



Pressure

Hi Wolverines,

In this edition of the "Mental Training" email series, we will discuss handling pressure. Most athletes share the belief that "pressure" is overwhelming. But, have you ever noticed some athletes handle pressure and use it to their advantage? For example, I have seen some athletes feel so much pressure they vomit before their performance only to then execute a near perfect routine.

The Challenge:

Like most challenges, how you handle the situation is key. Do you see the pressure of the moment as a personal challenge or as a threat? During the 2008 US Open, Tiger Woods was asked if he felt pressure to tie his opponent in the final two holes. His response illustrates how some elite athletes use pressure situations to their advantage:

"Well, trying to win is pressure, there's no doubt. I was nervous and that's a good thing. That means you care. You can try and use that energy to heighten your focus and then get into the right situation and it worked out great for me this week."
- Tiger Woods

The Challenge:

Often, I hear athletes focus on the "what if" of failing. When they do this, they tend to become nervous or anxious and try to avoid the moment. However, others will talk about pressure the way Tiger Woods did. Specifically, they will say pressure is a good thing. It means you have an invested interest in your performance. Feeling that charge of energy from the moment lets you know that you care. I have also heard some athletes talk about how they love to be "The One" who takes the last shot. These athletes say they also feel nervous before the game, but then they will add that once the game starts they begin to feel more confident as they let their instinct take over. It is interesting. If you think about it, basketball players have practiced jump shots over a million times in their life. When it is time for the game winning shot their instinct allows them to do what they have practiced over a million times: take the shot.

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Understand:

It is important in sports to recognize the simplicity of the results. Some days you win and some days you lose. No one goes undefeated in their career and no one makes 100% of their shots. So, if you can accept that some outcomes may be less desirable than others then perhaps you can focus on and embrace the moment at hand. The elite athlete embraces the opportunity to succeed knowing there is also a possibility to fail.



"Success consists of getting up just one more time than you fail."
- Oliver Goldsmith

• If you would like assistance in
• handling pressure situations; if you
• would like to feel more confident; if
• you would like to discuss other
• techniques for anxiety; if you would
• like to meet and discuss other
• benefits of sport and clinical
• psychology; or if you are feeling
• overwhelmed, exhausted, stressed
• out, frustrated, worried, sad, or
• lacking confidence, please contact
• Barb Donlan at 734-647-9656 or ask
• your athletic trainer to schedule an
• appointment with one of our
• trained professionals. We look
• forward to working with you.

• **Best Wishes,**

• Scott Goldman, Ph.D. *Director
of Performance Psychology*

"Many of life's failures are people who did not realize how close they were to success when they gave up."
- Thomas Edison