golfers use of physical and mental skills in practices and competitions and how these skills related to successful performance. Another research project being conducted concerns the influence of psychological factors (e.g., stress, social support) on injuries in college and high school football players. The results of this study will be used to help prevent injuries or rehabilitate those athletes who do become injured.

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Keeping Motivation in the Game

By Karen D. Cogas, Ph.D.

We’ve all seen this one before: Tyler is an exceptionally talented basketball player who has been a star for the first part of the season, and everyone thinks he is going to be the next Michael Jordan. But then something goes wrong. Tyler shows that he is capable of a lot but suddenly seems to struggle. His coach wonders why. Everyone agrees that he’s got so much potential... if only he would put in the effort. Michael Jordan couldn’t do that. Everyone believes that he had the talent, but he just isn’t MOTIVATED.

Most everyone in the sport world knows about motivation and believes it makes a difference in sport performances (or any other performance for that matter). Coaches know motivation is important; many give pre-game motivational speeches to get athletes up for the game. Many coaches also know that motivational levels vary from athlete to athlete and from competition to competition. So how can athletes and teams remain motivated through long, challenging seasons and then peak at just the right time?

We’ve all seen this one before: Tyler is an exceptional athlete and has a natural sense of competition. His parents, coaches, and everyone believes that he simply needs to complete his workouts and maintain motivation. Reward the athlete and understand what he or she needs and then offer assistance to make him or her believe that what you are doing is helpful to him or her.

Respect individual differences. They may be part of a team, but each athlete has their own sources of motivation, characteristics and needs. For example, not all athletes learn in the same way. Some athletes might like lots of detail in their training, while others may have difficulty paying attention and need only the bottom line. At the same time, peers can encourage or even pressure individual skill development. A sense of “we” with the team can provide a framework for individual differences can enhance the motivational environment by making everyone feel valued.

Agree on future directions and actions. Communicate with athletes about goals and what is needed to reach those goals. Goals are important sources of motivation and are even more useful when coaches and athletes work toward them together.

Know when to let an athlete go. Sometimes athletes are selected to play on a team, but athletes remain unmotivated. Realize that some athletes really do not want to be in a sport and are only involved because of individual factors. Let the best thing you can do is help the athlete get out of the sport and find something more meaningful and enjoyable. Talk with the athlete and understand what he or she needs and then offer assistance to make him or her believe that what you are doing is helpful to him or her.

Behavior precedes emotion. In some cases athletes don’t feel motivated and wait around for some miracle event to jump-start them. Unfortunately, miraculous events seldom occur, and athletes have to take a more active role in their motivation. Sometimes athletes have to “just do it” and start practicing because it is the only way to feel more positive attitude and a feeling of motivation.

Summarize: Although athletes are ultimately responsible for finding their own sources of motivation, coaches play an important role in maintaining motivation. Coaches need to know their athletes and vice versa. Coaches need to be aware of how each athlete may be feeling and how this may impact their performance.

COACHES CORNER: UNI HEAD FOOTBALL COACH

UNT Head Football Coach, Darrell Dickey, enters his second season at the helm of this NCAA Division I program. His number 1 GOAL is to develop a winning program. But, it must be done the “correct” way. That is, his coaches and players must practice and perform with complete effort and in the right frame of mind. At UNT, the football coaching philosophy rests mainly on “talking more about things players have to put in their MINDS as opposed to a statement of statistics. Specifically our coaches develop a plan each week for what is needed against a particular opponent that will allow the team to be in a position to win the game in the fourth quarter.”

Dealing with Unexpected Events and Stressors. During a single football season or across an entire football season, unexpected events will happen, such as an errant player mistake that results in a loss of a down or yards. When mistakes or penalties are made, coaches have choices in how they respond. Although some will pull the athlete aside and let them bemoan their fate, Dickey disagrees with this approach noting that these coaching actions confuse the athlete and make them timid and/or afraid of making future mistakes. When an athlete thinks they can, they are more likely to go out and give 100%, to perform at the highest level.” Under these guidelines, if mistakes are made, the head coach takes responsibility for them. In so doing, players can compete without fear. Coaches must make a plan for the game, but they should also anticipate what events or stressors might occur and how to help players adjust or adapt effectively.

