

Sneak
Peek!

See
What's
inside!



DAVID L. ANGERON

**THE MENTAL
TRAINING GUIDE
FOR ELITE
ATHLETES**



**How The Mental Master Method Helps
Players, Parents, & Coaches Create a
Championship Mindset**

A MENTAL TOUGHNESS PLAYBOOK FOR ATHLETES, COACHES, AND PARENTS

In sports, and in life, mental toughness matters—even more than raw talent and skill. But young athletes can't develop it, and master other vital aspects of the "inner game," on their own. Coaches and parents play a vital role as well.

In *The Mental Training Guide for Elite Athletes*, David Angeron speaks to all three audiences. He draws on his expertise as a sport psychology coach and his background as a college athlete and baseball scout to help readers overcome the fear, doubt, and negativity that derail players and teams.

IN THIS BOOK YOU'LL LEARN:

- The fundamentals of the "Mental Master Method"
- How personality type plays into athletic excellence
- How to develop traits like work ethic, grit, and desire
- Why tools like visualization and imagery and deep breathing help "weaponize" pressure and supercharge your game
- How positive energy can change the trajectory of a losing season

Packed with self-assessments, exercises, and engaging examples, this book is a must-read for athletes who want to transform their game—and coaches and parents who guide and support them on the journey.



David Angeron is a certified sport psychology coach who educates athletes on the mental aspects of achieving excellence. He has played both baseball and football in college; coached professional, college, high school, and youth athletes; and worked as a professional baseball scout. He is the founder of Mental Master Training, LLC.



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This book is dedicated to the loving memory of three especially important and influential men in my life, the three Berwick High School legacies: Tommy Bourgeois, John Menard, and John Melvin.

Coach Tommy Bourgeois coached me in high school basketball, baseball, and football. He was someone who pushed me both physically and mentally to be the best player and best person I could be. I had an incredibly special bond with him, and he was one of my main influences in becoming a coach. After I graduated college, Coach Bourgeois (then the head football coach and athletic director) gave me my first coaching job as the head baseball coach and his assistant football coach in 1997. I am extremely grateful for the opportunity he gave me and the belief he had in me as a coach. Coach Bourgeois was a great motivator and one of the toughest men I ever knew. Years later he faced the ultimate adversity when he was diagnosed with ALS (Lou Gehrig's disease). Through it all, he stayed positive and continued to influence and motivate people. He lost his battle with ALS in 2014 at the young age of 55.

Coach John Menard was a good friend of mine growing up. We played basketball, baseball, and football together throughout high school and graduated together in the Berwick High School Class of 1992. In 1997, when I received my first head coaching position, John was my assistant coach. He was a dedicated and hardworking coach and helped players get better on and off the field. John later became a successful head baseball coach and then became an assistant principal. John was one of the most caring and passionate

people I ever knew. John made me a better coach and a better person. In his 20 years of coaching, he touched many lives with his beautiful spirit, outgoing personality, strength, and faith. In 2019, John lost his courageous battle with cancer at the age of 44.

And John Caleb Melvin... Over my 20-plus years of coaching, I have coached thousands of players and I love each one of them as if they were my own. Being part of a team is a family bond for life. However, any coach will tell you that some players just click with you better than others. Similar personality types and certain players just gravitate toward you for guidance and improvement. John Melvin was the first player in my early coaching career that I had that special bond with. John was a little bit of a rebel, but he had an awesome, positive personality. I saw so much potential in him that I pushed him harder than I pushed the others. I became close to his parents and helped them by taking John on some of his recruiting trips. When he signed to be a Division I football player and track athlete in May of 2000, I was extremely excited and proud.

As John went on to be a two-sport athlete in college, and I moved on to begin coaching professional baseball, I continued to follow his college success. John always lived life to the fullest and could light up a room with his great smile and cheerful personality. On February 17, 2003, I received the call that his life had tragically ended in a motorcycle accident at 20 years old. I remember being devastated in my hotel room and feeling like I had just lost my brother. At that time, I wasn't sure why John had been such a special part of my life and why we had that close of a bond.

