

## Constant Reminders

One of the things I hear all the time in my work with athletes is "Cain, you always tell us the same things."

As a young mental game coach, I often will then try to find new ways to teach the same material or will try to find other areas of the mental game for us to explore. However, the reason I am having the conversation with the athlete in the first place is because they are not doing what they know.

"The two words I hear the most are 'I Know'. I hear that all the time," Dorfman said.

"The athlete has to understand that it is not *what they know* that matters; it is *what they do* that counts.

"If they know what to do, but don't do what they know, they are no better off than the person who has no clue about what to do."

It is the constant repetitions of the basic mental game fundamentals that lead to success over the course of the player's career. I think Rod DeHmonico, former head coach at The University of Tennessee and Dave Serrano, new head coach at Cal. St. Fullerton, said it best: "Baseball is a marathon, not a sprint."

Many athletes know what to do, but over the course of running their marathon and playing their season, they forget some of the fundamental mental game skills, such as routines and deep breathing, that all they need is often a quick "brain tune-up" or reminder of what they already know but are not doing.

## Compete In The Moment, Live In Big Picture

One of the concepts that Dorfman stressed to me is that athletes play at their best when they play in the present moment.

When you live in the moment

and play one pitch at a time, you give yourself the best chance for success. However, with the pressures of moving up through the minor leagues or through the college recruiting process, players can often get pulled mentally in all different directions.

"One of the common faults I see with baseball players is that they get caught thinking about things that are outside their realm of control," Dorfman said. "When players are doing great they are playing in the moment, but live in the big picture. They understand the politics of professional baseball and realize that so many factors are outside of their control.

"When athletes struggle they will play in the big picture of things and see statistical situations such as: 'If I go 2-for-3 today I will be hitting over .300.' And they live in the moment which can cause stress. For example they overanalyze when one of their teammates gets called up and they wonder why they were not the one to get the promotion. Athletes perform at their best when they play in the moment, pitch by pitch and live in the big picture, focusing on the long term goals of their career, and don't get caught up in the day-to-day politics and things outside of their control."

## Relaxed Muscles – Aggressive Mentality

When baseball players struggle it can often be linked to two factors: the player is competing with tension in their muscles or are playing with a passive mentality. The best players in the game compete with relaxed muscles and an aggressive mentality.

"When players struggle they

will often be looking for the perfect pitch or try to make the perfect pitch and can compete with a passive mentality," Dorfman said. "That is a recipe for disaster. Athletes want to play with a relaxed intensity. They want aggression in their mind but relaxation in their bodies. The athletes that look like they are playing with an ease about them have figured this out."

## Important To Have The Right Enemies

One of the statements that Dorfman made that I thought was excellent: "It is important to have the right enemies."

"All too often coaches, especially young coaches, try to be friends and try to be liked by all the players and other coaches, etc.," Dorfman said.

"The problem with that is when you try to be everyone's friend and get along with everyone, you can often lose sight of what you truly believe in.

"There are a lot of people out there that are self-serving and only have their best interests at heart. Those are the people that I would consider to have as enemies. When everyone else thinks that this person is a dink, and they truly are, why would you sacrifice your true beliefs to become friends with that person anyway? All you are doing is jeopardizing your credibility and backing down from what you truly believe."

## Be Painfully Honest

One concept that truly described Dorfman was his encouragement to be painfully honest. There is not enough time to beat around the bush and tip toe so as not to upset anyone.

If you want to be effective you

must get to the core quickly and be willing to call people on their BS. "There just is not enough time to dance around the issues. You need to call a spade a spade and get right to the point," Dorfman said. "Athletes want and need that. They will respect you as a coach for saving them the time and cutting through the crap. Get to the core of the issue. Get to the point and when you are dealing with the point is the only time that progress can be made."

## Anticipation Worse Than Participation

When athletes have to wait around for a competition to start, they can often psych themselves out by overanalyzing due to the anticipation of the competition. Often you will see this manifest in a pitcher struggling in the first inning only to turn it around and have a great rest of the game. The only problem with that is, it may already be too late.

"The anticipation for the athlete can often be more stressful and tiresome than the actual game," claims Dorfman. "Athletes need to develop strategies and skills that they can use to take their mind off the game and off of things that they can't control.

"Once you get into the flow of the game it is easy.

"Having a routine in place that you go through to help you separate and segment from being the athlete to being the person outside of the athlete will help to minimize stress, minimize the pressure and anticipation, and allow you to play at your best when it is needed most."

Brian M. Cain, MS, CAA is one of the Top Peak Performance Coaches specializing in the Mental Game of Baseball. For a limited time he is offering a free Inner Circle for coaches looking to gain an edge on coaching The Mental Game. Log on to [www.firstroundmentalcoaching.com](http://www.firstroundmentalcoaching.com) [www.briancaainblog.com](http://www.briancaainblog.com) and [www.briancaain.com](http://www.briancaain.com) for more information. Also, be sure to check out Harvey Dorfman's great books, *The Mental Game of Baseball*, *The Mental Key of Pitching*, *The Mental Keys to Hitting*, *Coaching The Mental Game* and his autobiography, *Persuasion of My Days*. On sale at your local bookstores and on the web.