

BIG GAMES

Think 2 Win Performance
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RIISING TO THE OCCASION

The greatest challenge that athletes have is to play their best when it really counts, regardless of the level of competition, athletes and players need to rise to the occasion. The ability to do this comes from composure, control, repeatability and confidence.

“CHAMPIONS PRODUCE NORMAL AND PREDICTABLE PERFORMANCES, IN VERY ABNORMAL AND UNPREDICTABLE ENVIRONMENTS”

BOB BOWMAN

NORMAL AND PREDICTABLE

What is normal? In this instance we are talking about the consistency to perform effective processes in order to achieve a given outcome. With the predictability being that that you / the team put together a series of normal performances to win and therefore control the outcome

ABNORMAL AND UNPREDICTABLE

What is abnormal and unpredictable is anything that you or the team cannot control; the conditions, the venue, the crowd, and almost the most unpredictable the opposition.

IRRELEVANT VS. RELEVANT

Within the unpredictable there are many things that should become irrelevant in order for you to produce a normal and predictable performance. The venue, the occasion the opposition should all be irrelevant. Where as yours and your teams processes should always remain relevant.

ATTITUDE

Your mindset will impact every psychological contributor to your competitive performances including your motivation, confidence, intensity, focus, and emotions. A healthy attitude will set you up for a psychology that will allow you to play your best. An unhealthy attitude, by contrast, will only set you up for failure. The Five P's should help you to establish a healthy attitude and approach to game day.

“NEVER LET THE FEAR OF STRIKING OUT GET IN YOUR WAY”

BABE RUTH

THE 5 P'S



Perspective

A single game is never going to singularly determine your season, you as a player, or in fact be life changing.



Process

Keep focusing on your and teams processes. By focusing on the outcome you are focusing on the final whistle not the game.



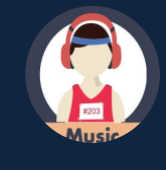
Present

Dwelling on past results and performances will not help you on the day. The only way to control the future is to concentrate on the present



Positive

Keeping positive is always a key factor in success. Focus on what you can control and allow the confidence to follow.



Progress

Keep focused on your performances, not those around you. Focus on your performance to aid yours and your teams progression

THE FIVE P's

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PERSPECTIVE

It's easy as a big game approaches to lose perspective (the importance you place on the game). You may think:

"This is the BIGGEST game of the season and I've worked so hard for this"

"If I don't play well, it is all for nothing"

"I will never play again at this level"

I MUST play well!"

If you don't play well, you will be disappointed, but it is never going to singularly determine your season, you as a player, or in fact be life changing.

Think of it this way. Let's say that before the big game, someone comes up to you, shows you a gun, and tells you that if you don't play well, he will be there after the game and will shoot you. Would you be nervous? Yes! Terrified, in fact! Would you be able to play well? Definitely not! Of course, there will be no one after the game with a gun, but, **when you lose perspective** and feel that your life (not your physical life, but your ego life) is on the line, then the same **feelings of threat and fear arise**. And there is little chance of your being **confident, relaxed, or focused** enough to play your best. If you look too closely at this game, it's easy to think that it will be in some way life changing, or career making.

But if you can step back and put the game in a long-term perspective, namely, it is just a small step in a journey toward your long-term goals, the so-called big game won't seem quite so important. The result? You'll be psychologically and emotionally prepared to play your best.

PROCESS

One of the most common problems that occurs in athletes and players as the big game approaches is a shift in focus away from process and onto outcomes.

A process focus involves paying attention to those things that help you play your best, for example, technique, structure, tactics, and pre-game preparation. In contrast, outcome focus involves focusing on the possible results of the game: winning, losing, or who you might win or lose to.

IF YOU SHIFT TO FOCUSING ON THE OUTCOME YOUR GAME WILL FALL TO PIECES

By keeping focused on the process rather than the outcome, you have a much better chance of playing your best because you are paying attention to things that will help you play well. And, if you play well, you're more likely to achieve the results you want.

Why do you get nervous before big games? Because you're afraid of the outcome, more specifically, you're afraid of failure. So by focusing on the outcome, you're more likely to feel over anxious and less likely to play well reducing the chance of the result you want. In contrast, if you focus on the process, you won't have a fear of failure, you'll stay relaxed, and you're more likely to play your best, the result of which is that you'll achieve the outcome you desire.

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PRESENT

Another shift that can occur before big games is a focus on either past performances “We beat them last year, They beat us last time”, or future ramifications “What if we lose?, What if we win?”

PAST FOCUS. There's a saying that you can't change the past, but you can ruin a perfectly good future by worrying about it. The reality is that you can't change the past, so there's no point in even thinking about it (except perhaps to learn from your mistakes so you don't repeat them). If something bad happened in the past, be disappointed, then let it go. If something good happened, revel in it, then let it go. Looking back has no value to your present.

FUTURE FOCUS. Thinking about the future also does you no good. It can cause doubt and worry because it often triggers a fear of failure. A future focus can create anxiety because it makes you think about expectations that you might feel from others, whether parents, coaches, or the media. Mostly basically, if you're focusing on the future, you're not focusing on your play in the here and now.

If you want to control the future, the only way to do so is to control the present. This means directing your focus on what you need to do to play your best right now.

POSITIVE

Perhaps the worst thing that happens to any athlete or player before a big game is that they go negative. The expectations and pressure that you can feel before a big game can cause your confidence, which may have been high from all of your training and games up to this point in the season, to plummet as you focus on all of the bad things that can happen in the upcoming game. You may go from being your best ally to your worst enemy.

What are the chances of good things happening in the big game with this "dark" mindset?

Your only chance to achieve your goals for the big game is to stay positive. This doesn't mean you have to be super positive all the time; feeling some doubt is natural. Just make sure that most of what you think about your upcoming game is positive, again keep to focusing on your processes, reflect on what you can control and what you have practiced.

PROGRESS

It is somewhat natural to compare yourself to your teammates and other competitors.

But when you focus on other people, in the opposite team or even in your own team, and think about their performance and how they are playing, you will limit your ability to perform as you are failing to focus on yourself and your processes.

The only thing you should really focus on is yourself, your processes and the progress you're making toward your goals. By keeping the focus on your individual performance you will enable your performance to be the best it can be progressing yourself towards your goals, as well as enabling the teams to achieving its goals (winning the game).

Are you improving your technique and tactics? Are your rankings getting better? As long as you are moving toward your goals and staying focused on improving, you will continue to get better and everyone else will take care of themselves.

So, if you really want to play your best in the upcoming big game, remember the 5 Ps and you can be pretty confident that your mind will help you, rather than hurt you, achieve your goals.