

GOLDMIND Excellence

A Relaxed Focus

Overcoming unproductive thinking

Case example

This alpine skier is probably more representative of the majority of athletes in that she performs best when feeling relaxed and not thinking about the outcome. Her personal racing history indicated that when she had an abun-

dance of unoccupied time before her race, she tended to think about, or worry about, other racers' results or her own performance. This unproductive thinking had resulted in her worst races.

Race Day Doubts

- "All the name people are here; they are really good"
- "Am I good enough?"
- "Have I trained well enough?"
- "Am I prepared?"
- "Am I capable?"

BEST PERFORMANCES OCCURRED WHEN...

Three of the best performances in her life occurred when her time was occupied right up to race time. Partly because her time was filled, she minimized or eliminated worries about other's expectations of her and where she would place. She was able to leave the start area thinking, "I know the course, I know what I have to do. Just go -- do it." It was helpful for her to plan a sequence of activities that constructively filled her time, from the moment she arrived at the hill until the start of her race. In terms of an ideal feeling for the race, she also gained from a long warm-up in which she could be physically active at the top of the hill for several minutes. She was then able to be more ready both physically and mentally at the start.

RACE DAY DOUBTS

Because worries or doubts such as "All the name people are here; they are really good," or "Am I good enough?" had sometimes surfaced in the past, this athlete needed a plan for dealing with

them. An organized pre-race plan minimized these distractions, but some still occurred. One strategy she used for dealing with them was to immediately tell herself, "Stop, tree it!", and then focus on something more constructive, such as "I've trained well," "I've prepared well," and "I've developed a detailed pre-race plan and race plan—I'm fully capable of doing it—relax and do it." Her refocusing goal was to get back on track quickly in terms of what she was supposed to be doing at that moment. Usually that meant returning to her pre-race plan.

CONTROL OF SELF

Initially it was helpful for her to remind herself that she couldn't control other racers or other people's expectations. No sense in wasting a lot of energy on that. But she could control herself, so it became important to focus on what she had to do.

The 20 minutes up the hill in the chair lift had been a time in



which worry thoughts began to intrude. The time on the chairlift was changed into an advantage, or at least no disadvantage. It seemed that it was a beautiful time for personal space—the eye of the hurricane. She attempted to view it as a repose, by using that time constructively to relax her body, to focus on relaxed breathing, and to visualize her race. Occasionally, she also chose to use that time for pleasant diversion by focusing on the shapes and forms of the hill, trees, and clouds, by listening to music or singing, or by recalling happy memories.

RACE FOCUS

In her best training runs, she was relaxed and the run unfolded naturally without conscious force. she knew the course, she knew what she had to do, and she did it. Her

best focus, going down the hill, was always to look for the next gate. Because this focus had worked in the past, she made plans to recapture it for races.

When sections of her race had not gone well, her focus had drifted, for example, to seeing the coaching staff on the side or wondering what someone else was thinking or worrying about her placing. If her focus did momentarily drift, she now planned to think "gate" and return her focus to the position where it had helped most before (i.e., the next gate). She developed a race plan, put it on paper, tried it in a practice situation, then tried it in a race situation. She made the necessary adaptations in the less important races, so she was ready and flowing for the more important events.

FOCUS
Do it!
Do it right!
Do it right now!

FOCUSED:
Right HERE,
Right NOW

YOUR NOTES

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