CONCLUDING REMARKS. Coach Dickey agrees that strength and physical skills underlie a successful football program. Yet, he insists that sport psychology skills also are critical for developing a winning team. “CONFIDENCE and COMMITMENT (believing in what you are doing) and the ABILITY TO DEAL WITH ADVERSITY are essential skills for all athletes in winning programs. Although position coaches work with athletes, know their strengths and weaknesses, talk with them and prepare them, I, as head coach must create an environment in which every team can bond, and I must be ‘believable’ when I tell them the weight physical and mental skills are needed for plans that lead to success each game and ultimately a winning season. Coaches and players need to understand the opponent, gain a mind-set about having a realistic chance to win, and develop strategies to overcome adversity.”

To learn more from Coach Dickey, listen to his weekly radio show on KTXY, every evening at 7 p.m. on KNTX (FM 88.1, Denton) or KTXY (FM 95.3, Dallas).

By: Peggy A. Richardson, Ph.D. and Scott B. Martin, Ph.D.

UNT Head Football Coach, Darrell Dickey, enters his second season at the helm of this NCAA Division I program. His number 1 GOAL is to develop a winning program. But, it must be done the “correct” way. That is, his coaches and players must practice and perform with complete effort and in the right frame of mind.
We’re all seen this one before. Tyler is an exceptionally talented basketball player who has struggled with motivation in the first part of the season, and everyone thinks he is going to be the next Michael Jordan. But then something happens. In Tyler’s next game, he progresses, his performance drops off. He seems to care less about the game, less effort is put in. Everyone agrees that he’s got so much potential. If only he would put in the effort. Apparently, Tyler has the talent, but he just isn’t MOTIVATED.

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Respect individual differences. They may be part of a team, but each athlete is an individual with unique characteristics and needs. For example, not all athletes learn in the same manner. Some athletes might like lots of detail in the pre-game motivational session, while others may have difficulty paying attention and need only the bottom line. At the same time, peer admiration and appreciation among these different individuals. A sense of “we” with the team, and knowledge of individual differences can enhance the motivational environment by making everyone feel valued.

Ages future directions and actions. Communicate with athletes about goals and what is needed to reach those goals. Goals are important sources of motivation and are even more useful when coaches and athletes work toward them together.

Know when to let an athlete go. Sometimes athletes have to leave a program, whether due to injury or because they don’t fit on a team. Athletes remain unmotivated. Realize that some athletes really do not want to be in a sport and are only involved because of external factors. Let the athlete and understand what he or she needs and then offer assistance to make the best decision.

Behavior precedes emotion. In some cases athletes don’t feel motivated and walk away from the game. Behavior precedes emotion and athletes make in improving his or her skills.

Develop team friendships. Sport is a social environment, and many athletes choose to become involved because of the friendships they make and the support they receive from teammates. Athletes can learn from team friendships by supporting activities outside of regularly scheduled workouts and encouraging support within the team.

Get to know each athlete. Learn and use their athletes’ names. Take the time to talk to each one and get to know him or her. Display a genuine concern for each athlete as a person. By showing an interest in the athlete’s needs, you are in a better position to motivate him or her in an effective way.

SUMMARY: By Karen D. Cogan, Ph.D.

By: Peggy A., Richardson, Ph.D. and Scott B. Martin, Ph.D.

If you have any questions, please feel free to call us at: (940) 889-SPORT
**Setting Goals for SUCCESS:**

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**THE SMARTEST SYSTEM**

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- How will I determine if I have achieved my goal?
- What obstacles may interfere with my being able to reach my goals?
- Have I made my goal visible so I am reminded each day of what I want to accomplish?
- Have I told a supportive person about my goals? If not, who might I tell?
- What might interfere with my being able to reach my goals?
- Have I identified all the behaviors I need to implement to actually reach my goal?
- Do I have a built-in timeframe, such as a competitive season, or an end date?


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