



WINNING THOUGHTS

50 TIMELESS LESSONS FOR PEAK
PERFORMANCE

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A MESSAGE FROM SAM

The pursuit of sporting greatness is a cruel journey.

You give your all but often get little back.

The following is a summary of 50 lessons any athlete can turn to when they face that cruelty.

These are lessons I've learned from many sources.

Some come from my own sporting endeavors. Some are synthesized from my formal studies in the psychology of peak performance. Others have emerged from my work with elite professional athletes as a mental performance coach.

I hope these insights serve as valuable tools in your quest for athletic excellence.



1

SPORT IS UNPREDICTABLE. ROUTINES AND RITUALS ARE RELIABLE.

Reclaim control with silly superstitions, gameday playlists, little dances, and the order in which you put your kit on.

2

ACCOUNT FOR 90% OF THE VIEWS OF YOUR OWN HIGHLIGHT REELS.

Getting out of a slump often comes from remembering who is still inside. It's just been a while since they've come out to play.

3

BE A NICE PERSON, NASTY PERFORMER.

Aspire to be the person parents want their children to bring home. But come gameday, be the person parents wouldn't want to accidentally knock into at the bar.

4

DO MENTAL REPS WHEN THE BODY IS DONE.

When the legs or arms can't make another shot, use the mind to take 100 more. Kobe made more shots in his head than on the court.



5

MOMENTUM MATTERS.

Ride the wave as long as you can or create a new ripple to turn the tide.

6

THE GREATS ARE ALWAYS PRESENT-FOCUSED.

The past conjures up frustration. The future conjures up fear. All that matters is the point, play, attempt, or step in front of you.

7

SOMETIMES THE RESULT MATTERS MORE. OTHER TIMES IT'S HOW YOU FELT YOU PERFORMED.

A win AND being happy with your personal showing is rarer than you think.

8

YOU MUST COMMIT.

Commitment means doing the thing, every single time it's needed. Especially during the times you don't feel like it.



9

YOU WILL NEVER PLAY THE PERFECT GAME.

But you should always challenge yourself to try.

10

THE MORE YOU CHASE "FLOW", THE MORE IT WILL EVADE YOU.

Letting go is what leads to that elusive "zone".

11

VISUALIZATION IS NOT JUST VISUAL.

Hear the crowd. Smell the grass. Taste the sweat. Feel the ball. The more senses involved, the more sense it will make.

12

ONE ATHLETE IN A MILLION HAS A CAREER THAT FOLLOWS A LINEAR TRAJECTORY TO THE TOP.

For everyone else, it's two steps forward, three sideways, and one back. Repeat.



13

THE JOY OF WINNING LASTS TWO DAYS. THE PAIN OF LOSING LASTS TWO WEEKS.

That's the human default. Enjoying victory needs to be trained and conditioned.

14

LEVERAGE "FRESH STARTS".

The first training session of the week. The first month at a new team. The first time you wear a new pair of boots or use a new racket/bat. You will feel more energy and excitement - use these as performance fuel.

15

AVOID "DON'T SELF-TALK".

Your brain gravitates towards the core instruction. Telling yourself "don't miss" or "don't screw up" only leads to focus on "miss" or "screw up". Replace with how/where you want to strike the ball, or how you want your body to move.

16

SLEEP IS THE BEST LEGAL PERFORMANCE-ENHANCING DRUG.

Become an addict.



17

ON THE DAYS YOU **HATE THE GAME,
REMEMBER YOU SPENT THOUSANDS
OF HOURS ON IT, FOR **FREE**, AS A KID.**

You can keep going if that childhood love is still there.

18

THERE ARE SEASONS **WITHIN A
SEASON.**

One month you're building. The next you're maintaining. Be intentional but also intuitive with how you train. Not every performance can be the grand season finale.

19

JUST **BREATHE.**

Fill the lungs to empty the mind.

20

THE HEAD USUALLY "GOES**" **BEFORE**
THE BODY.**

So build mental stamina. Make mental training part of your routine.



21

DISTRACTION IS THE BIGGEST CAREER-ENDING INJURY.

Don't become incapacitated by devices and instant gratification. Excellence only comes from endless hours of uninterrupted focus.

22

YOU NEED A RIVAL YOU FEEL SOMEWHAT THREATENED BY.

You may hate them, but they'll push you to be better, maybe even break boundaries. Ronaldo and Messi needed each other to put the numbers up they did.

23

YOU CAN DISAGREE WITH COACHES BUT NEVER DISRESPECT THEM.

It's their job to make demands of you; don't penalize them for wanting to make you better.

24

"NERVOUSNESS" AND "EXCITEMENT" FEEL THE SAME.

The increased heart rate, the butterflies, the jitters. Your brain just often mislabels them.



25

RECOVERY CREATES LONGEVITY, BUT AT A COST.

10 hours of the boring may only get you another 1 hour on the field. It's up to you to decide whether all the massages, stretching, and foam rolling is worth that disproportionate return.

