

# 2013 MENTAL EDGE CHECKLIST

For Peak Performance in the New Year



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## To: Athletes, Coaches, and Parents,

For many competitive athletes, January is a time to reflect on the past year or season and set new goals for the upcoming season or the new year. While most people are thinking about their 2013 resolutions, such as to lose weight, exercise more, or quit smoking, competitors and athletes are thinking about how to improve their performance and reach higher goals in sports this year.

And at Peak Performance Sports, so are we. We want to help you reach for higher goals and improve your mental toughness. That's why we have produced this short eBook for our valued subscribers—some of you who have been Peaksports subscribers or customers for more than a decade! Thank you for staying with us and we appreciate your continued feedback and support over the years!

Let's get to the good stuff... In this short eBook, you'll find an important mental edge checklist—a mental toughness checklist to improve your mental game and performance for 2013. These are the top 10 mental game attributes—strategies we help athletes with everyday—to help you prepare for a new season or year of competition.

If you are like most athletes, you probably spend 98% of your time training your physical game and maybe 2% training your mind for peak performance. We are here to help you change this ratio and give you the tools and strategies to train your mind.

Wishing You a Successful Year,



Dr. Patrick Cohn

# 1. SET SPECIFIC GOALS YOU CAN MEASURE

Do you set specific measurable goals for your sport? Some athletes only focus on results or statistics, such as improving stroke average, plus-minus ratio in hockey, batting average or times in races.

These are measurable goals, however, as you prepare for a new season or new year in sport, you want to set very specific goals that help you improve your performance. Season long or long-term goals are fine to have. I suggest to my students that they do an honest evaluation of where they are today with their performance and then set specific goals about how to improve the weaker parts of their performance.

Good goals are objective, measurable, have a timeframe in which you need to achieve the goal, and can be modified at anytime. Keep in mind that goals are not expectations--you are not a failure if you don't achieve your goals.

## 2. DISCARD EXPECTATIONS THAT DESTROY CONFIDENCE

Do you hold down your confidence because you set such high expectations or standards for your performance?

As you know, I've written a lot about the confidence-expectation connection--as I call it. As a matter of fact, you may have read my e-book titled the Confidence Expectation Connection in the member area at Peaksports Network or as a free download for subscribers. I believe that high expectations can sabotage or hold back your confidence.

The higher you set your absolute standards, expectations, or demands for your performance, the more difficult it is for you to feel like you're successful and grow your confidence. Having very high or strict expectations combined with low confidence is a recipe for disaster.

Thus, one of my formulas for athletic success is to have high confidence void of strict expectations. Expectations are typically judgmental, focus on outcomes or results, and price in perfection in terms of the standards you hold yourself to.

### 3. FOCUS ON EXECUTION OR THE PROCESS

Do you think too much about results or outcomes and this distracts you from performing in the present moment?

Superior concentration occurs when you become totally immersed in a task, feel that time is suspended, and lose the sense of being separated from your sports environment, such as when a baseball player reports he can see the seams of a baseball traveling at over 90 MPH.

Your goal every time you hit the field, court, or course is to have a razor-sharp focus, a mind clear of daily hassles, and the ability to focus on what is important in your environment.

Here's the strategy for focusing on the process: (1) Define what's important to focus on to execute a task—what we call performance cues, (2) immerse yourself into your performance cues, and (3) be ready to refocus when you start to think about irrelevant things that do not help you perform a task.

## 4. RESPOND TO MISTAKES AND ADVERSITY WITH COMPOSURE

Do you lose control of your emotions when the game is on the line?

Having composure means you can remain calm or in control during crunch-time or competitive pressure. Athletes with composure are able to raise the level of their play during crunch-time in competition – they thrive when the battle is close.

A composed athlete has the ability to remain focused when challenged by misfortune or after committing a mistake.

**Your mental edge lesson** is to know what causes you to lose control and develop a coping strategy to help you perform with composure. How can you react better when in a tight game or when you become frustrated, for example?

## 5. TRUST THE SKILLS YOU LEARN IN PRACTICE

Do you have trouble taking your practice skills to competition? Does your performance feel tight or controlled in competition?

