

Performing Consistently

During the recent NCAA Men's and Women's Basketball Tournaments, we have heard many players and coaches use the phrases "Take it one game at a time" or even "one play at a time."

Although these phrases may seem to be nothing more than overused sport clichés, they actually represent sound approaches to helping athletes and teams perform at a consistent level by having the appropriate focus. Coach John Wooden always preached to his players to not get too high or too low, but to stay consistent play to play and game to game. Performing consistently is a key to performing successfully, but consistency is more than just game to game or play to play.

Here are some ideas for how you can help your team/athletes perform consistently:

- Use Goals to Focus Practice and Training: link what you do in training to the goals you have set for your team and for your individual athletes. Let your players know before every practice what you expect of them and how what you are doing today will help them achieve their goals. At the end of practices, take a moment to evaluate how well the athletes worked in meeting the practice expectations.
- Create Consistent Pre-Performance Routines: how you practice, influences how you compete...but also how you prepare in the weeks, days, hours, and even minutes before a competition can determine how well you do. It is no surprise that the athletes and teams who perform consistently also have well-developed pre-performance routines that they implement consistently. These routines help athletes and teams become physically and mentally ready to compete each time they step onto their competitive venue.
- Create Competition-Like Scenarios In Practice: make practices feel like competitions so athletes have the opportunity to challenge themselves in higher pressure/stress situations. Athletes cannot perform consistently in games if they do not practice competing in similar situations.
- Have Consistent Emotions: work with your athletes to identify the emotions they associate most strongly with ideal/peak performances and then help athletes learn to regulate these emotions so they can readily access them for practices and competitions. Pre-performance routines are one effective strategy for achieving this.

At the Center for Sport Psychology and Performance Excellence at the University of North Texas, we have a staff of sport consultants who are committed to helping your coaches and players perform consistently in practice and competition. If you would like more information about our consultations please call us at 940-369-7767, email us at sportpsych@unt.edu, or

check out our website at www.sportpsych.unt.edu. And as always, we leave you with our sport quote of the week:

“I've always made a total effort, even when the odds seemed entirely against me. I never quit trying; I never felt that I didn't have a chance to win.”

-Arnold Palmer