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Today's Topic

Welcome back to the Coach's Corner!

Every coach and athlete on the planet wants to win the big one, right? Whether that be a State Championship, a National Title, or a World Championship. Regardless of the level or the sport, we all want to reach the top. We all have that ultimate goal.

Having that Ultimate Goal or 'North Star' that we are always working toward is great, but there are about a million other

things we have to do first before we get to that goal... And that's what we're talking about today - Goal Setting.

The term 'Goal Setting' has almost been worn out by now. It's something that everyone wants to talk about and everyone thinks they have the secret formula to set the perfect goals and make sure you achieve them. Well, I think that's a bunch of B.S. honestly.

Yes, there are more effective strategies for setting goals and there are things we can do to help us get there, but there isn't some magic pill we can take to ensure that we achieve every single thing we've ever dreamed of. But at the end of the day, once those goals are set, the rest falls on us as players or coaches to put in the work, buy into the process, and do everything in our power to achieve that goal we set for ourselves.

Okay, okay, okay... I'll get off my soapbox now.

My goal this week is to give you some of those strategies for effective goal setting, so you can set the best goals possible for you and your team. I also want to provide you with some tips to help keep you on track toward your goals throughout the course of a season, year, or however long it takes to get to the top.

There isn't really a right or a wrong way to set goals, there are just certain ways to do it that are a little more effective than others. Just because I mention it in this newsletter doesn't mean it is the only way to do it. And if I don't mention a strategy you prefer doesn't mean that your way sucks. These are just some of the tips that I have found to be most effective and I personally like. Feel free to take what you like, leave what you hate, and make them your own!

No matter what strategy you prefer, as long as you are using some type of goal setting and giving yourself and your team something to strive for and work towards, you're on the right path.

Without something to work toward, what's the point of working at all?

How Can I Apply This?

When it comes to setting goals there are a ton of things to consider: Is this goal just for you or for the entire team? Is this a short or long term thing? What happens if I don't get there? What happens if I do achieve it? How do I stay on track? And that's just the beginning of the questions that can arise when you start looking at goal setting.

This is one of the reasons that coaches shy away from talking about goal setting with their teams- it's intimidating! When we set goals for anything we want to simplify the process as much as possible to avoid getting overwhelmed.

Instead of trying to figure out every aspect of the goal right away, let's just take it one step at a time.

1. Who is the Goal for?

Is this a personal goal? Something you want to accomplish by yourself for yourself?

Or, is it a team goal? Something that you want you and your team to accomplish together?

Both types of goals are important to have, but for this week we are going to focus primarily on **team-based goals** and how to design the best ones possible for our own teams.

2. Is this a Short, Medium, or Long Term Goal?

It is important to have goals that fall into all three categories, but we treat each one differently so it is important to know the timeline of the specific goal you are working on.

Whichever category it falls into you want to have a timeline for the goal, a time or date that you want to achieve it by.

If we don't set a time-limit on our goals then we are giving ourselves room to slack-off, and slow-play the entire process. When we have a specific end-date in mind we won't have any excuses to make when that day finally comes, whether we have met that goal or not.

When we look at short term vs. long term goals, they really aren't that much different from one another. Outside of a difference in 'time to complete' these goals should be very similar. In an ideal situation you want every single one of your 'smaller' or 'short-term' goals to be something that leads toward the 'bigger' or 'long-term' goals.

When our goals are all intertwined in some way it is much easier to stay on track. When we accomplish something smaller in the short-term, we know that it helps us push closer to that big goal we have in mind for later in the season.

Before I go too much further into these techniques for setting goals, I have to mention one of the most popular goal-setting techniques out there: **SMART Goals**...

I'll cut straight to the point. I hate SMART Goals.

I think there is a ton of good in this technique and I actually model a lot of my techniques off the same ones taught with this method. But there is one aspect of SMART Goals that I despise so much that I choose to throw out the entire method... Let me explain.

Specific: Be detailed with exactly what you want to accomplish.

Measurable: Define a way to show progress. A way to quantify that you have reached it.

Attainable: "Make it Reasonable to Accomplish."

Relevant: Make it applicable to your sport and your situation.

Time-based: Have a defined end-date. Give yourself a timetable to complete it.

This is what the acronym SMART stands for and I love 4 of the 5 letters they use. Keeping your goals Specific, Measurable, Relevant, and Time-Based are all things that I echo in the way that I teach goal-setting. However, that letter A just doesn't sit right with me.

