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Self-Talk: Anger

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Emotional responses to external situations are often difficult to understand and produce very strong physical reactions in the human body. These responses result in physiological changes which can greatly influence performance levels of athletes in all stages of development. Thoughts which are positive create feelings of confidence, and a good attitude. It's these very thoughts and feelings that get you going in the right direction and create an internal belief that you can succeed. The strength of these internal emotions is boundless, and can affect performance in very powerful ways. These positive thoughts guide us to great heights and truly outstanding performance which can be learned and developed through practice.

But, just as positive thoughts can take us to great places, our negative thoughts, thoughts that discourage us, can drag us down like a ship's anchor. These bad emotions are a learned response to situations which, unfortunately, we have all picked up early in life. Because this is a learned response, these bad emotions can be reversed in a positive manner through education and self reflection.

Awareness of your emotions, either positive or negative, is the first step in raising your performance to higher levels. By becoming aware of what you are thinking you allow your conscious and unconscious mind to deal with the situations which arise, recognize the source of their influence and either proceed or change direction. Recognizing that you may be

unraveling is a giant step in the internal emotional battle which athletes face daily. One such emotion which I want to address in this article deals with the effects of anger and how performance issues are affected by this very strong emotion.

One thing is for sure, we all experience the effects of anger in our personal lives which in turn affects our physical performance during competition. Regardless of sport, or level, anger can drag down your performance and make it very difficult to succeed. In a book titled "The Art Of Mental Training", the author makes the point that we all get angry and that this emotion is very normal. According to the author, if you, as an athlete don't learn to control your anger it will ultimately control you. Remember, anger is no different than frustration, joy, or happiness in the sense that it is an emotion, and we can, with work, create and control our emotions with awareness and a focus on our internal thoughts and feelings. The question here is not whether you will ever feel the effects of anger during performance, but rather, how you will respond to this very powerful emotion. With practice we can reduce the effects of our anger by addressing the cause. By recognizing what is causing our anger we take away the power of the emotion, we become aware, then we can make a choice as to our response. Elite athlete's work hard to control this emotion so that their performance can be put back on track towards success.

But be warned, once the emotional effects of anger get a hold on you it is doubtful you will be able to immediately decrease the effects. This is why it is so important to develop a plan prior to the onset of these strong emotions so that we can stop the emotion from escalating. Those athletes who truly want to take the next

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step in their development work hard to develop their abilities in emotional control. This is where choice is so important. You have the power to choose how you will respond to all circumstances which come your way. But this choice has to be made well in advance of the rise in blood pressure. You must have a plan and chose to follow that plan. This is your most power tool in your bag. The power of choice should not be taken lightly, if used for your benefit it becomes a very powerful catalyst for your development in the mental game.