

TRAINING THE COMPETITIVE ATHLETE IS NOT ALL PHYSICAL

If someone asked you what made a successful athlete, some of the standard answers you would get would all lend themselves to their physical attributes. After all, these attributes are the basis of what all of our standardized physical tests measure. These are the tests we use:

Speed: (40 yard dash)

Absolute Power: (power clean)

Relative Power: (vertical jump)

Upper body strength: (bench press)

Lower body strength: (squat)

Agility: (pro agility run)

Conditioning: (300 yard shuttle run)

All things being equal, it would be fair to say that the athlete with the “best” numbers in these tests should be your best athletes. We all know that is not the case. So...what is the X-factor that makes players with inferior test numbers perform better than their “superior” teammates in a game setting?

An easy answer would be intelligence. And I would not refute that statement. But, another factor that comes into play is **MENTAL TOUGHNESS!** One of my favorite quotes is “A guy that can’t do it, is not any better than a guy that won’t do it” My experience has seen this statement come to fruition many times. I am always in awe of players that surprise us all season long with unexpected, spectacular, and consistent performances. These guys are often the emotional leaders of the team and possess a “don’t quit” attitude. With our athletes, we put a premium on trying to develop this character trait.

There are exhaustive amounts of research and strategies for optimizing training programs to improve physical performance. What about mental toughness? How do you train that? This is where science has to take a back seat to psychology. In our off-season we dedicate one day per week to “Toughness Training” On those days we REALLY challenge our athletes to take their bodies to a place they have never been before. The activities we choose are endless and only limited by our imagination. So what types of activities do we choose? It is usually a prescription of movements and modalities that the athlete is not used to. For example, an endurance athlete would be

prescribed power movements, while the power athlete would be prescribed endurance movements. After all, we are trying to take them out of their comfort zone. The only criteria we use is that the athlete MUST THINK ABOUT QUITTING AT LEAST ONCE. Quitting is a habit, but so is NOT quitting! The more you can bring an athlete to the brink of submission, and they battle back and finish, the more you can expect that result in a game setting. Here is the catch....Our athletes are never forced to complete any activity. That would be dangerous and defeat the purpose. We are trying to build intrinsic motivation. After all, that is the motivation that lasts a lifetime in any endeavor...not just sport. Incorporate these activities for team-building leadership exposure. You will love the results!

Train Hard, Train Smart,

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