If we are setting goals that are "Reasonable to Accomplish" then how are we ever going to push ourselves to accomplish great things? If we are always setting goals that we know we can reach, what's the point of setting them? For that reason I throw out the entire model, which is probably overkill... Oh Well!

Let me hop down from my soapbox for the second time this newsletter and get back on topic!

When we decide to set some goals for our team, it is important that we meet the other 'standards' we see in 'SM*RT' Goals, but also making sure they are extremely specific to our players and our situation as a team. The best way to do this is funnily enough by using teamwork.

A few weeks ago I talked about the importance of providing our players a feeling of Autonomy- giving them the power to make some decisions. This is another great opportunity to do just that.

I've found that the best way to set team goals for a season is to sit down with the entire team, brainstorm what they want to accomplish as a group, and come to the decision as a whole. I prefer this to the coach making the executive decision and picking an arbitrary goal for the team to strive for, because of the autonomy it provides everyone on the roster and the buy-in they have when it's their idea to set that goal instead of yours.

Okay, so we've sat down as a team and determined our goals for the season and we like what we have, what's next?

Like I said at the beginning, now it's time to put in the work and execute on the day-to-day tasks that will lead you to achieving those goals. This is why having smaller, short-term goals is so important. If we just set one big goal for the end of the season it is REALLY easy to forget about it when you are in the grind of the season.

Having monthly, weekly, even daily goals for you and your team can really help keep the eyes on the prize. Especially during those tough practices or the days when you just can't seem to catch a break.

Another way to keep these goals front and center is by physically having them front and center.

Printing off your goal-sheet and posting it in the locker room, at practice, in the players' lockers, etc. Finding ways to keep those goals in front of your eyes as much as possible is a very powerful thing. When you can't seem to get away from seeing them, those goals are going to get engrained into your athletes' minds... And that's exactly what we want.

I know a lot of this advice is pretty vague, and that's intentional. Like I said at the start, there isn't one single correct way to set and achieve goals. Every coach out there has their own method. Finding what you like, what your team responds best to, and what gives the best results is probably the method you should stick with.

I will provide my favorite method as an example that I've found some success with. I call it the Roadmap Method. With this method we start with our most long-term goal, or biggest thing we want to accomplish as a team and work backward from there until we have reached our day-to-day short-term goals that will lead us there.

I used this to design our season goals when I was coaching High School Baseball. We sat down before the season, just like I explained earlier, and determined that our goal that year was to win the Colorado 3A State Championship. Then we worked from there:

To win state, we had to get to the state tournament.

To get to state, we had to win a regional.

To win a regional, we had to beat the other 2 teams there.

To get to a regional, we had to be in the top 25 teams in the state.

To be in the top 25, we would have to take 1st or 2nd in the league (probably).

To win the league, we would have to beat X,Y,and Z teams.

To beat each of those teams, we would have to do X,Y,Z.

To be able to do X,Y,Z, we had to do certain things in practice each day.

To do that in practice each day, we all had to show up and put in full effort.

etc. etc. etc.

We set all these steps out before our first day of practice and we talked about it every single day to keep it at the front of our minds all the time.

Did we accomplish our goal of becoming State Champions?

No, but we did come in 5th. The highest finish in school history since the 1970's... So I'd call it a success.

I don't share that story as a flex, but instead to show you that when you take a pretty lofty goal like winning a state championship and break it down further and further until it's

simple daily tasks- it gets a lot easier to swallow and seems much more 'attainable'.

Goal setting doesn't have to be rocket science, it can be pretty simple. Determine what you want to accomplish as a team, find what it takes to get there, and execute on those steps!

If you find yourself struggling with this goal-setting process, try simplifying it as much as possible. You'll quickly realize that the more complex the goal gets, the harder it is to stick to the plan and try to reach it. This is one of the times when simplicity is your best friend!

Without goals we can't accomplish anything! Find ways to set effective goals, stick with them and shoot for the stars!

This Week In Sports

1. Punting History is Currently Being Made.

Matt Araiza, punter for the San Diego St. Aztecs football team, is currently having the greatest season we have ever seen from a punter, NCAA or NFL. Araiza is currently ranked 1st in 5 different punting categories, which is pretty much all of them.

This season he has punted 56 times and his stats are as follows:

-52 yd. Average

-30 punts of 50+ yds.

-15 punts of 60+ yds.

-29 punts inside the 20.

-2 punts of 80+ yds.

That's not a typo. YES HE HAS 2 80 YARD PUNTS THIS YEAR!

