

Setting Goals for Success

November is a month of transition in the sports world, with some seasons coming to a close and others just beginning. As with any beginning, fundamentals must be revisited because they are what all performances are based on. In terms of the mental side of the game, one such fundamental is goals, not just for the team, but for individual players as well. In setting goals, look not only at wins and losses (which most want, but what are not completely under our control) but at improvements in skills, teamwork, and other “controllable” factors. That is, measure success not only by the number of W’s you earn, but by how the team and individuals develop over the course of the season. One key to ensuring this development is to connect what is done in practice each day to the goals the players and team are trying to reach. If you are working on a specific skill or play, let the players know how mastering this will help them reach their goals (e.g., decrease the number of turnovers in a game). By making connections between practice behaviors and the achievement of goals, you will likely increase the athletes’ motivation, focus, and intensity in their training. Also, monitor progress toward your goals across the season so you can evaluate your training and make adjustments as needed.

Lastly, it is important to remember that a season is long and there is a lot of time to improve and still achieve the goals you set as a coach, player, or team. It is counterproductive to believe that a season is over if you lose the first couple games or meets. Just as the Dallas Mavericks should not throw in the towel after losing their first three games this season after being in the NBA Finals, nor should you as coach, player, or team give up if you are not winning the competitions you want. Through monitoring, you can assess your progress, alter your training (if needed), or adjust your goals. Knowing what you want to achieve, but being flexible in the process of getting there, will serve you well over a long season.

At the Center for Sport Psychology and Performance Excellence, we have a trained staff of sport psychology consultants who can assist teams, coaches, and players to set goals, monitor those goals, and create strategies to achieve those goals. For more information on how we can assist your team or athletes this season, please contact us at 940-369-7767 or sportpsych@unt.edu or visit us at www.sportpsych.unt.edu. Good luck with the beginning of the season and we leave you with our sport quote of the week:

“Setting a goal is not the main thing. It is deciding how you will go about achieving it and staying with that plan.” – Tom Landry