

Vol 2, Issue 2: On Top of Your Game

On Top of Your Game

Dominance in sport; how do some athletes maintain it while others lose it? These are questions that seemed to be answered this weekend and are the subject of this week's Performance Edge enewsletter.

Roger Federer has won the past three Wimbledon championships and on Sunday he claimed his third consecutive U.S. Open title. Tiger Woods, on the other hand, has won his last five starts and has captured many grand slams himself. Both enjoy and expertly handle the pressure of championship matches, and both feel invincible when they are out on their competitive venues.

On the other hand, the University of Texas was riding a 21 game winning streak-the nation's longest-when the Ohio State Buckeyes came to Austin Saturday night. Despite being last year's national champions and slight favorites in the game, the Longhorns did not dominate their opponent. Texas coach, Mack Brown, said that the difference in the game was Ohio State's ability to make big plays and his team's inability to do so.

So, what allows athletes and teams, like Federer and Woods, to make great play after great play, but prevents others from feeling that extreme sense of confidence such that they can dominate their opponent and make the big plays when needed? When game plans and physical preparation are equal between opponents, it is mental factors that tip the scale to one over the other: The ability to handle pressure, stay in the present, be confident, and a motivation to continually improve are just a few of the factors that make a real difference. Although some athletes come to these naturally and with little effort, others develop this high level of mental toughness over time and through purposeful effort. Tiger Woods developed his mental toughness over the years of working with his father, who focused as much on Tiger's mental preparation as he did his physical skills. So, as a coach, what are you doing to help your athletes develop that level of mental toughness.that unerring belief in their ability to be the best when they compete?

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In closing, we leave you with the sport quote of the week:

"You need to play with supreme confidence, or else you'll lose again, and then losing becomes a habit." - Joe Paterno