

THE COMPETITION PROTOCOL

**A STEP-BY-STEP GUIDE TO GETTING THE BEST
OF YOU**

Giannis Notaras

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Table of Contents

Introduction: The Pilot's Checklist

PART I: THE PHILOSOPHY OF THE MACHINE Chapter 1: The Myth of Rising to the Occasion Chapter 2: Motivation is a Flawed Engine Chapter 3: The Protocol Mindset

PART II: THE PREPARATION WINDOW (T-MINUS 7 DAYS) Chapter 4: The Physical Taper Chapter 5: Mental Terrain Mapping Chapter 6: The Gear Audit

PART III: THE CALIBRATION (T-MINUS 24 HOURS) Chapter 7: Bio-Hacking the Pre-Game Body Chapter 8: Sleep Architecture

PART IV: THE ARENA (RACE DAY) Chapter 9: The Awakening Chapter 10: Social Firewalling Chapter 11: The Warm-Up Ritual

PART V: EXECUTION & BEYOND Chapter 12: The Zone & The Aftermath Conclusion: Trust the Protocol Race Day Cheat Sheet

INTRODUCTION: THE PILOT'S CHECKLIST

You have trained for months. You have put in the miles, lifted the weights, and studied the film. You *are* ready. But when you step into the arena, will you *feel* ready?

Most athletes treat competition day like a lottery. They wake up and hope they feel good. They hope their nerves don't get the best of them. They hope their nerves don't get the best of them. They hope they remember everything. Hope is not a strategy.

Imagine a pilot walking into the cockpit of a fighter jet. Do they "hope" the engines start? Do they "hope" the flaps work? No. They pull out a checklist. They follow a rigorous, non-negotiable set of Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs). They don't rely on memory or feeling; they rely on the **Protocol**.

This book is your Pilot's Checklist. It is a manual for the chaotic, high-pressure window before the gun goes off. It is designed to take the thinking out of the equation so that you can simply meaningful action.

When you have a protocol, you don't need to be confident. You just need to be compliant. Trust the process, and the result will take care of itself.

PART I: THE PHILOSOPHY OF THE MACHINE

CHAPTER 1: THE MYTH OF RISING TO THE OCCASION

"We do not rise to the level of our expectations. We fall to the level of our training."

— Archilochus

It was 4:00 AM in Tokyo. The Olympic Village was quiet, but inside one of the dormitory rooms, a world-champion sprinter was staring at the ceiling, heart pounding at 120 beats per minute.

He wasn't sick. he wasn't injured. He was suffering from a condition that kills more dreams than torn ACLs or broken bones: **The Expectation of Magic.**

For four years, he had told himself a convenient lie: "*When the lights come on, I'll just turn it on. I'm a gamer. I rise to the occasion.*"

He believed that the adrenaline of the Olympic final would unlock a hidden gear, a reservoir of speed he hadn't accessed in practice. He believed that the pressure would transform him into a superhero.

Six hours later, he finished 7th. He didn't choke—at least, not in the way we usually think. He didn't trip. He didn't false start. He simply ran exactly as he had trained: inconsistently, with poor mechanics under fatigue, and with a mind cluttered by noise.

He didn't rise. He fell. And he fell hard.

THE GAMER'S FALLACY

We love the myth of the "Gamer." The player who sucks in practice but dominates in the final. Hollywood loves this story. The underdog gets beaten down in the montage, but in the final fight, he digs deep, finds a magical source of willpower, and wins.

Real life is not a Rocky movie. In high-performance environments—whether it's the 100-meter dash, a chess grandmaster final, or a Navy SEAL raid—**biology does not care about your narrative.**

When you are under extreme stress, your physiology changes.

1. **Cortisol floods the system.**
2. **Fine motor skills degrade.** The ability to perform delicate, precise movements (like a golf putt or a surgical incision) drops by up to 50%.
3. **Tunnel vision sets in.** Your peripheral awareness vanishes.
4. **The Prefrontal Cortex (PFC) goes offline.** This is the part of your brain responsible for complex decision-making, logic, and long-term planning.

