

## Chapter 1

### Introduction To Mental Skills

As an athlete you put in numerous hours of training to prepare your body. You run, jump, kick, swing or throw more in one season than most people do in a lifetime. You train week after week to the point of exhaustion. You train diligently. You are supremely aware of your body. You train to become fast, strong and powerful! You train hard to be the best you can be. But are you doing everything you can to be the best you can be?

Athletes often train the physical component with a well-planned, systematic program that focuses on the physiological aspects, yet the mental training tools have not been provided and practiced. Mental skills training are often not an important component of training because few athletes and coaches are formally exposed to mental skills and drills.

How important is the mental side of athletics? How ironic that both athletes and coaches consider mental skills to be an extremely important part of high performance, but yet do not take the time to learn and develop a systematic program to develop the mental skills.

The mind controls the body, and as an athlete you want control over what your physical energy can create. Only when you have a fully prepared mind can you reach your full potential and perform at your peak. Like physical training, mental training must be practiced on a consistent basis. *Mental Skills and Drills for Athletes* has been designed to prepare you mentally to practice and compete to your potential. It supplies mental skills and drills that will allow you to develop your mental skills and become a better athlete. Only you can make the decision to commit to the mental program to improve.

How important is the mental side of athletics? Complete *Activity 1.1 Why Mental Training* to determine what importance you place on the mental component of track and field.

Activity 1.1: How much of athletics is mental?	
What percentage of your performance is mental?	_____
What percentage of your performance is physical	_____
What percentage of your time do you spend training for the mental side?	_____
What percentage of your time do you spend training for the physical side?	_____
Many coaches and athletes believe a large percentage of their performance is mental but they don't train for the mental side. Could this be you?	
Think of how many times your performance suffered from a lack of confidence, focus or determination?	
Do you believe that mental training could improve your game? How could it improve it?	

Although it is hard to place an exact percentage that the mental part plays in athletics we can agree that it is an extremely important part of the game. Would you take a week of practice off and show up on game day ready to play without any physical practice? Sounds funny, doesn't it? However, many athletes are told to get psyched up and be mentally tough for the big competition, yet the athlete may not have the training tools to accomplish that task because they have not practiced it.

In surveys conducted of Olympic Track and Field athletes, all of the athletes engaged in mental training. In comparison to the average high school athlete, 90% do not engage in a systematic mental training program. Which group would you like to be in? What is the one thing the Olympic athletes have in common? They prepare their minds as well as the body to perform at the highest level. In fact, the physical preparation sets the stage and the mental preparation allows them to achieve optimal performance.