

## Vol 2, Issue 5: Building Confidence

### **Building Confidence**

What makes an athlete confident? Is it making guarantees for victory such as Chad Johnson or Rasheed Wallace? Is it calling your shot like Babe Ruth? Or is it consistently wanting to challenge yourself against superior competition, such as Annika Sorenstam or Michelle Wie playing in PGA tour events? Although some may consider such behaviors cocky or irrational, they represent the confidence that these athletes have that makes them great competitors. So, how does one go about building confidence? It is not an innate feature such as eye color or height, but instead a strategy that is learned and mastered over time. Here are three quick tips on building confidence in your athletes:

- Set achievable, realistic goals with your athletes. You want to have high expectations for your athletes, but you also want them to have a good chance of achieving the goal if they put forth maximal effort. Achieving goals (and attributing your success to effort and ability) sets the stage for increasing confidence. In addition, create short term goals and strategies that will act as steps to the long-term goal. It's great to want to win the conference or regional championship, but it's the day-to-day, week-to-week goals that keep us motivated, focused and confident.
- Talk positively to your athletes and about their performances. Using positive language focuses on what the athlete can do, instead of what the athlete cannot do (or did not do). The more positive an athlete feels, the more they will want to learn and work to perform at a high level.
- Shift the focus from your or the parent's perceptions about the athlete to the athlete's own perceptions. Instead of focusing on how happy or proud a coach or a parent is of the athlete, help the athlete to take pride or enjoyment out of his or her own performances. Developing an internal sense of success will help build confidence.

At the Center for Sport Psychology and Performance Excellence we have a staff of highly trained consultants who are committed to help athletes, coaches and teams achieve their performance goals through setting goals, increase positive self-talk, and focus on their own feelings about their performances thus increasing confidence. For more information about our services and how we can work with you and/or your team, contact us at (940) 369-SPORT (7767). Or you can visit our website and send us an email at [www.sportpsych.unt.edu](http://www.sportpsych.unt.edu). In closing, we leave you with the sport quote of the week:

"Experience tells you what to do; confidence allows you to do it." Stan Smith, Tennis Legend