Basically, you become a scared, reactive animal.

If your strategy is to "think your way through" the moment, you will lose. You cannot think when your thinking brain is offline. You can only **execute**.

And you can only execute what you have automated.

THE BIOLOGY OF "CHOKING"

What we call "choking" is rarely a lack of effort. It is almost always an **overload of the conscious mind**.

When you are learning a skill—say, driving a car—you are in the **Cognitive Phase**. You have to think: *"Check mirror, foot on brake, hand on gear stick."* It is slow and clunky.

As you get better, you move to the **Autonomous Phase**. You drive home without remembering the trip. Your basal ganglia has taken over. It is fast, efficient, and requires zero conscious thought.

Pressure pushes you backward.

When the stakes are high, you get anxious. You start *thinking* about your mechanics again. *"Is my elbow high enough?"* *"Am I breathing right?"*

You regress from the Autonomous Phase back to the Cognitive Phase. You start trying to manually control a system that is designed to run on autopilot. It's like trying to run an F1 engine using a manual hand-crank. The system stalls. The athlete freezes. The "Gamer" fails.

THE SOLUTION: THE PROTOCOL

If you cannot trust your feelings (which will be fearful) and you cannot trust your conscious mind (which will be slow), what can you trust?

You trust the Protocol.

A Protocol is an external brain. It is a rigid, non-negotiable set of actions that you perform regardless of how you feel. It is a checklist that pilots use when an engine fails. Unlike the pilot, they don't have to decide what to do. The decision was made 10 years ago by engineers. The pilot just executes the steps.

- **Step 1:** Pitch down.
- **Step 2:** Full throttle.
- **Step 3:** Flaps up.

This book is not about hype. I am not here to tell you "you can do it."

I am here to help you build your Checklist. We are going to construct a rigid scaffolding around your performance window—the 7 days leading up to the event—that will hold you upright even when your knees are shaking.

We build rituals. We build standard operating procedures. We automate excellence.

So that when the gun goes off, you don't have to rise. You just have to let your training fall into place.

CHAPTER 2: MOTIVATION IS A FLAWED ENGINE

Imagine buying a car that only starts when the weather is sunny and you're in a good mood. You wouldn't drive it to work. You certainly wouldn't drive it to the hospital in an emergency. It's unreliable. It's a toy.

Motivation is that car.

In the world of amateur sports and business, people are obsessed with motivation. They watch highlight reels on YouTube. They listen to aggressive hip-hop playlists. They scroll through Instagram quotes about "grinding."

They are addicted to the chemical spike of *arousal*—the hit of dopamine and norepinephrine that makes you feel like you can run through a wall.

Here is the problem: **Arousal is biological, and biology is cyclical.** You cannot be "up" forever. For every peak, there is a valley.

If you rely on being "up" to train or compete, you are at the mercy of your biology. You are a slave to your mood.

THE PROFESSIONAL VS. THE AMATEUR

The difference between the amateur and the professional is not talent. It is not genetics. It is the relationship with **boredom** and **obligation**.

- **The Amateur** trains when they feel inspired. They treat sport as a form of self-expression. "I'm just not feeling it today" is a valid excuse for them.
- **The Professional** treats sport as a trade. A plumber doesn't look at a clogged toilet and say, "I'm just not feeling inspired to unclog this today." They do it because it is the job.

In the week leading up to a competition, your motivation will be erratic. Monday: You feel great. You're ready to kill. Wednesday: You feel heavy. Doubt creeps in. "Did I do enough?" Friday: Panic. You just want it to be over.

If you let these emotional waves dictate your actions, you will sabotage your prep. You will over-train on Monday because you're excited, and you will under-eat on Friday because you're nervous.

ENTER THE MACHINE

We need to replace the **Internal Engine** (Motivation) with an **External Engine** (Discipline/Protocol).

Discipline is often misunderstood. People think discipline is about "white-knuckling" it—gritting your teeth and forcing yourself to do hard things. That is *willpower*, and willpower is a battery that runs out.

True discipline is structural. It is a Machine.

