

GOLDMIND Excellence

Mental Skills Training Programme

A Preliminary Training Phase for JAE at Hinchingsbrooke School



Performance enhancement starts with awareness of self. The following programme of presentations and activities is designed to provide the athlete with an initial core awareness and understanding of themselves as performers. In addition, the athletes will acquire some initial skill sets that they can apply in both training and competition.

1. THE PRESSURES OF SPORT.

The presentation serves as an introduction to the crucial area of performing **in control** of one's thoughts and emotions. The presentation serves to provide the athlete with an understanding of how their appraisal of competitive situations affects the quality of performance that follows. Advice on how to stay in control is provided.

2. PERFORMANCE REFLECTIONS

At the completion of Step 1 (above) the athlete would be given a working document that creates an awareness and initial understanding of how the mind-body connection relates to the quality of their performances. Specifically, the document guides them to explore both good and bad performance from the past and identify key issues to address in the MSTP.

The athletes would be given a period of time to complete the activity. Later, I would facilitate a group discussion to highlight key concepts to broaden awareness and understanding to allow each athlete to clearly recognise their unique profile with regards to mental activity and performance quality. This activity serves to commence an understanding of the respective athlete's Ideal Performance State (IPS).



3. GETTING COMFORTABLE WITH THE UNCOMFORTABLE

Following on from the previous activity, the athletes will complete an activity that is designed to allow each athlete to develop coping strategies which will allow them to better handle situations that have been identified as uncomfortable and performance-debilitating.

Specifically, the activity identifies how 'pressure situations' affect the athlete's focus, the accompanying self-talk, the accompanying emotions and behaviours. Using a "Traffic Light" metaphor, the athlete will prepare strategies that enable them to retain their IPS (stay in the Green) or to regain the IPS when the Amber and Red lights flash.

The purpose of this activity is to prepare strategies to stay IN CONTROL (of the performance state) when faced with uncomfortable situations.

4. PERFORMANCE FOCUS

The purpose of this session is to provide the athlete with strategies (and examples) to develop their own performance focus plan. Performance outcomes are more likely to be achieved when what is done prior to and during competition has been planned, practiced, and shown to be successful.

This activity will include key items such as: Segmenting a Performance, Task-Relevant Thought Content, Mood Words, Positive Self Talk, and other special considerations.

5. PRE-COMPETITION MENTAL SKILLS

Pre-competition strategies concern all the behaviours and thoughts that occur away from and at the competition site prior to the start of competition. This seminar will introduce the athlete to the following activities: Waking with a Positive Attitude, Trouble-Free Planning, Establishing a Competition Site Mindset, and a Competition Build-Up Routine. All of the activities are designed to help the athlete gain the IPS that is essential for Performance Excellence.

Dr. Peter Usher

"It was a privilege to have him on my side when I was pursuing my goals during a challenging period of my competitive career."

"Dr. Usher provided valuable mental skills training to a team with a reputation for 'choking' at the crucial stages in tournaments. In a matter of months he was able to provide each team member with the appropriate mental skills to enable them to produce their best performance whenever they played. More importantly, he was able to instill in each individual a high level of self-confidence and self-esteem that contributed to the team's all-round development and culminated in the Gold medal."

"Dr. Usher has had a profound influence on me personally. He has shown me as a professional and as a friend, how to add value to my life."

"I will always be indebted to Peter for the personal growth that I have achieved as a result of my association with him."

"He has been a teacher and dear friend who takes pride in supporting me through the different tides in my sporting career. He has been remarkable in understanding my many emotions and mental state through my sporting life. I truly believe he is no different to all the other athletes and that is special."

"Dr. Usher was a critical factor in our 'golden harvest'. He spent numerous hours painstakingly developing and enhancing the mental skills of our team, comprising athletes, coaches and officials. The skills we acquired made the difference."

"I have the utmost respect for Peter's knowledge and ability in the sports psychology area. His approach was thorough, simple, friendly and caring. His belief in, and enthusiasm for what he was communicating to the athletes was obvious and he was able to reach across many barriers to gradually enlighten my players to the benefits of mental skills."

"He was extremely astute in his observations, but never usurped the authority of myself as coach in dealing with the athletes."

"I have absolutely no doubt that Peter's involvement with our team contributed significantly to the team's success in winning the Gold. I believe for the first time in their lives the players had a heightened level of self-esteem and a respect for what they were doing. They felt a sense of achievement at their progress and believed they were indeed "Simply the Best!"