But several years later, when I returned to my hometown after my professional coaching career, I was reunited with John's family and ended up marrying John's older sister, Jean. My sports brother back then and my brother-in-law now will always be loved and missed.

All three of these small-town legacies touched so many lives. I am extremely blessed and grateful to have had them as huge parts of my life and to have learned so much from them. They all have a special place in my heart, and each of them has been influential in my coaching career and in making me the Christian family man I am today.

I hope you enjoy this book written in honor of John Melvin, John Menard, and Tommy Bourgeois.

Table of Contents

Foreword	i
Introduction	ix
Chapter 1: My “Chicken Poop” Moment	1
Chapter 2: Ingredients for Chicken Salad	17
Chapter 3: Desire	33
Chapter 4: Understanding Personality Types	55
Chapter 5: Goal-Setting	77
Chapter 6: Work Ethic	105
Chapter 7: Confidence	129
Chapter 8: Positive Energy	147
Chapter 9: Mental & Physical Toughness	165
Chapter 10: Resilience & Overcoming Adversity	181
Chapter 11: Competing in the NOW	201
Chapter 12: Motivation & Positive Self-Talk	219
Chapter 13: Visualization & Imagery	229
Chapter 14: Breathing & Relaxation	247
Chapter 15: Chicken Salad	263
Acknowledgments	279
About the Author	283
Praise for David Angeron	285

Foreword

I have a great love for sports in general and for baseball in particular. Currently, I am the co-owner of Double-A minor league baseball team the Pensacola Blue Wahoos. As a community-builder, one of my big goals was bringing this team (then called the Carolina Mudcats and located in Zebulon, NC) to Pensacola. This finally happened in 2010, and since then the Blue Wahoos have played a pivotal role in driving the city's economic development. That's the magic of baseball!

It was through baseball that I met David Angeron. We met in the pre-Wahoo days, in the summer of 2002. I had purchased a brand-new team, the Pensacola Pelicans. David had just been hired as the general manager. I saw something special in him right away. David worked around the clock to get the stadium up and running while also dealing with player recruiting and development. It was clear he was incredibly dedicated and a very hard worker, and that he had a gift for inspiring others.

I knew that when he mastered a few basic tools, he would quickly accelerate to the next level. I started coaching David on his business leadership and public speaking skills, and he took the ball and ran with it. The Pelicans went on to win the 2002 Southeastern League Championship, and from there, we started the process of making Pensacola a professional baseball town.

David and I worked together for a couple of years before he moved on to become a coach and scout at higher levels of professional baseball. Over the years, we've remained close friends.

So when David asked me to read his book, I was delighted. I loved that he was writing about the psychological aspects of playing a team sport. In getting to know many baseball players over the years, I have seen that what goes on in the mind and heart is just as important as talent or athletic ability. In fact, it may be even more important.

This is not just a "sports" thing either. It's true in business and in all areas of life.

I've had the privilege of getting to know some highly successful people from many different professions and from every industry. It's widely believed that success is about how educated or well-connected or even how smart a person is, but I have found that's not always true. Passion, drive, and resilience (which is a big part of the mental toughness David writes about) are actually far better indicators of success.

This book is written to young athletes and the coaches and parents who guide and influence them, but really, it's valuable for all young people. If they can master the inner game from a young age—from learning to motivate them-

selves, to cultivating work ethic and grit, to setting goals, to developing confidence—they'll set themselves up for success for the rest of their life.

Over the years, I've learned there are certain mindsets and habits that predictably lead to excellence and success. And as I read this book, I realized that all of them are woven into David's Mental Master Method. And he doesn't just instill these points of excellence in others. He lives them.

David is a good example of the saying that you can't take anyone else further than you can take yourself. He works on himself daily. He walks the talk, and that's what makes him a great coach and a powerful influencer. (It's also what makes him a great parent: He and his wife have raised four highly successful children, all of whom are unique individuals and strong athletes!) The mindsets and habits he embodies are the same ones he shares in this book—and they're the same ones that go into building the mental toughness that creates elite athletes.