A machine doesn't have feelings. A machine has inputs and outputs.

- **Input:** 7:00 AM.
- **Function:** Eat oatmeal.
- **Input:** 8:00 AM.
- **Function:** Pack bag.

When you operate as a machine, you liberate yourself from the burden of choice. Decision fatigue is a real physiological phenomenon. Every time you have to decide *"Should I stretch now or later?" "Should I eat this or that?"*—you burn glucose in the brain. You deplete your willpower reserves.

By the time the race starts, you are mentally exhausted from making micro-decisions.

THE "ZERO-OPTION" WEEK

For the final 7 days before your competition, we are going to institute a **Zero-Option Policy**.

You have no choices effectively immediately. Your meals are planned. Your sleep times are set. Your clothes are picked. Your

warm-up is scripted.

You are not the CEO of your life this week. You are the Employee. The CEO (Rational You) made the plan last month. The Employee (Emotional You) just punches the clock.

This sounds restrictive. It is actually **freedom**.

When you don't have to choose, you don't have to worry. You can relax into the structure. You can let the machine carry you to the starting line.

Motivation is for amateurs. Protocols are for pros. Let's build yours.

CHAPTER 3: THE PROTOCOL

MINDSET

Before we start building checklists, we need to calibrate your internal dashboard. We need to talk about **The Red Line**.

In auto racing, every engine has a tachometer. There is a red zone at the top—usually around 7,000 or 8,000 RPM. If you drive below the red line, you aren't maximizing power. If you drive *into* the red line for too long, the engine blows up.

Human performance works exactly the same way. This is known in psychology as the **Yerkes-Dodson Law**.

THE INVERTED-U CURVE

Imagine an upside-down "U".

- **The X-axis is Arousal** (Stress, Energy, Adrenaline).
- **The Y-axis is Performance.**

Zone 1: The Sleepwalker (Low Arousal) You are bored, tired, or too relaxed. Your reaction times are slow. You don't care enough. Performance is low.

Zone 2: The Flow State (Optimal Arousal) You are alert, focused, and energized, but not frantic. Your heart rate is elevated, but your mind is clear. Performance is at its peak.

Zone 3: The Red Line (High Arousal) You are panicked. You are "over-amped." You are shaking. Your muscles are too tight, destroying fluid movement. You miss easy cues. Performance crashes.

FINDING YOUR RED LINE

The "Protocol Mindset" is not about being as calm as a monk. You need fire. But it is about **Controlled Aggression**.

Different sports (and different people) have different Red Lines.

- **The Powerlifter:** Needs extremely high arousal. They might slap their face, sniff ammonia, and scream before a lift. They need to be near the Red Line because their sport is gross motor power.
- **The Golfer/Surgeon:** Needs low-to-moderate arousal. If a golfer sniffed ammonia and screamed before a putt, they would miss by 10 feet. They need fine motor control.

Assignment: Think back to your best performance ever.

- How did you feel 1 hour before?

- Were you joking around? Were you silent? Were you listening to angry music?

Now think back to your worst performance ("Choking").

- What was different? Were you too hyped? Too scared?

Your goal for this week is not to "eliminate nerves." It is to **steer the ship into Zone 2.**

THE CONTROL DICHOTOMY

The second pillar of the Protocol Mindset is the **Dichotomy of Control** (borrowed from Stoic philosophy).

Things You Control (The Internals):

- Your preparation.
- Your effort.
- Your attitude.
- Your self-talk.
- Your breathing. (This is a bridge between mind and body—we will use this heavily).

Things You Do Not Control (The Externals):

- The weather.
- The referees/judges.
- The crowded venue.

- Your opponent's performance.
- Delays in the schedule.

The Protocol Rule:

- If you can control it, **attack it**.
- If you cannot control it, **ignore it**.

This sounds simple, but under pressure, we forget. We obsess over the rain. We get mad at the delay. We waste precious energy on the Externals.

When you find yourself worrying, ask the question: "*Is this in my control?*" If the answer is No, visualize putting that thought in a box and throwing it off a bridge.

