

FINDING SUCCESS

Confidence comes from your preparation

By **JOSEPH MANISCALCO**
NY BlueFire Fastpitch

I am often asked to provide mental training discussions on confidence or to speak to a particular player about her confidence, or lack thereof.

Parents ask me how does my daughter acquire confidence? Or why does she lose her confidence? If only she was more confident!

Confidence is one of those ingredients everyone wishes they had at the right time, and blames it for every failure they encounter. However, one must consider where confidence comes from and how you can engage in a mindfulness technique of exuding more confidence. Confidence will not always lead to a successful result, but being confident usually provides a mental advantage when facing your adversary.

I have used these techniques as a trial attorney, and also with student athletes who are in high-pressure situations, often playing the sport they love.

Let's start our discussion with a quote from a Hall of Fame baseball pitcher Tom Seaver: "My confidence isn't in my talent, it is in my preparation."

Although Seaver had a massive amount of talent, he referred to confidence by describing that word — and the feeling so many seek — as something that was garnered through his preparation. Watching Seaver on the mound and his display of making batters look foolish, one would say "he is such a confident, dominant pitcher."

For Seaver, like many others, his confidence came in his preparation for game day. It was the rigorous, deliberate and methodical approach he engaged in to provide that feeling of being prepared and ready for competition.

Why Athletes Lose Confidence

Athletes lose confidence because they allow thoughts to enter their mind that counter their belief system

in their ability to succeed. The thing that disrupts confidence the most is accepting the white noise as a fact, or experiencing some type of failure.

Failure can come in different shapes, sizes and forms — making a mental error, a physical error, not performing the way you anticipated, etc. When this occurs, failure creates a loss of faith in your ability and causes tentative and cautious behavior.

If an athlete has low confidence, she will focus on negativity, past failures, and allow negative noise to be considered a fact in her mind. And then she keeps focusing on it over and over, and she does not know how to eradicate the feelings from her mind. If the cycle continues, she is going to feel nervous, depressed, doubtful, and frustrated. There is no way that will lead to a successful result, and I highly doubt you will have fun and perform well.

In order to combat this, I have described a simple confidence formula to assist you and bring you back on the confidence track.

Mindset is the starting point for confidence

Confidence starts from a belief system. You must first believe in yourself and feel worthy to start the confidence build. Then, as you understand that you are worthy and believe in yourself, you build confidence by your preparation.

It starts with a culture and methodology that is enforced, either through your program or your behaviors. Do that over and over again. Once you start to engage in this type of behavior, it creates a bond of mental fortitude in your mind that exudes confidence to the outside world.

Whether you win, lose or tie, you should practice playing the game with confidence — a belief that you are ready and prepared for anything, and can achieve success at any time. This starts

with changing your mindset and your preparation for competition.

If your mindset is not moving you forward in the direction of your goals, it is difficult to be a confident player. Obviously, your preparation should be deliberate, methodical, and presented in a way to place yourself in a position to succeed, but your confidence is not something that you turn on and off like a switch.

Mental training, mindset, mindfulness, and remaining calm are all traits that are practiced and part of one's daily life and culture. The same way that confidence can provide you with a competitive advantage and the proper focus to defeat a stronger opponent, lacking it can also lead to performance way below your potential.

Preparation and performance are the key factors

In studying confidence and teaching this feeling, it is quite difficult sometimes for me to conclude "OK, now you are confident." It is not something that a coach can deliver to you, but rather something you deliver to yourself. It is not something that people can provide to you, but rather something you acquire through practice and preparation.

However, in understanding confidence and how to acquire this for yourself, consider that confidence usually comes from two things: Preparation and past performance.

In your preparation, simulate as many live-game situations as possible. This allows the mind to get used to a pattern of competition that emulates the real thing. It is much better to provide yourself with mental, physical and IQ training, than simply doing repetitions of your physical activity.

The former will create a more methodical approach to your preparation, which will translate into a better mindset and then becoming more confident. So often players



Joseph S. Maniscalco is an attorney and entrepreneur. He currently serves as an assistant coach for the Adelphi University softball team, providing mental training and sports performance to the student-athletes. Maniscalco is the founder of the BlueFire Softball travel program, where he trains and coaches. He is a frequent lecturer and writer about softball and performance-related topics, and regularly conducts mental training seminars. The former All-America pitcher at Fordham University, where he still ranks among the leaders on the baseball team's all-time list, Maniscalco has been an NFCA member since 2006.

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engage in preparation the wrong way; they simply do their reps, go through the motions and then look to perform. When the performance is not what they anticipated, their confidence wanes and gets attacked by the internal white noise created in the mind. This can become a spiraling effect on failure.

Instead, if your preparation is simulated, detailed, exhausting and deliberate, you create an internal focus, and internal engine with energy and an intrinsic feeling of confidence. This allows the mind to become calm and strong, whereby a simple failure will not lead to a spiraling effect of more failure. Rather, it will be considered a temporary speed bump in your approach.

The next thing you should consider when not feeling confident and trying

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to engage in a stronger mindset to create confidence is to draw on a past performance of success. In the moment when that white noise comes in to the mind and you get the feeling of doubt — the antithesis of confidence — take a break, breathe and remember a past performance. You should start that right now. Think of a past performance

of success and place it in your memory bank so that you can draw upon it later when the white noise approaches.

Remember, confidence starts with how we fuel our mind. That comes from preparation, because when we are prepared, the mind becomes calm. Once calm, we play the game we love the way we love to play the game ... and that is with a deliberate focus, competitive drive, smile and calmness. If we do that, we cannot be defeated. Instead, you merely tweak, adjust, work harder, give a little more and

continue your preparation.

Below are some key deliverables to assist with the mindset change and a daily approach of remaining more confident.

- Your attitude starts with gratitude and acceptance as a privilege that you have the ability to compete at this level.

- Understand that you will succeed and you will fail. As legendary UCLA basketball coach John Wooden once said, “Success is never final and failure is never fatal. It’s the courage

and journey to continue that counts.”

- Proper planning prevents poor performance.

- Remain positive, present and focused.

- Do not accept negative thoughts and feelings as a fact, but rather as opinions – thank the thought for its opinion and move on.

- Act as if: Walk, talk, smile often, and remember past successful experiences.

- Never quit: Always be moving forward.