26

BE ADAPTABLE.

The more roles you can fill or systems you can play in, the more coaches will use you.

27

RESETTING AFTER A MISTAKE MUST BE INSTANTANEOUS.

Clean the slate with a pull of the short strings, a slap of the face, or a mutter of "next one" under your breath. Act to Detach.

28

DEFEAT TASTES WORSE WHEN YOU'RE BITTER.

You don't have to be a "good" loser but don't be a "bad" loser.



29

YOU CAN SIMULTANEOUSLY BE A "WINNER" AND A "LOSER".

Don't gloat or rub victory in your opponent's face. They worked and competed just as hard as you. Respect that.

30

ON THE DAYS YOU DON'T WANT TO DO THIS, REMEMBER YOU GET TO DO THIS.

There will come a day where you can no longer run, jump, kick, or throw.

31

PRACTICE DELIBERATELY AND WITH INTENTION.

Progress is made by setting a specific number of reps, striving for a specific time, or carrying a specific mood into training.

32

BODY LANGUAGE DECIDES THE BATTLE.

Mike Tyson won fights at the stare down, not by the knockout blow.



33

**MOST TEAMMATES ARE COLLEAGUES.
SOME ARE FRIENDS. FEW ARE
FAMILY.**

You can win or lose with all three.

34

**LEARN THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN
"DISCOMFORT" AND "PAIN".**

Athletes often mistake the former for the latter. The sweet spot for progress often lies between the two. Listen to your body and become fluent in its signals.

35

**MOST SKILLS SUDDENLY JUST "CLICK"
ONE DAY.**

But you only get to that point after thousands of “nopes” and “nearlys”.

36

**YOU WILL HAVE A SHOCKING GAME
OR PRACTICE FOR NO OBVIOUS
REASON.**

Immediately think of it as nothing more than an anomaly. Otherwise, it can easily become the norm.



37

ATHLETICISM MAY FADE, BUT GAME IQ AND STRATEGY CAN GROW INDEFINITELY.

There reaches a point where you can no longer do what your younger self could. But that younger self couldn't do a lot of what you're doing now.

38

LOYALTY IN SPORT IS OVERRATED.

You're easily disposable to teams and coaches, so don't be afraid to dispose of them when the time is right.

39

BE AT PEACE WITH ALL OUTCOMES.

Despite your best efforts, the result is always somewhat uncertain. Just take the shot. Another will come soon enough, irrespective of whether you miss or make it.

40

ONLY ALLOW SPECTATORS TO SPECTATE.

They are not "dictators". So don't let them dictate your performance.



41

INJURIES ARE AN INEVITABILITY.

What's not inevitable is whether your "rehab" creates a habit of "prehab". Don't let the routine of strength exercises and stretches fade once you're fit again.

42

IF YOU'VE MADE IT PRO, BECOME A TRUE PROFESSIONAL.

Most pros last a few years at the top. True professionals last one or two decades. Follow the example set by Serena, Tiger, Eliud, Novak, LeBron, Brady, & Cristiano.

43

YOU'RE ALLOWED TO HAVE A BAD GAME.

But you're never allowed to lack effort.

44

YOU DON'T HAVE TO BE LOUD TO LEAD.

Sweep the floor. Arrive early for team meetings. Stay behind to talk to fans. These are remembered more than any pep talk.



45

SPEAK IN DEFINITIVES.

“I will” should never be followed with “try to”. The elite expect greatness to be a certainty, even if they can’t be certain of it.

46

REFLECT ALONG THE WAY, NOT JUST AT THE END.

Sport is always about the next thing. But recalling the past thing is what helps nail the next thing.

47

IGNORE YOUR SPORT THE DAY BEFORE COMPETITION.

It’s not yet time to drive. So stop putting your foot on the accelerator when the handbrake is on. You’re just burning through all your gas before starting your journey.

48

YOU’LL NEVER GET RID OF PRE-PERFORMANCE NERVES ENTIRELY.

It’s a sign you care and want to compete. The second these disappear, it’s time to retire.



49

**TOUCHING A TROPHY OR MEDAL IS
COLD. TOUCHING HEARTS IS WARM.**

Remember who you're really doing this for.

50

**"IT'S JUST A GAME".
ON OCCASIONS THIS SAYING SHOULD
ENRAGE YOU. ON OTHERS, IT SHOULD
PLACATE YOU.**

Sport is everything. But it is also nothing.



CONCLUSION

Thank you for checking out “Winning Thoughts”.

I hope you can keep coming back to these lessons on your journey to peak performance.

If any of the lessons really resonated with you, I'd love to hear from you. Drop me a line - sam@lomotus.com

And if you want to become a master of these lessons, then you may be interested in my 1-to-1 coaching program [Peak Performer](#).

As part of this program I will help you build a top 1% mentality so that you're able to achieve your biggest athletic goals.

Until then, I wish you all the best in your pursuit of excellence.

Keep at it,

Sam