

The **7** secrets to being a successful performer!

1. Understand why you play and compete

- Too often we forget why we play a sport, very few of us are lucky enough to play the sport we love for financial gains, therefore we need to understand is it for fun; to enhance fitness; to improve; to win; to socialise; to achieve something; for distraction / leisure, fitness, to test yourself, another or a combination.
- Take a minute and list your top 5 reasons for playing sport, ranking them in order of importance. Whatever your core values are keep them at the forefront of why you play especially when you have not performed how you want to!

“The glory is being happy. The glory is not winning here or winning there. The glory is enjoying practicing, enjoy every day, enjoying to work hard, trying to be a better player than before”.

Rafael Nadal

2. Use your warm up to be ready

- Warm ups are pivotal to you playing your best and it is what it is: a warm up. So don't expect every shot, stroke or pass to be perfect as you are getting warmed up. You cannot win or lose the warm up, don't expect to play perfectly in your warm up.
- After a good warm up, all four key areas of sport should have been addressed: the tactical, technical, physical and the mental side of your game, to allow you play to your true potential

“Golf is played between the ears and if you are not 100 percent focused on what you are trying to do, then people will go past you no matter who you are”.

Lee Westwood

3. Separate yourself from your result

- If your life and wellbeing are defined by your game performance, there is a greater risk of low self-esteem or feeling down personally after you lose a match or perform poorly. It is important to pursue a goal of balance in life between sport, work, friends, family and other hobbies, no matter how important you feel sport is for you!
- So if you have a game plan prior to your match, you depersonalise your performance. Your mind can accept the outcome. If you lose, it was the wrong game plan or you didn't carry out the game plan well enough – rather than chastising yourself for being a rubbish performer.

“I think the tennis is only a game. You can lose. You can win. After that? In life, there are much more important things than tennis”.

Rafael Nadal

4. Use only positive Self Talk

- Your brain cannot tell the difference between what you imagine and what happens in real life therefore what you say to yourself has a profound effect on how you will perform.
- Practice recognising when you say a negative comment, and immediately reframe to saying what you want in a positive, eg “Don’t double fault”, to “make the serve, pick a target”.

“If you do not believe you can do it then you have no chance at all”.

Arsene Wenger

5. Have practiced routines to keep you safe

- Our whole life is made up of routines to keep us feeling comfortable and safe, and sport should be no different.
- Use routines within you pre performance or actually performance to keep you in a stable emotional place, not allowing your mental state to get out of control and let over arousal (stress) to take over to the detriment of your performance.

“Any active sportsman has to be very focused; you’ve got to be in the right frame of mind. If your energy is diverted in various directions, you do not achieve the results. I need to know when to switch on and switch off: and the rest of the things happen around that. Cricket is in the foreground, the rest is in the background”.

Sachin Tendulkar

6. Control only what you can control

- By understanding what we can control and what we can’t control you can take responsibility for your actions, deal with what you can control (internal distractions), and leave what you can’t, (outside distractions).
- You have no control over external distractions so why worry about them? Why use emotional energy on something you have no control over? To play to your true potential you must focus only on areas you can control in your game.

“My thoughts before a big race are usually pretty simple. I tell myself: Get out of the blocks, run your race, stay relaxed. If you run your race, you’ll win... channel your energy. Focus.”

Carl Lewis

7. Use mental imagery as one of your weapons

- Imagery can maximize the efficiency and effectiveness of your training when used in the correct way. When you visualise yourself playing sport you activate the same nerves used when actually playing the sport itself. Activating these nerves actually strengthens the connections and improves the skill, just like real practice.
- Practising imagery can therefore build both physiological memory and confidence to perform certain skills under pressure and in a variety of possible situations. The most effective imagery techniques result in a vivid sports experience in which the athlete has complete control over a successful performance and a belief in their ability.

“Concentration is a fine antidote to anxiety”.

Jack Nicklaus