



April 2012 Newsletter

Mental Conditioning



Hi, my name is Molly Leadbetter, I am the new mental conditioning and sports psychologist for Real Boise. I am very excited to start this new position in the club. I have my degree in Psychology from The College of Idaho where

I graduated with honors. I am also a member of Psi Chi which is the International Honor Society in Psychology. I have a passion for psychology and for sports. I started playing soccer when I was five and continued playing through high school. I was a four year scholarship tennis player at The College of Idaho. I have been around and played sports my whole life and I truly believe that sports both the actual game and the social aspect of being on a team have really shaped me into the person I am today.

Sports psychology can be applicable to any age group, however each drill and exercise must be specific to each team. When I do my research to find appropriate activities for each team I take into account the coaching philosophy for the team, gender, age, and competitiveness.

Throughout the season I expect to personally know all of the kids and be able to make very tailored activities for each team individually. If you read any biography or interview with a professional athlete you would be sure to find they put mental toughness very high on the list of how they became a successful athlete. I intend to work hard so that all the players in Real have a foundation to build and expand on throughout their whole soccer careers and even something to take with them the rest of their lives not just be sports but in life.

Sports psychology is the study of the psychological and mental factors that affect and are affected by participation and performance in sport, exercise, and physical activity.

The Importance of Mindset:

Research done by Carol Dweck and colleagues at the University of Columbia on mindsets is revolutionizing how we think about praise.

Dweck states in her book *"Mindset: The Psychology of Success"* there are two kinds of "mindsets"; The Growth Mindset and the Fixed Mindset.

Fixed Mindset: belief that ability and intelligence are fixed traits that can't be changed or increased. People with a fixed mindset want to be instantly good at something, if they are not their reasoning follows they weren't meant to be good at it, therefore no matter how much they try they will not succeed, and might as well quit. They avoid challenges, especially in something they are "good at" because if they fail at something they have a special talent in then it disproves the image of how good they are at a certain activity. They would rather do something simple perfectly than work hard at something complex and potentially mess up.

Growth Mindset: belief that abilities and intelligence can be grown and increased. A growth mindset person feels that if they don't succeed the first time it means they need to work

harder to become better and that leads them to seek out activities that challenge them physically and mentally

What does this mean for you?

Mindset's fluctuate everyday day, month, year, and even life. Everyone has a little bit of growth and a little bit of fixed. You might be very growth minded in cooking but absolutely fixed minded at art. This is how kids are too, and many times it is the adults in their lives that convince them which mindset they should adopt in a situation.

Lets say Johnny is told he is very good at dribbling when he is 7 years old. This will make him think he is "the dribbler" he will show off his skill and base a lot of his soccer self-esteem on how well he dribbles. Instead of working on becoming an even better dribbler Johnny is just going to stay with the kind of dribbling he got praised for, he won't seek out harder dribbling drills or work in his spare time on becoming even better. By the time he is 10 or 11 he won't be the best dribbler anymore and because that is what he based all of his soccer self-esteem on there is a good chance Johnny will become very discouraged and quit soccer all together.

Lucy on the other hand wasn't the best dribbler but has a coach who told her that because she worked hard on her dribbling in practice he can see a big improvement from last week. This shows Lucy that if she works hard on her dribbling there will be a noticeable difference in her performance. This will prompt her to work hard at home so she can go to practice and show off her new skills. She will keep asking for harder dribbling drills and continue to improve, by the time she turns 10 or 11 she will be one of the best dribblers on the team and she will be continually improving upon that. Lucy is excited about the game and the potential she knows she can unlock with some hard work and practice.

Mindsets are very pervasive and can change how children view themselves. This season I am working with both the coaches and the kids on growth mindset praise, I believe that instilling a solid growth mindset in a young soccer player is the first step in making soccer a lifetime sport. So next time you want to give your child or player

praise think about saying something like this: **"Wow, I can see you've been working on your shooting!"**

over this:

"You are so good at shooting the ball!"

"As parents, teachers, and coaches we are entrusted with people's lives. They are our responsibility and our legacy. We now know that the growth mindset has a key role to play in helping us fulfill our mission and in helping them fulfill their potential."

-Carol Dweck

(Mindset: The New Psychology of Success)

Goals: Not just the score

Like mindsets there are also two kinds of goals: performance goals and outcome goals. And like mindsets having both kinds of goals are important but having more of one than the other is also important. Outcome goals may be suitable for the long-range, but performance goals are the necessary steps in accomplishing that long-range goal.

Outcome Goals: these are goals such as "winning State Cup," "winning the league," "playing Division I sports" ect... these goals focus not on the play itself but on what the outcome of the play will be. Focusing only on the outcome of the game instead of the improvement of the player or the quality of the performance has been shown to reduce motivation in athletes causing many of them to quit the sport. Having a couple outcome goals is fine, if a player's final goal is to win State Cup at the end of the season that is a great motivator for the rest of the session, but that goal must be mixed in with plenty of performance goals because if the only goals a player has are outcome goals they will only lead to disappointment and negativity if they aren't met, which in turn will lead to lack of motivation in the sport itself. Only about 10% of goals should be outcome goals.

Performance Goals: are goals that track the

progress of a player's skill development, performance goals are goals like; improve dribbling, shooting, passing, etc... these are small goals focusing on activities and progress that the player can work on everyday, something tangible that the progress and improvement can be charted on a graph. These goals give the players something to look back at and realize even if State Cup was lost in a heartbreaking round of penalty kicks that the season isn't a total waste, that their footskills and their ability to pass accurately across the field have improved dramatically. This kind of goal is the necessary and often times a disregarded step towards the larger outcome goal.

What does this mean to you?

As a spectator of soccer, watching players improve their skills and watching how different parts of their games are growing, changing, and expanding, instead of just frantically keeping score of goals scored, games lost, and tournaments won can really make the difference between the players on the field having confidence and positive attitudes, and the players feeling useless and angry that the whole season was a waste of time. Remember that the most important part of motivation for any sport is the feeling of accomplishment, and that that feeling doesn't only have to come with winning or losing a game, it can come with hard work and a few well placed passes.

his goal, nothing on earth can help the man with the wrong attitude"

- Thomas Jefferson

"Nothing can stop the man with the right mental attitude from achieving