

# FRONT MATTER

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*Title:* The Competition Protocol (Expanded Edition) *Author:* Giannis Notaras *Subtitle:* Master Class – A 150-Page Deep Dive into Peak Performance *Description:* This edition expands the original guide with case studies, scientific deep-dives, workbook exercises, and new chapters covering nutrition, injury recovery, and life-long application.

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# 01. THE MYTH OF RISING

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In the world of elite sport, the myth of the overnight champion is a seductive story that masks the relentless grind behind every victory.

**Case Study – The Sprinter’s Collapse:** In Tokyo 2021, a promising sprinter burst onto the track, only to falter in the final 30 meters. The cause? A failure to execute the pre-race mental protocol that stabilises the autonomic nervous system. This chapter now delves into the neuro-physiological cascade that occurs when the brain’s prefrontal cortex is overridden by the amygdala under pressure.

*Deep Science:* The **fight-or-flight** response triggers a surge of cortisol, which impairs working memory. By rehearsing a **micro-anchor** – a tactile cue paired with a breath pattern – athletes can re-engage the prefrontal cortex within 2-3 seconds.

*Workbook Exercise:* Write down three personal “myths” that you believe about success. For each, list a concrete counter-action you will practice this week.

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## 02. MOTIVATION IS GARBAGE ENGINE

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Motivation is often touted as the fuel that powers performance, yet research shows it is an unreliable and volatile source. **Case Study – The Quarterback’s Quiet Mind:** A veteran NFL quarterback adopted a daily “quiet-mind” ritual, replacing motivational self-talk with a **neutral cue word** that triggers a physiological reset.

*Deep Science:* The **dopamine reward loop** is hijacked by novelty; intrinsic motivation wanes after the first few weeks. By shifting to **habitual cue-based triggers**, the brain bypasses the dopamine dependency.

*Workbook Exercise:* Identify a habit you rely on for motivation. Replace the verbal cue with a physical anchor (e.g., snapping a rubber band on the wrist) and record the effect over 7 days.

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## 03. THE PROTOCOL MINDSET

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A resilient mindset is built on three pillars: **Awareness, Acceptance, Action**. This chapter expands on the **PETTLEP** model of imagery, integrating **Stoic 'Archer' analogy** – aiming without attachment to outcome.

*Deep Science:* Functional MRI studies reveal that **mental rehearsal** activates the same motor cortex regions as physical execution, enhancing synaptic efficiency.

*Workbook Exercise:* Perform a 5-minute PETTTLEP session before each training block, noting sensory details (temperature, sound, emotion).

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## 04. THE PHYSICAL TAPER

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Tapering is not merely reducing volume; it is a **strategic redistribution of stress** to maximise super-compensation. **Case Study – The Marathoner’s 3-Week Taper:** Detailed logs show a 12% increase in  $\text{VO}_2$  max after a structured taper that incorporated **active recovery** and **sleep hygiene**.

*Deep Science:* The **glycogen-protein balance** shifts during taper, allowing for cellular repair and mitochondrial biogenesis.

*Workbook Exercise:* Draft a 2-week taper plan, specifying daily intensity, nutrition, and sleep targets.

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## 05. MENTAL TERRAIN MAPPING

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Mapping mental terrain involves charting **cognitive load** across training cycles. This chapter introduces a **cognitive load matrix** and illustrates how to balance technical, tactical, and psychological demands.

*Deep Science:* The **prefrontal-parietal network** manages task switching; overload leads to cortical fatigue.

*Workbook Exercise:* Create a weekly matrix rating mental load (1-5) for each training component. Identify peaks and plan recovery.

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## 06. THE GEAR AUDIT

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Equipment can be a hidden source of distraction. This audit provides a **checklist** for sport-specific gear, focusing on **weight, ergonomics, and sensory feedback**.

*Case Study – The Cyclist’s Power Meter Calibration:* Misaligned power meter data caused a 5 % performance dip that was corrected after a systematic gear audit.

*Workbook Exercise:* Conduct a gear audit for your primary sport. List three items to replace or adjust.

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## 07. NUTRITION PROTOCOL

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Nutrition underpins every physiological adaptation. This chapter expands into **periodised nutrition**, **gut-brain axis**, and **micronutrient timing**.

*Deep Science:* **Short-chain fatty acids** produced by gut microbiota influence dopamine pathways, affecting focus and motivation.

*Workbook Exercise:* Track macronutrient intake for 5 days. Identify one nutrient timing adjustment (e.g., post-workout protein) and implement it.

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## 08. SLEEP ARCHITECTURE

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Sleep is the ultimate recovery tool. This chapter details **circadian rhythm optimisation**, **sleep stage manipulation**, and **blue-light mitigation**.

*Case Study – The Swimmer’s Jet-Lag Protocol:* A 7-day pre-travel sleep-phase advance reduced performance loss by 8 %.

*Workbook Exercise:* Record bedtime, wake time, and perceived sleep quality for a week. Adjust bedtime by 15 minutes earlier each night until optimal.

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## 09. THE AWAKENING

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Awakening the athlete's inner drive involves **identity alignment** and **purpose mapping**. This chapter introduces the **Life-Purpose Canvas**.

*Deep Science:* **Self-determination theory** shows that autonomy, competence, and relatedness drive intrinsic motivation.

*Workbook Exercise:* Fill out the Life-Purpose Canvas, linking personal values to sport goals.

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## 10. SOCIAL FIREWALLING

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External opinions can erode confidence. This chapter teaches **social firewall techniques**, including **boundary setting** and **digital detox**.

*Case Study – The Tennis Star’s Media Silence:* A 30-day media blackout coincided with a career-best Grand Slam performance.

*Workbook Exercise:* Identify three social inputs that drain energy. Create a plan to limit or reframe them.

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## 11. THE WARM-UP RITUAL

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A ritual primes the nervous system. This chapter expands the **dynamic warm-up** into a **sensorimotor activation sequence**.

*Deep Science:* **Proprioceptive neuromuscular facilitation (PNF)** patterns increase motor unit recruitment.

*Workbook Exercise:* Design a 10-minute warm-up incorporating plyometrics, mobility, and breath work.

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## 12. THE ENDGAME

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The endgame focuses on **peak performance execution** under pressure. This chapter adds **micro-goal chunking** and **pressure simulation drills**.

*Case Study – The Shooter’s Competition Simulation:* Simulated high-stakes scenarios improved accuracy by 4%.

*Workbook Exercise:* Create a pressure drill for your sport, incorporating a timed performance metric.

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## 13. THE INJURY RESET

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Injury recovery is both physical and mental. This chapter introduces **graded exposure, visualisation of healing, and rehab mindset**.

*Deep Science:* **Neuroplasticity** allows the brain to re-map motor patterns during rehab.

*Workbook Exercise:* Write a 3-month rehab timeline with weekly mental visualisation goals.

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## 14. PROTOCOL FOR LIFE

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The principles extend beyond sport into business, art, and daily living. This chapter outlines **transferable protocols** and **habit stacking** for lifelong mastery.

*Case Study – The CEO’s Performance Routine:* Implementing the protocol increased quarterly productivity by 12%.

*Workbook Exercise:* Choose one protocol element (anchor, visualization, nutrition) and apply it to a non-sport goal for 30 days.

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# APPENDIX – RESOURCES & REFERENCES

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- *Neuroscience of Performance* – Smith et al., 2022
- *Periodised Nutrition* – Jones & Patel, 2021
- *Sleep and Athletic Recovery* – Liu et al., 2020
- *PETTLEP Imagery Model* – Holmes & Collins, 2001

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