

# GOLDMIND Excellence

## Playing In Control

*An example from cricket.*



*"We've got a really strong side with lots of exciting young talent. It's just a case of us making sure we're on top of our game every game. The best teams in the world are the ones that play their 'A game' day-in-day-out and that's what we've got to look to achieve."*

*- Alex Wakely, ex-Bedford School*

Scene 1. Steve Jones has ball in hand, but just barely. After four good overs, mostly dot balls, including a maiden, he opens his next over with a 'no ball'. He then gets hit for a six, followed by two boundaries. He then bowls a wide, followed by another 'sweet stroke for four'.

Steve is in a hurry to bowl the next ball. "Let's get out of this as

quickly as possible," he says to himself as everything seems to speed up around him. He's annoyed that his captain is holding on to the ball, telling him to calm down. "I'm OK," he snaps back. His eyes shift from one place to another, not clearly focusing on anything. He notices a lot of hurried activity as his captain re-aligns the fielding and he hears a

### The Goal is Confidence

The goal of the mental game is to play with confidence; to play with a sense of freedom, a sense of total concentration, high physical energy and a lack of fear. It's about trusting your ability and letting go.

More importantly, your time in the mental GYM will allow you to develop the skills needed to handle situations like Steve, the bowler, is facing —those all-too-frequent times when you lose confidence and feel yourself spiraling out of control.

sarcastic voice from one of the opposing batsmen who tells him to, "Bowl it harder!" Steve pulls on his shirt as if it's starting to squeeze him. It's almost time to stick a fork in Steve — he's about done. Steve needs help. Throw him a lifeline!

Scene 2. Frank Simmons is on fire. He's been hitting everything solidly



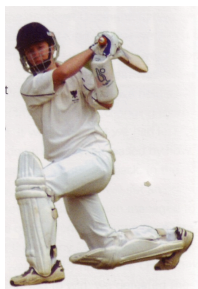
for the last couple of matches. He looks totally relaxed at the crease: calm and focused. "I'm seeing the ball real well right now," he tells his teammates, who know that's probably the understatement of the year. The ball looks both big and slow to Frank which gives him plenty of time to decide on each ball; there's no way anyone can

bowl him out.

Although he studies the bowler and each situation carefully, his mind is clear in the crease. He's not thinking; he's just an on-going hitting machine, oblivious to everything around him. He simply sees the ball and hits it. Because Frank enjoys his time at the crease his hitting is easy, his swing effortless. In short, Frank is in the 'zone'

Do those scenarios look familiar to you?

**See it!  
Hit it!**



**SPIRALING OUT OF CONTROL**



We often see players spiral out of control. It can start with something minor like a 'no ball', not getting an 'lbw' decision, misplaying a ball in the field, dropping a catch, and playing a poor stroke. From there you spiral out of control. You're upset about what happened on the previous ball, fail to refocus, and 'screw up' on the next one. Instead of a centred and balanced mindset that leads to good performances, you snowball out of control.

Instead of being focused on the present and playing one ball at a time, you are, in effect, **mentally playing at least three balls at a time!** You will learn that self-control is a major theme in the mental skills training programme (MSTP) and a skill you must develop.

**YOU must be IN CONTROL before you can control your performance!**

**IN CONTROL**

Players generally agree that the game seems almost easy or that they are in what is often called the 'zone' or 'flow state' roughly 10% of the time. The obvious question, then, is, "What do you do the other 90% of the time?" It's critical that you have something to go to when the game isn't easy and your confidence begins to slip. Peak performance isn't about being perfect, it's about compensating and adjusting. It's about staying IN CONTROL.

*As we saw with Steve, players often allow negative events from one ball to carry over into the next ball causing them to 'spiral out of control' and leaving them the difficult challenge of playing more than one ball at a time.*

**YOUR CHOICE**

The players who get the most out of their ability recognize the mental game's importance and find ways to improve their mental skills. Part of what makes those players successful is their ability to adjust. They are consistently at or near their best even when they don't feel their best. Unfortunately, most players leave the mental game to chance, not realising that a strong mental game can be developed.

Prepared for the Athletes at Hinchingsbrooke School by:

Dr. Peter Usher  
**The 'Head' Coach**

