



GOAL SETTING

“Good behavior doesn’t always bring [positive] statistical results. Nor does bad behavior guarantee failure. Luck can influence our world, true enough. But a hitter who consistently approaches his at-bats effectively will be a greater influence on his performance.” – Harvey Dorfman

Many people get sick of setting goals, yet if done correctly, they can serve a crucial role in providing purpose and direction for an athlete. Right goal setting also gives feedback through measurement. A relentless drive to excel towards your goals keeps that focus – on *your purpose*. Are you setting the right goals for your life and athletic career? Or are you trying to live to the expectations of others? A good athlete must know the difference between helpful goals and goals that hurt progress. A good athlete knows that on that list of helpful goals, “playing to the expectation of others” doesn’t belong.

There are several types of goals. Here we will address two: results goals and behavior goals. **Results goals** are *out of an athlete’s control* and thus – are not helpful to focus on. Baseball example: hit .300 with 5 homeruns and 25 rbi’s. While desirable to strive for, once the ball leaves the bat, it is out of a hitter’s control what happens. These goals become a distraction.

Behavior goals are *within an athlete’s control* and entail controlling ones thinking patterns and actions. Choose to give these goals your full focus. Examples that can be practiced ever day: Taking care of the ball, taking nice deep breathes between plays, mental and physical preparation, making adjustments when necessary, playing within your capabilities, staying relaxed, positive self talk, using visualization to envision a successful competition...etc. These are within every athletes control and when done consistently – lead to desired results goals. Your shooting percentage in basketball may be outside your control – but you can work on the release of your jump shot that can lead to a better shooting percentage.

In a weekend series an athlete may have hit the ball hard and have “little to show for it” as far as results. Maybe you hit the ball right at people all weekend. This can be disheartening, yet, if your goals were to hit the ball hard and see the ball well – and you felt you did those things – you’ve accomplished what you set out to do! Yet, many athletes who focus on results would say they did not perform well –and totally miss out on the fact that their approach to hitting a ball well was locked in.

INAPPROPRIATE GOALS LEAD TO UNNECESSARY CHANGES AND FRUSTRATION: By focusing on the result goal and not achieving it (even when you are performing well but hitting right at people) an athlete’s frustration can bubble over and push them to try and “change things up” when nothing needs to be changed, except the perspective (the way you see things). This is where the patience, determination, and relentless perseverance of the athlete is tested. Those who stick with it will likely be rewarded. Those who don’t, will likely change things up and may only

find themselves in a slump when before, they were actually in a groove – just not getting the results.

To encourage this player, he or she might say to themselves or have a coach say, “Stay right there, stay strong...you’re doing great. The results will come.” Reinforce the approach – the process to success...not the result. Even if you have 10 straight hard hit outs...#11 might be a hit, if the athlete stays confident in their approach. **DO NOT FALL VICTIM TO RESULTS.** Let behavior goals be your focus and serve to fuel you to stay positive that you are already successful in what you are trying to accomplish.

Conclusion: The results in a game may not always reinforce your approach. As in, you may have thrown 10 great passes and 9 were dropped. You did your job, yet you only have a 10% completion rate to show for it. During these times, keep a good perspective that you are doing everything within your control to be successful. If you do not, you may begin to press (try harder) and actually put yourself in a real slump mentally and physically. Continue to stay strong. Continue to work on the behavior goals – the results will come. You will be rewarded if you do not lose site of the process. Stay relentless in pursuit of your behavior goals...today.

(Some ideas were borrowed from: Dorfman, 2001 – The mental keys to hitting)

TAKE RESPONSIBILITY FOR YOUR CAREER:

List 3 **RESULT GOALS** that you have focused on that may not deserve your full attention (examples include: desired batting avg./rbi’s, win totals, shooting percentage, # touchdowns)

List 3 **BEHAVIOR GOALS** that you are going to start focusing on that *will eventually lead* to your result oriented goals: (breathing, physical/mental preparation before games, mechanical parts of swing like “stepping towards pitcher with my stride”)

For each of the Behavioral goals above – list 1 way you can measure if you are meeting that goal every day.

How will you use proper goal setting in your next lesson? Game?

