

Here are five ways mental training can help change uncertain players into athletic leaders:

Adapted from an unknown article

1) Fear Awareness.

Fear paralyzes. It stalls. It's the difference between a goal and no goal with seconds left on the clock. Fear has many faces: responsibility, social image, disappointment, newness, discomfort, loss. The most important question here is: 'What are you really afraid of?' Once this question is answered, the athlete can take time to address those fears head on.

2) Give Up Perfection.

One of the biggest barriers to athletes becoming leaders is the intimidation of being perfect. They feel that without achieving perfection they are ill-equipped to lead others. This means their ability to lead is dependent on how they are performing that day. Missed shot? Leadership suffers. Missed a dig the last two plays? Leadership suffers. Woke up on the wrong side of the bed? Well... you get the point. The key is to disconnect "perfection" with "leadership", thus making your athlete's role as a leader more about how they handle imperfection, not about if they are perfect or not. Otherwise the times you need leadership the most are the times it is noticeably absent.

3) Be Bold and Brave.

It takes guts to stand up and be a leader. It takes a strong resolve to stand up for what is right. It takes internal fortitude to confront and challenge a teammate. Players with low self-confidence avoid scenarios where they are required to "step up"; they may even hold others back from bravery, often times without knowing it. People with high confidence will raise others up to their level... and those with lower confidence will drag down the rest.

4) Build Mental Muscle.

Most athletes recognize the importance of exercising all the parts of the body and not just one or two groups of muscles. Muscular balance is critical to avoiding injury and playing at one's best. However, one area is all too often thought of as secondary, if thought of at all: the BRAIN.

Great leaders take the time to develop themselves as people, not merely as bodies: they recognize their strengths and work on their weaknesses. All of them. Improving mental strength and humility makes an athlete mentally tough and a person their teammates can trust.

5) The Discipline of Positivity.

Great leaders know that mental strength is a discipline, not a character trait. Do effective leaders feel great every day? Of course not. Do they always find it easy to be positive? No. Leaders are human; they have bad days just like everyone else. The difference is that leaders recognize that thoughts guide behavior and they learn to be disciplined in their thinking. Being positive is a choice, not a trait.