



*Providing information to individuals and teams seeking optimal performance*

## Do You Get It?

On March 7<sup>th</sup>, I had the opportunity to watch ABC's broadcast of the Oklahoma-Oklahoma State men's basketball game. Toward the end of the close contest, Jimmy Dykes, commentator and former pro scout, spoke about the five criteria he used as a scout to assess a player as a potential professional. The first four of these criteria focused on basketball-specific skills, such as the ability to play offense and defense. The last criterion was labeled "Does he get it?" Dykes used the example of a player being in the gym early and working extra to improve his or her game to define this less tangible quality. He then used the five criteria to assess Oklahoma's star player, Blake Griffin. Both Dykes and his co-announcer agreed that Griffin, who scored 33 points and pulled down 14 rebounds in the game, was highly likely to be a successful professional basketball player.

As I listened to this discussion, I began to think about Dykes' notion of "getting it" and its application. I concluded that it not only applies to athletes of any sport at any level but also to non-athletes. The mental skills involved include goal setting, making choices, preparation and effort, and commitment. The present newsletter will focus on goal setting and making choices.

### *Goal Setting*

"Getting it" starts with goal setting. Begin the process of goal setting by deciding what you want to do. Examples can include becoming a high school athlete, a college athlete, a professional or Olympic athlete, a teacher, a sport psychologist, a singer, a previously non-athletic marathon finisher, etc. This is your long-term goal.

Lack of natural talent or ability does not necessarily mean your goals are unattainable. However, it does mean that if you choose not to adjust your goals, you will need to work even harder to reach the goals you set than would others with the same goal who do have more natural talent

or ability.

Once you've identified what you want to be or where you want to go, consider what needs to happen in order for you to reach your goal. In the December 2006 issue of this newsletter, I described a way to self-assess your skills (Moncier, 2006). This issue can be downloaded at our website. Using this self-assessment process, and keeping your long-term goal in mind, determine which skills are already in good shape. What skills do you need to develop or improve? Identify how you will work to develop or improve these skills. Then consider what other criteria, such as a certification or degree, must you meet in order to reach your goal. Identify how you will meet these criteria. These are your short-term goals. I strongly recommend that you write both the specific areas you need to work on and how you will work on them on a piece of paper so that you can refer to them easily during the next step.

Next, consider a set of stairs. Imagine that your overall goal (the long-term goal) is at the top of the staircase. The skills, abilities, or other criteria needed to reach your long-term goal (the short-term goals) are the steps you must climb to reach the top of the staircase. Put the short-term goals in logical order – you must get a high school diploma before you can get a college degree, for instance, and you probably should be able to run a mile without stopping before you can complete a marathon. Write these down as well.

Once you have an ordered list of the short-term goals and a description of how you are going to meet them, take out a fresh piece of paper (or start a new file on the computer). Write the long-term goal at the top of the page. Then write the short-term goal that you feel you should start with at the bottom of the page. Just above this, write the next logical short-term goal. Continue to write short-term goals up the page in logical order until you have written

them all. By now, you should have a general step-by-step guide to reaching your long-term goal.

Make several copies of this sheet. Hang it up in places where you'll be sure to see it. Spots such as a bedroom mirror, a school locker, or an office wall are ideal. Start working toward your long-term goal by focusing on the first short-term goal at the bottom of the page. Once you have met this goal, draw a line through it and move on to the next goal.

Over time, you will start noticing clear progress towards your long-term goal. In my experience, this makes the work a bit easier (although not easy) and keeps up motivation.

### *Making Choices*

"Getting it" also involves making choices, the *right* choices. You have set up a game plan for meeting your long-term goal. Now, it is up to you to follow it. This means sticking to the game plan, even when it gets difficult to stick to the plan. And the best part is that you have control over the choices you make. In fact, when you boil it down, you are the *only* person who can control the choices that you make. This means that you can choose to work out instead of watching TV or study instead of playing video games or going out with friends. It is all up to you!

Due to space limitations, we have really only scratched the surface of the topics of goal setting and making choices. However, the information here will get you started. Next issue, we will focus on preparation, effort, and commitment as we continue to look at the question, "Do you get it?"

For more information about this topic or any other topic related to mental skills or sport psychology, contact your local sport psychologist.

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#### Reference

Moncier, J.C. (2006). Confidence: A key to success. *Performance Enhancement News*, 1(3), 1.

### **Announcement: UAB Sport Psychology's Mental Toughness Boot Camp**

Developing mental toughness is a process that is only now becoming more completely understood. UAB Sport Psychology has created a course to help athletes develop the skills consistent with the emerging literature regarding mental toughness.

This course will focus on helping the individual athlete develop self-awareness of mental strengths and areas needing more work. Additionally, participants will learn a variety of mental skills used by elite athletes in order to further develop their own mental toughness, such as controlling emotions, self-talk, and focus; managing energy; and using imagery as a performance tool. These skills form the basis of the individual athlete's pre-performance routines, regrouping plans, and general mental preparation strategies that will allow him or her to perform to the best of his or her abilities. Participants will also learn ways to incorporate mental toughness training into physical practices and their life in general in order to make the most out of both.

The course will start on June 22, 2009. It will meet one night per week for 10 weeks at UAB-Huntsville from 6:00-7:30 pm. The course will be limited to 25 athletes ages 15 and older. There will be homework between each class. At the end of the course, each participant will have a notebook that they can use to continue to guide them as they strengthen their mental toughness long after the class is over. For a more detailed description and for registration materials, go to [www.monciersportpsychology.com](http://www.monciersportpsychology.com) and follow the "Mental Toughness Course" link. Registration ends June 12, 2009.

**Notice: The June issue of Performance Enhancement News will be the last sent by US Mail. Beginning with the September issue, the newsletter will be distributed either through email or by download from our website.**

You can now hear Dr. Moncier on the radio on WUMP (730 AM or 103.9 FM) on Wednesday mornings during "The Griff Show" which airs from 6:00 to 9:00 am. Dr. Moncier discusses sport psychology in relation to current events in the sports world with host Scott Griffin. If you are not in the North Alabama area or do not have access to a radio at work, you can listen to the show by directing your computer's web browser to [www.730ump.com](http://www.730ump.com) and clicking on the "On Air Now" link at the upper right corner of the page.