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Awareness, Self Talk, Conscious Control, and Emotion:

(A Series on Behavioral Control Before, During, and After Competition)

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Effects of Emotion on Performance

Jumping on the Derek Jeter bandwagon is something I have been toying with for the past 10 days or so. While I have not always been a Yankee fan I can honestly say I have always been a fan of number "2". There are numerous articles which have been written and are being written about Jeter and I have intentionally waited for the hoopla to die down before taking on this article.

There are a lot of things which can be written about Jeter which would make for a beneficial read but it wasn't until I listened to his postgame press conference in Yankee Stadium that I really latched on to something I could use in an article concerning concepts related to sports psychology.

While I've been a fan for number of years Jeter has really never given us much of a glimpse into his game face which always seems to be stoic. The man simply seemed to have it all together all the time, never showing weakness, concern, or lack of confidence in his body language. The image portrayed consistently said I'm a winner and there is nothing anyone or anything can do about it.

It was in this last Yankee Stadium press conference that we got a glimpse of the man who for years provided his fans with a model of individual greatness. With Jeter, there was always something more important than his personal success; TEAM.

Never one to be caught up in all the hype surrounding him Jeter stated "I think I've done a pretty good job of controlling my emotions over the past 20 years", and especially this year. But as he stood at shortstop in his last game at Yankee Stadium Jeter became emotional, and in his words got "choked up". The event, the setting, and the circumstances were all getting to him. He admitted afterwards that he almost told Joe (Girardi) to pull him from the lineup because he didn't want his emotion to cause a mistake which might cost his team the game.

Derek Jeter never wanted to get over emotional regarding personal and team accomplishments because he knew that **too much emotion clouds judgment** and has a detrimental effect on performance. Jeter always seemed to be aware of his surroundings, but not caught up in them. Like a lion on the hunt he was always alert and seldom fell victim to circumstances which were out of his control.

Other great players such as Michael Jordan, Peyton Manning, and Mia Hamm, have figured out the formula for staying in the moment. Sure there is the huge release of emotion at the end of a big game or even a big play, but during the next moment of the game they are calm, cool, and totally collected. There is only the next play, the next opportunity during a game, nothing else matters. They have all figured out that focusing on points, wins, or other things outside their direct control only brings failure into the equation.

Emotions are one of those things that make life what it is. They are hard to describe yet are

powerful beyond human comprehension. Joy, fear, love, hate; some cause us to flee from danger; others cause us to stand up and fight for what we believe in. In sport emotion can become highly distractive in nature causing even the most seasoned athlete to stumble, or they can push the athlete through a tough situation. Those athletes who are so in tune with the process and seemingly make the right decisions at the right times make high level performance look smooth and easy. Success just seems to follow them where ever they go.

While emotion can have a positive effect on the athlete they must be aware of the warning signs which indicate they are becoming too emotionally involved in the outcomes and need to back off or re-focus on their inner game skills. Too much thinking on outside obstacles which includes anything outside of their direct control means they are not thinking about the process. Like Jeter, being aware of your mental state allows you, the athlete/coach, to re-engage, and avoid distracting thoughts. Be aware of your surroundings but don't let yourself fall victim to them.