Mental toughness doesn't just happen. The strength, resilience, and confidence required to be a great athlete and teammate—and ultimately, to excel at whatever you decide to pursue in life—don't spring up in a vacuum. All are by-products of lots of practice and preparation. I believe when you embrace the mindsets and practice the habits David writes about—the same ones that I've found through my own work consistently create great leaders and successful human beings—you build up your mental toughness.

Perhaps the most important one is this: Stay self-aware and coachable. Self-awareness just means knowing what we're good at and what we're not. Coachability means we're open to feedback from others. These are the

foundations of humility, which is one of the most important traits a leader can have. David talks about them throughout this book in various ways.

Speaking of humility, it may not mean what you think. It's not about being meek or submissive or thinking you aren't good enough. It's about seeing yourself as you truly are—knowing your strengths and weaknesses. That said, it's critical to know what you do well and play to your strengths. No one is good at everything. Take what you are good at and really, really develop it.

This means you need to be willing to do the hard work. You'll find in life that there's no shortage of people with big ideas. There is a shortage of people who want to sit down, get focused, and put in the elbow grease it takes to execute. Be the person willing to put in the blood, sweat, and tears to get things done.

Get up and make your bed each morning. Read over the report one more time before you turn it in. Work an extra hour longer than everyone else. Be known for follow-up. Assume the ball is always in your court. Always be asking if there is anything you can do to help.

You'll see that none of the changes you're being asked to make are huge ones. Small ball matters. You don't have to knock it over the fence every time or do something grand and glorious. Often the most successful people are those who show up every day and hit a single or double, consistently.

I've found making small, incremental changes is better than making a big transformation all at once. It's more sustainable. Today and as you move through life, always be looking around to see what little, high-impact change you

can make. Once you have one small win under your belt, move on to the next one. You never know where that small win might lead.

That said, never underestimate a small opportunity. Sometimes if it's not a huge contract, people don't work as hard on it. They put it off until the last minute and then rush through it. But big opportunities often grow from small ones. People watch how you do the little things before they ask you to do the big things. If you do a great job, it sets the tone for future projects.

Much of success in sports and in life is about how you treat others. Little actions and habits show people what you're made of. For instance, show up on time. It's a sign of respect and enthusiasm. And people will notice when you're late. Build in a few extra minutes just in case. (Remember the mantra Early is on time, on time is late, and late is unacceptable.)

Keep your promises. In fact, under-promise and over-deliver. People will be delighted when they get more than they expected, and they'll associate that feeling with you in the future.

Know that honesty and integrity matter. Deceptive or shady people can and often do thrive in the short-term. But those who are successful long-term are the ones others know they can trust and count on to tell the hard truths and do the right things (even when it's really, really hard).

When you live by these principles, you will be more likeable, and likeability is at least as important as skillset (and often more so). Don't try to be the smartest person in the room. Be interested, not interesting. Even if you really

do have the best ideas, it won't matter if people don't like you enough to give you a chance to bring them to fruition.

Be partnership-oriented, not self-interested. Learn to see things from the other party's perspective. Propose ventures or solutions that are good for everybody. It is natural to seek out situations that benefit us, but successful people look for ways that everyone can win. Know that there is enough to go around. Your win doesn't mean someone else has to lose (and vice versa).

Therefore, don't be ruled by fear. Trust life. We all have fears and insecurities, but I have found that successful people refuse to let them dominate their mindset. They make the decision to see the world as a place of abundance, not scarcity. They trust that things will work out for the best and that sometimes the big pay-off comes down the road.

I did not start out knowing and believing all of these things. It has taken a lifetime. Some days I still have doubts and fears. Some days I move backward. It's okay. We are all works in progress. Every day that the sun rises, we have a chance to start over.

Finally, cultivate resilience. There are always going to be challenges for there is no utopia in work or in life. To me, resilience must go hand-in-hand with passion for your work. It's so important to select a vocation that you are passionate about, because when challenges come, both that passion and the resilience you've developed will keep you going.

You'll find David writes a lot about adversity. It's crucial that we get back up when life knocks us down. Mindset matters, and it shows up early in life. I am watching young people with great interest these days. I predict those who set

out to grow stronger, mentally and physically, during this time will thrive later.