During Mental Toughness Training, I teach my students about two mindsets that contribute to success in sports. The first is the training or practice mindset. Great athletes have a tremendous amount of motivation and work ethic and this helps them practice hard so they can master their skills.

The trusting or performance mindset is equally important for success in sports. Trust or the performance mindset is the ability to rely on your practice, perform freely, and allow your skills to flow without excess thought in competition. Trust in your skills is essential to perform the way you can in practice.

When you arrive at the field, court, or gym – practice is complete, and it's time to trust. Rely on what you've already learned and win ugly or get the job done! Don't get trapped in performing perfectly or wanting to look good when you perform!

## 6. GET THE MOST FROM YOUR PRACTICE TIME

Do you use your practice time to help you become a better competitor? And do you get the most benefit from your practice time?

Most athletes don't consider this under the mental game umbrella, but it's vital to becoming a better competitor and improving your skills. Getting the most from your practice time means having goals or objectives to practice, staying focused on the task or drill, practicing with the intensity you use in competition, and varying the skills and drills you work on.

You want to look at every practice as an opportunity to improve your skills for competition, not just as a time to put in two hours on your game. Set one or two small objectives to focus on for each practice, objectives that tie into your goals or your coach's goals.

## 7. USE PREGAME & POST-GAME ROUTINES FOR CONSISTENCY

Do you use a pregame warm up routine to help you mentally prepare for competition? Do you have a specific preshot, prekick, prerace routine you use to get focused before execution?

Both preshot and pregame routines are overlooked by many athletes, but should be a huge part of your overall mental game plan.

Why are they so important to your success? Routines are a perfect way to integrate your mental skills into your performance. For example, your warm up routine or pregame routine should be a guide for good mental preparation.

The goal is to incorporate mental preparation into your regular warmup routine. Your mental edge strategy is to remind yourself to dispel or check your expectations, focus on the process, take control of your confidence, and prepare to trust the skills you have practiced—all prior to competition.

## 8. EMBRACE THE PRESSURE TO TAKE THE FINAL SHOT

Do you ever get “butterflies” in your stomach (pregame jitters) before you compete? Do you get really nervous when the game is on the line and you have to step it up?

Most athletes have felt the effects of pressure during their athletic careers. Even the best athletes feel pressure before a big game, but they know how to channel it into positive intensity to boost performance.

What is pressure and how do athletes experience it? Pressure is a perceived expectation to perform well under challenging situations. The first step is to understand that pressure starts in your mind. Thoughts about the big game or meeting others' expectations, for example, create pressure.

However, pressure is not some external force that grips you by the neck and strangles you. How do you cope with pressure? Start by understanding the specific pressures (or expectations) you place on your performance. When you understand how you put pressure on yourself, you can use this information to change your thinking.

## 9. FOCUS ON YOUR PASSION NOT OTHERS' TO STAY MOTIVATED

Are you so concerned about making mistakes and letting down your team that you tighten up and don't play relaxed and free? Do you worry too much about what others think about your performance?

Do you let others' passion for your game be the primary motivator for you in sports? If you want to please others, be admired, accepted, respected, or liked by other athletes, coaches, or teammates, then you care too much about making others happy.

Do you wonder what your parents or coaches think when you drop a pass and commit a turnover during the basketball game? We call this social approval in our work. Some athletes perform to make others happy and thus are motivated to gain approval from others. If you do this, you don't perform for yourself—you perform for ulterior motives.

If this sounds like you, your goal is to be more selfish with your focus and start thinking about how you'll perform for yourself and not to please others.

## 10. SHOOT FOR SUCCESS INSTEAD OF AVOIDING FAILURE

Do you focus a lot on avoiding failure or trying not to make mistakes in competition? Do you worry about what will happen after you make a mistake in the game?

This mindset is focused on avoiding failure instead of striving for success. For example, do you think about losing the lead after your team is winning by two goals? Or do you think about missing a shot on net instead of focusing on hitting your target?

These are common thoughts for athletes who have a defensive mindset and focus on protecting themselves from failure or mistakes. How do you shoot for success? You perform without expectations, but instead set small positive goals to help you focus on the process.

For example, instead of thinking about striking out, you want to focus on seeing the ball well and feeling yourself put the fat part of the bat on the ball—thus, programming yourself for success.

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