Return to the Protocol. Return to the inputs you own.

PART II: THE PREPARATION WINDOW (T-MINUS 7 DAYS)

CHAPTER 4: THE PHYSICAL TAPER

T-Minus 7 Days. The work is done. You cannot build new fitness in seven days. It takes 10-14 days for a physiological adaptation (like increased mitochondrial density or muscle strength) to actually take effect in the body. If you do a hard session today, you won't reap the benefits until *after* the competition. All you will get is the fatigue.

The goal of this week is not to get fitter. The goal is to get **fresher**. This is called "The Taper."

THE SUPERCOMPENSATION SCIENCE

When you train, you damage your body. Performance goes *down*. When you recover, your body repairs itself to a level slightly higher than before. This is **Supercompensation**.

For months, you have been training hard, carrying a cumulative load of fatigue. You are like a Ferrari driving with the parking brake on. The Taper is about releasing that brake.

When you reduce volume while maintaining intensity, two things happen:

1. **Glycogen stores overfill.** Your gas tank gets bigger.
2. **Oxidative enzymes peak.** Your engine becomes more efficient.
3. **neuromuscular readiness spikes.** Your spark plugs fire hotter.

But you have to do it right.

MISTAKE #1: THE PANIC TRAIN

This is the most common sin. It's Tuesday. The race is Saturday. You feel a sudden wave of imposter syndrome. *"Am I ready? I feel slow. Maybe I should do just one more interval session to test my legs."*

STOP. This is insecurity disguised as work. If you "test" your fitness now, you leave your best performance in practice. You are digging a hole you cannot climb out of in time. **SOP:** If you doubt your fitness, look at your training log. Trust the data, not your feelings.

MISTAKE #2: THE SEDENTARY SLUMP

On the flip side, some athletes hear "rest" and turn into couch potatoes. They execute a "Hard Taper"—doing absolutely nothing for 4 days. This is equally dangerous. Your body is used to high revs. If you shut it down completely, your blood plasma volume drops,

your muscles lose tension ("tone"), and you feel stale and "flat" on race day.

THE SHARPNESS PROTOCOL

We want a **Linear Taper**.

- **Volume (Quantity):** Reduce by 40-60%. Cut the miles, cut the reps.
- **Intensity (Quality):** Maintain it.

The Golden Rule: Touch the Red Line, but don't hang out there.

Example Taper Week (for a Saturday Event):

- **Monday:** Rest Day.
- **Tuesday:** Normal intensity interval session, but cut the *number* of reps in half. (e.g., if you usually do 10x400m, do 5x400m). You simulate race speed without the fatigue.
- **Wednesday:** Light aerobic recovery.
- **Thursday:** Rest or very light drill work.
- **Friday (The Shakeout):** 20 minutes very easy + 4 x 15-second "primers" (short bursts at race speed). This wakes up the nervous system without burning fuel.

You should finish every workout this week saying, "*I feel like I could do twice as much.*" That feeling of "holding back a caged animal" is exactly what we want for Saturday.

CHAPTER 5: MENTAL TERRAIN MAPPING

Most people visualize wrong. They close their eyes and see a "highlight reel" of themselves winning. They see the crowd cheering. They feel happy. This is basically daydreaming. It feels nice, but it prepares you for nothing.

Professional visualization is not about watching a movie; it is about **programming a simulator**.

We are going to engage in two specific types of mental mapping:

- 1. Venue Study (The External Map)**
- 2. Polysensory Scripting (The Internal Map)**

SOP: THE VENUE STUDY

Uncertainty creates anxiety. The brain perceives the "unknown" as a threat. We want to convert the Unknown into the Known before you arrive.

Tactical Intelligence Gathering:

- **Satellite Recon:** Use Google Earth. Look at the venue. Where is the parking lot? How far is the walk to the entrance?
- **The Bathroom Plan:** I am dead serious. Knowing exactly where the bathrooms are prevents a surprisingly high amount of subconscious stress.
- **The Warm-Up Zone:** Find out where you will be waiting. Is it a crowded hallway? An open field? A small room?
- **Lighting & Sound:** Watch YouTube videos of previous events at this venue. Is it an echo chamber? Is the lighting harsh?