Whatever your age, I urge you to read this book cover to cover. The simple, straightforward writing makes it easy to understand and digest. The ideas, though, are valuable to anyone of any age—from middle school to high school and beyond. Do the assessments and assignments David includes. Then read the book again. If you take it seriously, you will be amazed on your second read to find how much you have grown and improved since the first time.

Growing and improving is what life is all about. Successful people know they can always be better—better athletes, yes, but also better students, employees, partners, friends, and leaders. They know they can always learn from others. They know that every day is an opportunity to grow. I hope you'll take this opportunity and run with it.

—Quint Studer
Author of *Building a Vibrant Community*
and *Wall Street Journal* bestseller *The Busy Leader's Handbook*
Co-Owner, Pensacola Blue Wahoos

Introduction

I have been an athlete all my life, and I have coached athletes for the past twenty years. Here's what I have learned during this time: The single biggest factor in determining success in sports and in life is mental toughness. That's right, *mental* toughness. Elite athletes go far beyond the physical conditioning and training that their sport demands. They also master the mental side of competition, and this is what helps them rise above the rest.

In *The Mental Training Guide for Elite Athletes*, I am going to teach you the routines and exercises that great athletes use to take their performance to the next level—whether “next level” for you means making the team for the first time, or moving up to varsity, or being offered your first professional contract. When you practice these regularly and incorporate them into your life, you will be able to set and exceed goals and eventually reach your true potential.

How Athletes, Coaches, and Parents Can Use This Book

Athletes, coaches, and parents alike will benefit from this book. Athletes, you will learn strategies to make you mentally tough enough to overcome the adversity that comes along with playing sports. Coaches, you will learn all about sport psychology and can immediately begin using the exercises and techniques you learn in practices with your teams. Parents, you will learn how to best support your athlete on and off the field. By better understanding what they are going through, you can encourage them to use the strategies laid out in the book to improve their performance. Plus, you can try some of the tactics in your own life and benefit from the knowledge you learn.

Athletes

Resist the urge to speed read your way through this book. Go slowly, absorb the information, and take it to heart. When you do this, you will discover who you are as an athlete and how to best utilize these proven techniques.

Every chapter in this book is a different piece of the puzzle, and the content builds upon itself. Read it from beginning to end. Once you have finished the book and completed all of the exercises, you will have a clear picture of what you need to do in order to reach your athletic potential. The first four chapters have very important questions for you to ponder and answer. Go ahead and mark up your book

by circling the results. Take notes in the margins and use the extra paper at the end of each chapter.

At the end of every chapter is a “chapter work-up” with questions or exercises. These are important as they will create your final Mental Master Method. Be sure to complete each chapter work-up. Doing only half of them won’t work; only 100 percent effort will reap rewards.

Coaches

Many chapters ahead are filled with personal coaching stories to inspire and relay the struggles and successes that led me to embrace sport psychology. The message I want you to remember above all others is through sport psychology, all athletes, regardless of talent, circumstances, or lack of ambition, can become great players.

By following along in the book as the athlete would, you will discover not only how sport psychology works for you, but also how to best coach each of your players (because each player is unique, and not all strategies work for all players). Why not have the best team possible?

Each chapter has a “coach tip” section where you can take the information in the chapter and apply it to your job as a coach, but also for your own use. Showing your players how you practice and live these techniques is extremely important in getting players’ buy-in.

Parents

Being a parent is much like the job of a coach, and you can work with each player to help them become the best they can be. Whether you're an athlete or not, your athlete learns and emulates what they see you do. They see your actions, whether you follow through, and how you deal with adversity. This book helps you recognize these elements in your life and gives you simple daily activities that will help you live your words of wisdom for your kids out loud in your own life. Inspire your athlete and use this book like they will: every day and with purpose.

Each chapter has a "parent tip" section where the information is distilled down for you, speaking directly to your role as a parent, and sharing how you can support your athlete's goal of becoming an elite athlete.

