

HOW TO BUILD YOUR CONFIDENCE

By Jeff Janssen, M.S.

When you are involved in sports long enough, each of you will likely find yourself in a pressure-packed late game situation where you need to come through in the clutch. Whether it is a last-second shot in basketball, or a game-winning hit in softball/baseball, each of you will likely need to perform with the game on the line. And the mental skill that will help you most during these pressure situations is confidence.

Simply put, confidence is the belief that your ability to perform is greater than or equal to the demands of the situation. Believing that you have the skills and ability to handle the situation creates confidence. Believing that the situation demands more than what you can handle produces stress, doubt and fear. The key to confidence then is to focus on all the positive things you have going for you. Confident athletes expect success because they focus on their strengths, past successes, preparation and praise.

Four Ways to Create & Cultivate Confidence

Focus on Your Strengths

What do you do well? One way to build your confidence is to focus on your strengths (both physical and mental). Confident athletes remind themselves of their strengths before they perform by focusing on the talents and abilities they have going for them.

At Arizona, we have our athletes list their individual strengths or "weapons" as they like to call them. Take a moment and list all of the things you are good at in your sport. By recognizing and remembering your strengths, you will create some concrete thoughts to focus on the

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next time you need to create confidence.

Remember Your Past Successes

Down by one, five seconds left, your team needs a basket to win the game. What's going through your mind? Michael Jordan says that when he is in a pressure situation he remembers all of the past game-winning shots he has hit to build his confidence.

Remembering your past successes is another effective way to create confidence. If you have been successful in similar past situations, you have the right to expect that you can and will be successful again. List past successful games or plays you have made, as well as any awards or honors you have received. These past successes will prove to you that you have what it takes to be successful.

Prepare and Practice with Quality

Working hard and putting in quality practices are great ways to cultivate confidence.

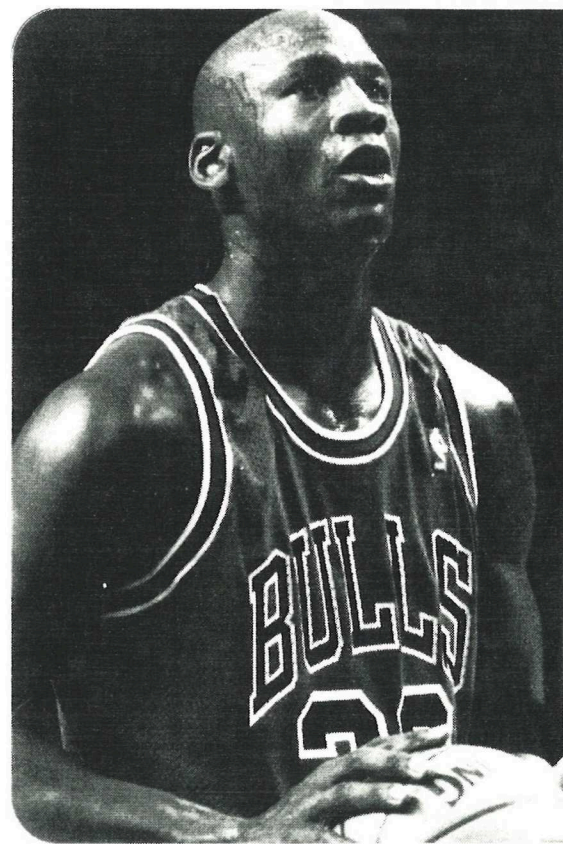
National Softball Player of the Year Jenny Dalton-Hill credits much of her success to the quality hours of preparation she has invested in the batting cage and the thousands of balls she has fielded. The quality practices gave her the right to feel prepared and confident come game time.

Be sure that you take advantage of each practice as an opportunity to build your skills and your confidence.

Appreciate the Praise

A final way to build your confidence is to focus on the praise and encouraging words that coaches, parents and teammates have given you. Remembering that others believe in you and want you to be successful is a good way to jump-start your own confidence. Reflect on the positive things that others may have said about your game. Further, be sure to compliment your coaches and teammates in an effort to build their confidence.

Confidence is critical to successful performance, especially in pressure situations. Use the four ways to create and cultivate your confidence so that you believe you can be successful in every situation.



Jeff Janssen, M.S., is the Mental Training Consultant at the University of Arizona, considered one of the top 10 all-around athletic programs in the nation by the Sears Directors' Cup. Based on Arizona's successful mental training program, Janssen has produced an instructional mental training video, "Winning The Mental Game (\$29.95)," and a mental training workbook, "The Mental Makings of Champions (\$19.95)." Call (520) 290-8416 to order or to receive a free copy of the 10 Mental Makings of Champions. Send a self-addressed stamped envelope to Winning The Mental Game, 8898 E. Desert Lavender Place, Tucson AZ 85715.