By the time you walk in physically, you should feel like you have been there 100 times. You are just verifying what you already know.

POLYSENSORY VISUALIZATION

Daydreaming is visual. Real visualization involves all five senses. The more sensory data you include, the more your brain fires the same neural pathways as the actual event.

Exercise: The Perfect Lap (or Rep/Match) Sit in a quiet room. Timer set for the *exact duration* of your event (if applicable).

- **Visual:** See the color of the mat/track/court. See the glare of the lights.

- **Auditory:** Hear the specific buzz of the crowd. Hear your own heavy breathing. Hear the referee's voice.
- **Kinesthetic (Touch):** This is the most important one. Feel the texture of the ball. Feel the tightness of your shoes. Feel the burn in your lungs at the halfway point.
- **Olfactory (Smell):** Smell the chlorine, the cut grass, or the stale air of the gym.

THE "MURPHY'S LAW" PROTOCOL

Finally, we visualize **Disaster**. Military pilots don't just visualize flying; they visualize engine failure.

Spend 5 minutes visualizing things going wrong, and then—this is the key—**visualize yourself solving it calmly**.

- *What if my goggles snap?* -> I calmly reach into my bag for the backup pair.
- *What if the start is delayed 30 mins?* -> I put my headphones back on and sit in the corner. I eat half a banana.
- *What if I trip?* -> I roll, get up immediately, and reset my rhythm.

When you pre-program the solution, the crisis doesn't cause panic. It just triggers the response. "*Oh, this is happening? I know what to do.*"

CHAPTER 6: THE GEAR AUDIT

In 2004, a gold-medal favorite swimmer was disqualified because his swimsuit ripped right before the race. In F1, a 2-second pit stop creates a champion; a loose wheel nut destroys a career.

Equipment failure is not bad luck. It is negligence.

You cannot control the weather, but you can control your gear. This is the one variable that should *never* beat you. This week, we institute the **Zero-Failure Standard**.

THE PSYCHOLOGY OF TRUST

Why do we obsess over gear? Because gear is the interface between your body and the environment. If you don't trust your shoes, you won't plant your foot hard. If you don't trust your grip, you will hold on too tight (wasting energy). Trust in your gear allows you to forget about it and focus on execution.

THE KILL KIT (REDUNDANCY)

Two is one. One is none. This is a Navy SEAL maxim. If you have one pair of goggles and they snap, you have zero. If you have two, you have one.

Your Competition Bag must contain:

1. **Primary Kit:** The gear you intend to use. Broken in. Tested. Perfect condition.
2. **Secondary Kit:** A full duplicate set of critical items. (Spare laces, spare jersey, spare battery).
3. **The "Oh Sh*t" Kit:** Safety pins, duct tape, superglue, extra contact lenses, ibuprofen, blister pads.

THE PACKING RITUAL (T-MINUS 24H)

Do **NOT** pack the morning of the event. Packing is a sacred ritual. It should be done the afternoon before, in a calm state.

The "Flat Lay" Protocol:

1. Clear a large space on the floor.
2. Empty your bag completely. Shake it out.
3. Lay out every single item in a grid.
4. **Touch & Check:** Physically touch every item. Check the zipper. Check the seemingly obvious things. *Are both left and right shoes there?*
5. **Reverse Loading:** Pack the bag in reverse order of need.

- *Bottom*: Post-race clothes, towel.
- *Middle*: Competition Uniform.
- *Top*: Warm-up gear, snacks, headphones.

6. The Lockdown: Zip the bag. Place it by the door.

Once the bag is zipped, the "Gear" file in your brain is closed. You never have to ask "*Did I bring my...?*" You know you did. You touched it. You can sleep in peace.

PART III: THE CALIBRATION (T-MINUS 24 HOURS)

CHAPTER 7: BIO-HACKING THE PRE-GAME BODY

T-Minus 24 Hours. The training is done. The bag is packed. Now, we turn our attention to the machine itself. Your body is a chemistry set. If you mix the wrong chemicals today, you will get an explosion (or a fizzle) tomorrow.