While reading the book, go ahead and dive into answering the questions by substituting "athlete" with "creator" or "employee" as it relates to your career. This way, you can use the techniques and work alongside your athlete. Not only will you benefit from the endeavor, your athlete will see your efforts, see the positive changes you are making, and will be more invested. Actions do speak louder than words, especially in parenting.

Now, let's get started!

My "Chicken Poop" Moment

"Positive thinking is more than just a tagline. It changes the way we behave. And I firmly believe that when I am positive, it not only makes me better, but it also makes those around me better."

—Harvey Mackay

"Don't worry about it, Coach; you can't make chicken salad out of chicken poop." That was the first thing I remember hearing after my first season as a coach. (The person who said it actually used a different word that I won't repeat here, since this is a family-friendly book!) That quote alone changed my entire coaching style and philosophy. That one quote is what helped me turn hundreds and hundreds of young athletes into successful men in sports, business, and in life.

The Rookie Coach

It was 1997. I was a confident, fresh-out-of-college 22-year-old who had just received my first high school baseball coaching job. My dream job! Was I ready? Heck yeah, I was. I have played baseball since I was five years old and went on to play at the college level. I knew all about the X's and O's of baseball. What could possibly go wrong?

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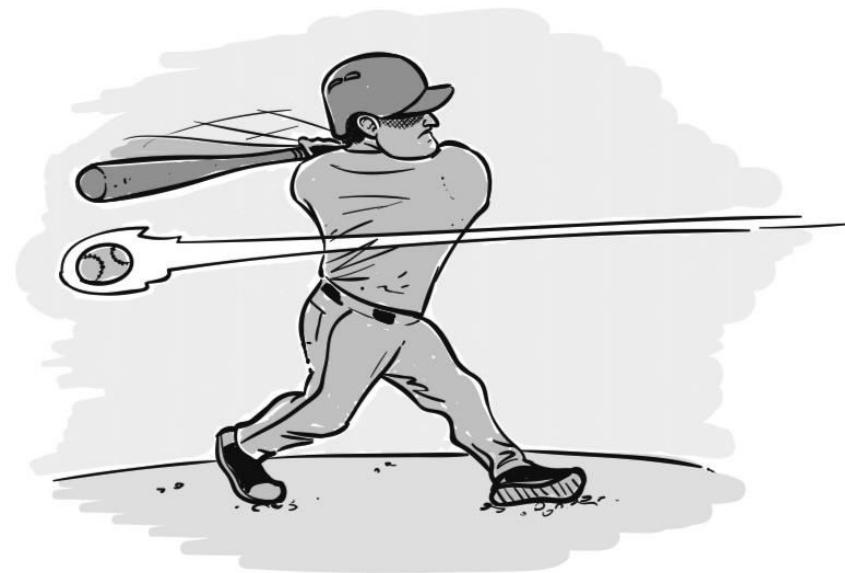
At the first athletic booster club meeting of the school year, they introduced me as the new head baseball coach. After the meeting, I had several of the longtime supporters come to me and tell me that they expected the next few years to be down since they had lost a very talented senior class last year, and the underclassmen didn't show much promise. The boosters didn't seem to have much confidence in this year's athletes or the new "young" baseball coach. What they didn't realize was this cocky 22-year-old was determined to be the best coach ever. I was going to prove to everyone that I was not too young to be a successful head coach.

First, I put a serious off-season training plan in place. Each day for two hours after school, the players did weight training and physical conditioning, followed by individual baseball drills. One thing was certain: We would be in great physical shape.

As spring rolled around, I was determined to be the hardest working team in the state. We were physically strong, we had ten senior players with some playing experience, and we worked extremely hard in the weight room and on the practice field.

The first part of the season was exciting. We had a new coach, positive energy, an exciting atmosphere in the stands, and the team was playing well. Halfway through the season, we had a record of twelve wins and four losses, and we were well on our way to breaking the school's home run record. That's when things went south.