At this point, Araiza is on pace to shatter multiple NCAA punting records and is a shoe-in for the Ray Guy Award at the end of the season (awarded to the nation's best punter). Oh, and he's also their placekicker and field goal kicker- with 3 FG makes from 50+ yds. One last thing- He's only a Junior!

Araiza is having an historic season, begging the question of whether or not an NFL team will draft him after this season, but we will have to wait and see.

2. More Retired Athletes Turning to Boxing.

On Monday we saw two more famous, retired athletes announce that they will be stepping in the ring to box each other in December of this year.

Deron Williams (37), a 3-time NBA All-star and Olympic Gold Medalist will step in the ring across from Frank Gore (38), 16-year NFL veteran and 3rd on the all-time rushing yards list. These are two highly decorated athletes in their own sports, now venturing into the world of combat sports.

Growing up during the 2000's it was strange for me to see these two names on the undercard for a celebrity boxing match, because I distinctly remember both of these guys in their primes on the field and on the court.

They will be fighting in the 215-pound division on December 18th, 2021 in Tampa, Florida as part of the undercard for the highly-anticipated Jake Paul-Tommy Fury fight.

I'm not much of a boxing fan myself, but I'd be lying if I said I wasn't looking forward to seeing two 40-year-old 'washed up' professional athletes throw haymakers at each other in the ring!

Other Sport Psych Resources

1. [Mental Health Awareness Making its Way to the PGA Tour](#)

Over the past few months we have seen more professional athletes than ever speaking out and advocating for their own mental health. It makes me really happy to see people working together to destigmatize the world of mental health and making it OKAY to seek out help when you aren't okay.

Last month 'Golf Digest' published this article which takes a deep dive into this topic and how it has made it's way into professional golf. The main focus of this article is Matthew Wolff, the current #31 golfer in the world, who not long ago fought some serious battles with his own mental health and happiness.

Input from Wolff, along with other members of the PGA Tour is all put into one place in this article. These golfers discuss some of the battles they face every single week on tour. From the crippling pressure to perform, to the loss of enjoyment of the game of golf itself. We learn that it isn't all sunshine and rainbows for these guys on tour.

We often look at professional athletes as 'god-like' and assume that they don't face the same type of issues that us 'normal' people do. Every time an athlete speaks out we get a look behind the curtain and are able to better understand that just because they play sports for a living doesn't mean they are immune to everything else going on in the world.

This is a bit of a longer article, but I think it is well worth the read because it gave me a whole new appreciation for what these guys have to go through week in and week out on the PGA Tour.

[Check out the full article HERE.](#)

2. [Our Minds Need Time to Recover, Just Like Our Bodies](#)

This article was posted by Dr. Andy Bass, Mental Performance Coach for the Pittsburgh Pirates. In it he talks about the importance of Mental Recovery and why we should give our athletes' minds time to rest and recover.

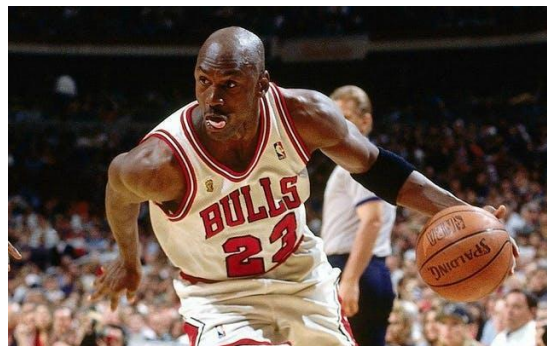
Just like you wouldn't overtrain or overwork your athletes' bodies, you don't want to overwork your athletes' minds either. Our minds are essentially a muscle and need time to rest and recover in order to function properly and work as efficiently and effectively as possible.

Throughout the article Dr. Bass discusses many of the benefits associated with proper mental recovery and all the good things it can do for our athletes. He talks about not only the improved mental performance, but also the increase in motivation and drive that come with keeping our minds in a healthy state of recovery.

This article references some intense research that was done on the topic, and trust me this article is a much easier read than the results section of that study. All in all, I think Dr. Bass provides some great information here and offers some sound advice to get your athletes to buy into this idea and actually take a break every once in a while.

[Check out the full article HERE.](#)

Quick Quote



"I'm a firm believer in goal setting. Step by step. I can't see any other way of accomplishing anything."

-Michael Jordan

Check out Older Editions of the Coach's Corner at the Bottom of
the Page Here:

<https://www.streckersportpsych.com/coachs-corner>

Thank you for reading and until next week, remember:

Today is a great day to change a life!

Cheers,

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