THE GLYCOGEN PROTOCOL

You have heard of "Carb Loading." Most people do this wrong. They eat a massive bowl of pasta the night before, wake up feeling bloated and heavy, and wonder why they feel sluggish. Glycogen (stored carbohydrate) is your primary fuel source for high-intensity effort.

The Golden Rule: It takes 24-48 hours to top off glycogen stores. Stuffing your face at 8:00 PM on Friday does very little for a Saturday morning race, other than spike your insulin and disrupt your sleep.

The Solution: The Slow Drip.

- Start increasing carb intake slightly at lunch on the *day before*.
- **Dinner:** This is the most critical meal. It must be **Boring.**
 - **High Carb:** White rice, potatoes, quinoa.
 - **Moderate Protein:** Chicken, white fish, tofu.
 - **Low Fat:** Fat slows digestion. We want the fuel in the muscle, not sitting in the stomach.
 - **Low Fiber:** This is not the time for a giant kale salad. Fiber creates bulk and gas. We want an empty gut on race morning.

HYDRATION: THE HIDDEN VARIABLE

Being just 2% dehydrated reduces physical performance by up to 10%. But you cannot just chug a gallon of water. If you drink plain water without electrolytes, your body will just flush it out (and you'll be peeing all night).

The Sponge Analogy: Think of your muscles like a sponge. If you pour water on a dry sponge, it runs off. If you add salt (electrolytes), the sponge absorbs the water.

- **Protocol:** Sip electrolyte-enhanced water throughout the day.
- **The Pee Test:** Your urine should be "Lemonade," not "Apple Juice" (too dehydrated) and not "Clear Water" (over-hydrated).

THE GUT-BRAIN AXIS

Your stomach has a "second brain" (the enteric nervous system). When you get nervous, your brain sends signals to your gut to stop digestion. This is why you get butterflies or nausea.

- **Avoid:** New foods, spicy foods, excessive dairy, or anything you haven't tested in training.
- **The Comfort Meal:** Pick one meal that you *know* makes you feel good. Eat that. Every time. It's a psychological anchor as much as a physiological one.

CHAPTER 8: SLEEP ARCHITECTURE

If you are a serious athlete, you obsess over sleep. But the night before a big event, sleep is often elusive. The nerves kick in. You stare at the clock. *11:00 PM... 12:30 AM...* Then the panic sets in. "*If I don't sleep, I'll fail.*"

THE SLEEP MYTH

Here is the truth: **One night of bad sleep does not kill performance.** Studies show that while perceived effort goes up (it *feels* harder), actual physiological output (strength, VO₂ max) remains almost identical after one night of deprivation. Adrenaline masks the fatigue.

The real danger is the **anxiety about not sleeping.** Lying in bed stressing about being awake is more draining than actually being awake.

The Bank Strategy: Sleep is cumulative. Focus on getting "money in the bank" on Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, and Thursday. If you sleep 9 hours a night all week, a 5-hour night on Friday won't bankrupt you.

OPTIMIZATION PROTOCOL

1. **Temperature:** Your body needs to drop its core temperature by 2-3 degrees to initiate deep sleep. Set the AC to 65-68°F (18-20°C).
2. **Light:** Darkness triggers melatonin. If you are in a hotel with bright streetlights, wear a sleep mask. It is non-negotiable.
3. **The Wind-Down:** No screens 60 minutes before bed. Blue light tells your brain it is noon.

THE BRAIN DUMP

If your mind is racing with "What ifs," you have a **Working Memory Overflow**. Your brain is trying to hold onto tasks so it doesn't forget them. **The Fix:** get a piece of paper and a pen. Write down every single worry, task, or thought in your head. *"I need to remember my socks." "I'm worried about the start." "Did I lock the car?"*

Once it is on paper, your brain feels safe to let go. You have "saved" the data. You can now sleep.