Taking a Turn for the Worse



In the next few weeks, our best three hitters went into a slump, our pitchers started losing control, and our

defense started making errors frequently. Just like that, the team was falling apart. I would get frustrated and yell at them. I would add extra conditioning for player mistakes. We would stay late and practice for four hours after school. The more I felt like I was trying to motivate and discipline them, the worse they played. We ended the season with 16 wins and 16 losses, placing third in our conference and losing in the first round of the playoffs.

The more I felt like I was trying to motivate and discipline them, the worse they played.

And that's when it happened. After the playoff game, a man from the booster club meeting came down from the stands. He shook my hand, patted me on the back, looked me in the eyes, and said, "Don't worry about it, Coach; you can't make chicken salad out of chicken poop." As he walked off, I remember feeling angry for two reasons. My first thought was, *I think he just called my team "chicken poop."* Second, I never like it when anyone tells me that I *can't*. I don't believe in the word *can't*. As an athlete, if anyone said to me that I could not do something, you better believe I took that as a challenge and did everything in my power to prove them wrong. And that was not about to change once I became a coach. I quickly realized that I had to figure out precisely what he was talking about if I was going to succeed. My challenge was to learn how to "make chicken salad out of chicken poop."

My challenge was to learn how to "make chicken salad out of chicken poop."



I didn't sleep at all the night after the playoff loss. I replayed the entire season over and over in my head trying to figure out just what happened. As I looked back, I admitted to myself that our team didn't have a lot of raw talent. Our 10 "experienced" seniors had only junior varsity experience before their senior season, and none of them ever hit over .280. We didn't have a pitcher who could throw harder than 78 MPH. However, at the beginning of the season, they had played like big leaguers. *What changed?* I wondered.

My Aha! Moment

That's when it hit me. At the beginning of the season, there was positive energy and a new, confident coach who believed in his players and had helped them believe in themselves. They played confidently through the first half of the season. Then it all changed when adversity hit. The players started to lose confidence and mental focus. That's when I realized that the term "chicken poop" did not refer to my team's physical ability. The real "chicken poop" was all the negativity taking place in the players' minds. Stress, fear, doubt, anxiety, and negativity are all examples of mental weakness, a.k.a. "chicken poop."

That's when I realized that the term "chicken poop" did not refer to my team's physical ability. The real "chicken poop" was all the negativity taking place in the players' minds.



So, to prove the man from the booster meeting wrong, I needed to learn how to mentally train my players. I needed to get them mentally tough and teach them how to turn the negativity in their heads into positive energy and self-confidence. It came down to doing the research and finding the right recipe and ingredients for mental toughness, a.k.a. "chicken salad."

Here's what players and coaches alike should take away from this: When a team that is physically fit and has been performing well experiences a sudden or gradual downturn in effort, ability, and attitude, you must consider the possibility that the mental aspect could be the cause.

You must consider the possibility that the mental aspect could be the cause.

While it still doesn't get to the root of the problem, some coaches try to remedy this downturn by making the athletes work harder. They keep them at practice longer, which in turn pulls the athletes' focus back to the sport through time consumption and exhaustion. This type of coaching has its place; however, it can result in injuries and lack of energy for games, especially mid- to late season.

Turning to sport psychology as a quick-fix is not the solution either. Reversing a downturn and sustaining a winning performance takes training, preparation, and consistent daily, weekly, yearly activity and investment by everyone: coaches, athletes, and parents or caretakers. Just as an athlete does push-ups every day to stay in shape and goes through drills at practice, the brain needs its workout and daily practice, too.

Just as an athlete does push-ups every day to stay in shape and goes through drills at practice, the brain needs its workout and daily practice, too.

Physical strength and proficiency matter a lot. But these factors can take you only so far. I wrote this book to address the other side of the coin, which is mastery of your mind. You may be the biggest, the strongest, and the most naturally talented athlete, but without a strong mental approach to your sport, you can't achieve peak performance. The Mental Master Method is a plan of action that guides athletes to not only reach, but to exceed their goals and potential. It is also a lifestyle characterized by an optimistic and resilient mindset—one that prepares you to change obstacles into opportunities.

You may be the biggest, the strongest, and the most naturally talented athlete, but without a strong mental approach to your sport, you can't achieve peak performance.