PART IV: THE ARENA (RACE DAY)

CHAPTER 9: THE AWAKENING (THE MORNING OF)

The alarm goes off. This is the moment most athletes dread. The heart rate spikes immediately. The stomach churns. The "What if?" thoughts flood the brain. **Stop.** Do not lie in bed thinking. Thinking is the enemy. **Move.**

THE CORTISOL AWAKENING RESPONSE (CAR)

Your body releases a surge of cortisol (stress hormone) naturally within 30-45 minutes of waking. This is designed to wake you up. We want to harness this, not fight it.

The Wake-Up Protocol:

- 1. Feet on Floor:** aim for < 60 seconds from alarm to standing up.

2. **Light:** Photon impact on the retina signals the suprachiasmatic nucleus (your master clock) that it is "Game Time." Open the curtains. Go outside. Turn on every light in the room. Darkness breeds doubt.

3. **Hydrotherapy (The Cold Shower):** You don't need to freeze for 10 minutes. Just turn the water to cold for the final 30-60 seconds of your shower. This triggers a massive release of norepinephrine. It wakes up the central nervous system faster than coffee.

THE FUELING WINDOW

- **T-Minus 3-4 Hours:** This is the standard window for your pre-competition meal.
- It should be the *exact same* meal you ate yesterday. No surprises.
- **The Caffeine Rule:** Caffeine peaks in the blood around 45-60 minutes after ingestion. Do not drink your coffee 4 hours before. Save it for the "Priming Window" (T-Minus 60 mins).

CHAPTER 10: SOCIAL FIREWALLING

You have arrived at the venue. This is a dangerous environment. It is filled with "Energy Vampires."

- The Complainier: "*Man, this floor looks slippery.*"
- The Worrier: "*Did you see who is in our bracket?*"
- The Over-Excited Parent/Friend: "*You gotta win this! We're all counting on you!*"

These people mean well (mostly), but they are poison. They are introducing variables you cannot control.

CONSTRUCTING "THE BUBBLE"

You need a physical and psychological firewall.

1. The Headphone Shield Wear big, over-ear headphones. Even if they are playing nothing. Headphones are the universal

international sign for: "**Do Not Disturb.**" They allow you to control your auditory environment.

2. The Polite Nod If someone tries to engage you, do not be rude, but do not stop walking.

- Give a firm nod.
- Smile slightly.
- Keep moving. "I'm in my zone right now, catch you after."

3. Landmark Anchoring When panic sets in, your eyes tend to dart around rapidly (saccadic masking). This increases anxiety. Pick 3 physical landmarks in the venue (a banner, a door, a scoreboard). When you feel overwhelmed, lock your eyes on one landmark for 5 seconds. Breathe. This stabilizes your visual field and calms the amygdala.

CHAPTER 11: THE WARM-UP RITUAL

The Warm-Up is not just about heating up muscles. It is about **Transitioning Identity**. You are crossing the bridge from "Normal Person" to "Competitor."

Stage 1: General Activation (The Body) Jogging, skipping, dynamic stretching. Nothing specific yet. Just getting the fluids moving.

Stage 2: Specific Activation (The Nervous System) Now we simulate the event. If you are a sprinter, you sprint. If you are a fighter, you throw combinations. We need to touch "Race Pace."

- **The Glaze:** You break a sweat. This is crucial for evaporative cooling efficiency.

Stage 3: The Anchor Trigger This is the most powerful tool in the book. Pavlov proved that if you ring a bell every time you feed a dog, eventually the dog salivates just at the sound of the bell. We can do the same for Flow State.

Create a "Trigger Action" that you ONLY do right before you perform.

- *Tightening your shoelaces super tight.*
- *Two slaps to the chest.*
- *A specific breathing pattern (e.g., two sharp inhales).*

Over time, your brain associates this action with "It is time to kill." Do not use this trigger in normal life. Keep it sacred.

Stage 4: The Armor Putting on your competition uniform is the final step. When the jersey goes on, the "Nice Guy" stays in the locker room. The person wearing the jersey does not have doubts. They have a job. You are now a machine.