In other words, the Mental Master Method teaches you to condition your brain as well as your body. In the coming chapters, I will share with you the tools, skills, and routines that help you endure and rise above adversity. You will learn powerful self-examination techniques that allow you to recognize areas of your performance and your mindset that need work. Additionally, you will learn the skills that help you perform well under pressure, work hard to achieve your goals, and create the career you dream of, no matter where you are starting from today. The examples in this book are based on my experience as a professional baseball

coach and scout; however, the Mental Master Method can relate to and be effective for all kinds of athletes, performers, and business leaders—or anyone who wants to become a stronger person.

The Mental Master Method can relate to and be effective for all kinds of athletes, performers, and business leaders—or anyone who wants to become a stronger person.

Where Do You Want to Go from Here?

When you practice the mental side of your athleticism as regularly as you practice for your sport, you can become not just a great athlete, but an elite athlete. Just as becoming physically fit now serves you when you're older by giving you strong bones and muscle memory, mental fitness increases your success in your career and in personal relationships from now on. It guides you when life deals you tragedy or misfortune, giving you access to a higher purpose and strength that helps you win the game of life.

Are you looking to grow from where you are currently? If you're serious about having fun while playing your sport, advancing, and even making a career out of it, I cannot stress enough how important it is that you read this entire book and implement everything you learn, every day.

And I do mean *every day*. There isn't a day when you shouldn't wake up and tell yourself: *This is my day. I'm going to make it amazing.*

There isn't a day when you shouldn't wake up and tell yourself: This is my day. I'm going to make it amazing.

Athletes, go ahead and read the *Coach Tips* and *Parent Tips* in each chapter as well so you can see what you and your sport look like to these pivotal players in your journey. It's my hope that what you read will help you understand their actions and enable you to speak to them about your thoughts and needs.

A Message for Coaches...

At the end of each chapter, there's a *Coach Tips* section. It is incredibly important that you implement everything taught here. The more your athletes can see that you are invested in the mental side of the game, the more you'll see them buy in and improve exponentially. You will witness a massive change in their attitudes, motivation, focus, and mental toughness. Imagine when all of your athletes shake off mistakes and turn around the next minute to bust out a smart play. Think about how you'll be able to focus on your job better when your athletes are so self-motivated they take the initiative to improve themselves, not hang their heads in defeat after a bad game.

I strongly suggest you read everything the athlete is learning and practice it for yourself. We can all use the tips shared in this book. Think about how this will change your game, your coaching, and your results for the better.

A Message for Parents...

Every day, you contribute to your child's athletic career. I can't stress enough how necessary it is for you to read this book cover-to-cover. Pay close attention to the *Parent Tips* sections at the end of each chapter and do your part by following the advice. You can wield a great deal of power for good or bad. Practice being a good listener, a positive motivator, and know when to step aside and let your athlete struggle to work out their own solutions. In this way, they own their success and gain the prize of true self-confidence that will carry them to a career as an elite athlete.

A Message for Athletes...

Athletes: This is very important, so pay attention! To get everything out of this book that you need to gain the edge over your competition and be the best athlete you can be, you must commit to reading and doing the work. Engage fully in the *Chapter Work-Ups* at the end of every chapter; otherwise, you'll read it and forget it. You don't want to go back to your usual mode of not understanding why you can't overcome your focus issue.

Finally, a word about how this book is structured. I have divided it into two parts. The first part (Chapters 1-6) is about learning who you are as a person and a player. This is vitally important because you won't be able to implement the techniques taught in this book without knowing who you are and how to best work with yourself.

The second part of this book (Chapters 7-15) is filled with ingredients that can transform you into a powerful athlete and person who is unstoppable in the face of adversity.

Let me tell you this now: This isn't a library book. Mark it up. Scribble in the margins, underline points that speak directly to you, and take additional notes in a separate notebook. Write down portions that resonate and hang them in your bedroom, on the refrigerator door, in your car, and anywhere that you will see them often.

What you will be learning is meant for everyday practice and implementation. As much as you work out physically, double your efforts to work out your mind. That's where winning starts—no exceptions!