PART V: EXECUTION & BEYOND

CHAPTER 12: THE ZONE & THE AFTERMATH

You are now standing at the edge. The warm-up is done. The headphones are off. The crowd is loud, or maybe it's dead silent. It doesn't matter.

THE FINAL 60 SECONDS: THE SILENCE

This is where the amateur mind breaks. The gap between the warm-up and the whistle is where doubt creeps in. "Did I do enough?" "What if I lose?" Your brain will try to "Coach" you. It will start shouting technical instructions. *"Remember to keep your elbow up! Watch out for his left hook!"*

Shut it down. You cannot coach yourself while you are playing. The time for analysis is over. The time for output is now.

The "No-Mind" State (Mushin) In Japanese martial arts, this is called *Mushin* (No Mind). It means the mind is not fixed on anything and is open to everything.

- **The mantra:** Replace the technical coaching with a single, simple mantra.
 - *"I am ready."*
 - *"Light and fast."*
 - *"Kill."*
- **The visual:** Soften your gaze. Don't stare intensely at one spot (tunnel vision). See the whole field.

THE GREEN LIGHT

The gun goes off. The Protocol is now complete. You have successfully delivered your body to the starting line in optimal condition. The Pilot has completed the checklist. Now, you fly the plane. Trust your training. Let the animal out.

THE DEBRIEF: DATA VS. EMOTION

The race is over. You either won or you lost. You either hit a PR or you failed. Immediately after the event, your brain is flooded with emotion (dopamine or cortisol). **This is the worst time to analyze your performance.**

The 24-Hour Rule:

- You are allowed to celebrate (or grieve) for 24 hours.

- Do not make any structural changes to your training plan.
- Do not fire your coach.
- Do not quit the sport.

The Clinical Debrief (Day After): Sit down with a notebook. We analyze the **Protocol**, not just the result.

1. **Did I follow the Taper instructions?** (Yes/No)
2. **Did I eat the planned meal?** (Yes/No)
3. **Did I engage with Energy Vampires?** (Yes/No)
4. **Did I use my Anchor Trigger?** (Yes/No)

If you lost, but you followed the Protocol 100%, then the issue is **Training** (you need to get fitter/stronger). If you lost because you stayed up until 2 AM and forgot your gear, the issue is **Discipline**.

Fix the Protocol first. Then fix the Fitness.

CONCLUSION: TRUST THE PROTOCOL

We started this book with a sprinter in Tokyo who failed because he expected magic. We end it with you.

You now have a system. You have a "Pilot's Checklist" for your own performance. It is not sexy. It is not a Hollywood montage. It is boring. It is repetitive. It is rigid.

But it works.

When you strip away the decision-making, you strip away the doubt. When you ignore the "need to feel motivated," you become dangerous. You become consistent. You become a machine that produces excellence on demand, regardless of the weather, the crowd, or the critics.

Do not wait to "feel" ready. **Execute the Protocol.**

See you at the finish line.

Giannis Notaras

ADDENDUM: THE MASTER CHECKLIST

T-Minus 7 Days (The Taper)

- Reduce volume by 40-60%.
- Maintain intensity (short bursts).
- Venue Recon (Google Earth / Video).
- Equipment Failure Visualization (Murphy's Law).

T-Minus 24 Hours (The Calibration)

- Hydration: Pale yellow urine target.
- Nutrition: High carb, moderate protein, low fat/fiber dinner.
- Gear Audit: "Flat Lay" packing and "Zero-Failure" check.
- Sleep: Cool room (65-68°F), Brain Dump journaling.

Race Morning (The Awakening)

- Wake Up: 3-4 hours prior.
- Light: Immediate exposure.
- Cold Shower: 30-60 seconds for CNS activation.
- Fuel: Standard meal 3 hours prior.
- Caffeine: 45-60 mins prior.

The Arena (T-Minus 1 Hour)

- Social Firewall: Headphones ON.
- Environment: Locate bathrooms and landmarks.
- Warm-Up: Sweat + Race Pace touches.
- Anchor Trigger: Fire the anchor.
- **GO.**