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Chapter Work-Up: A Dedication Pledge

There's no easy way to achieve real success in life and no easy road to becoming an elite athlete. You'll face bumps and hit roadblocks no matter what. You might as well have the tools ready to use in your toolbox right now. They will help you bounce back after defeats and know precisely where to go as soon as you get up and dust yourself off.

Dedicate yourself right now to reading this entire book. Promise yourself that you will read, at the very minimum, one chapter a day for 15 days, and read more if you can. At the end of this chapter, you will see a signature line and a place for you to put your full name and the date. By signing, you are committing to read this book entirely, take notes, take part in the exercises, and take time to make goals for yourself.

Take this seriously. This has everything to do with how you will perform in your next game. Do you want to be the person who lost their team the game with a bad play? Or, do you want to be the person who is already working on next week's game—the player who's not worried about what was, but is excited about what will be next? Quarterback Patrick Mahomes—who actually started out playing baseball—is a prime example. Known for his earnestness and upbeat attitude, Mahomes always looks to the future. It is surely this mindset that allowed him to play a pivotal role in Kansas City's late-in-the-game comeback to defeat San Francisco in the 2020 Super Bowl. Can you imagine how freeing it would be to adopt this optimism and drive for yourself? Let's beat expectations by reading two chapters today.

Sign below, make the commitment, date it, then turn this page and let's make some chicken salad.

Signature _____

Date _____



PERFORMANCE JOURNAL

Ingredients for Chicken Salad

“Nothing can stop the person with the right mental attitude from achieving their goal; nothing on earth can help the one with the wrong mental attitude.”

—Thomas Jefferson

The next season was going to be a challenging one. The new class was even weaker physically than the previous year’s class. However, unlike last year, this off-season I did not focus 100 percent on physical training. As I started to do research on the psychology side of sports, I came across this famous quote from Yogi Berra, “Baseball is 90 percent mental, and the other half is physical.” Instead of spending hours after school in the weight room and conditioning, I decided I would cut the team’s conditioning time down by half.

I focused the rest on developing a plan for the mental side of the game.

I came across this famous quote from Yogi Berra, “Baseball is 90 percent mental, and the other half is physical.”

I spent hours and hours each day thinking of all the things that were missing from last year’s squad. We ended up breaking the school home run record the previous year, so I knew the team did not lack physical strength. I made notes of everything that had happened during the season. Then I compared their performance from the beginning of the season, when they played like superstars, to the end of the season, when they played like Little Leaguers. Those notes turned into topics for research. That research revealed the ingredients necessary to build elite athletic performance.

It All Starts With Desire

The first thing missing from last year’s team was ingredient number one: *desire*. Desire is a strong feeling of wanting to have something or wishing for something to happen. Later in this book, we will take desire a step further and discuss the difference in “wants” and “needs.” For now, suffice it to say that at the beginning of the season, when things were going well and everything was exciting, it was easy to see the players wanted to be there.

As the season went on and we faced a little adversity, however, they seemed to lose their desire. Seniors started worrying about prom and graduation, while the underclassmen were more interested in spring break and summer vacations than they were in improving their game.

Soon thereafter, I became more aware of the changes that were occurring in the players and in the team as a whole. Once desire was gone, work ethic seemed to follow. Players who used to stay late to get in extra work were now the first ones to pack up and leave. The players’ personalities began to clash, and the team started to argue and bicker among themselves. Their confidence decreased as soon as they faced a little bit of adversity.

Once desire was gone, work ethic seemed to follow.

Soon it became clear that they had lost not only their mental toughness but their physical toughness as well. Injuries began to pile up, and excuses became regular. The change in the players—from the first half of the season when everything was high energy and positive to the end of the season when they folded to adversity—was unbelievable.

As I mentioned in the previous chapter, our first season ended in the first round of the playoffs. Sure, we had achieved some early success, but in the end, the mounting frustrations and challenges of the year had won out. I knew we could do better—even become champions—and I was determined to take my players to the top! Although the team and I clearly had a long journey ahead, I had faith that I could teach them the tools and skills that would make them



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