

DOC TALK with the Banner Concussion Center

All of us here at the Banner Concussion Center hope that this finds everyone having a great spring. This month, we are very happy to have Dr. Jim Afremow provide us with a look into the mental side of sports. Enjoy!

Get Psyched for Soccer

Sports psychology is the scientific study of mind, emotion, and behavior as it relates to athletic performance and physical activity. The mental demands of rigorous competition can be enormous, making sports psychology a crucial part of any athlete's training regimen. To quote soccer legend Mia Hamm, "The most important attribute a player must have is mental toughness."

An athlete looking to improve his or her game can benefit from sports psychology skills and strategies at any time. Junior athletes can get a significant head start on their peers by developing their mental strength early on, rather than waiting until college or beyond. Seasoned pros can ensure they stay on top of their game, never letting themselves get complacent, by training their minds appropriately.

Important mental skills for athletic excellence include:

- Supreme, unwavering confidence in your abilities
- The ability to keep a laser-like focus when surrounded by distractions
- The capacity to sustain a high level of motivation throughout a long season
- The strength of will to conquer all anxiety, frustration, and discouragement
- The power to bring your intensity to the next level when needed

Your mentality will either hold you down or bring you up. Strive to master your mind rather than being mastered by it. If you don't, you risk losing every game before it even starts. Think about how you can improve your performance in the following areas:

- How you prepare mentally in practice and during training
- How you maintain a winning mindset on the day of competition
- How you manage your thoughts in the moment of action
- How you focus and deal with distractions
- How you use the results of competition to build your character from event to event
- How you communicate with others as a leader and a teammate
- How you decompress after training and competition to stay fresh and avoid burnout
- How you can overcome injuries, slumps, and other types of adversity

A mental game coach works collaboratively with athletes to identify the challenges they face, the best ways to approach these challenges, and to put athletes in the optimal mental position to take charge of and accomplish their goals. The mental game coach's role parallels that of the team coach and is just as pivotal in helping athletes achieve their full potential. The mental game is the

key that can transform a weak performance into a brilliant one, and a good athlete into one of the best to have ever played the game.

Dr. Afremow's private practice is located in Phoenix, Arizona. His website is www.goldmedalmind.net.

For more information about the Banner Concussion Center, to schedule a baseline test or make an appointment with Dr. Erickson please contact us at 602-839-7285. We are located near the campus of Banner Good Samaritan Hospital at 1320 N. 10th St., Suite B Phoenix, AZ 85006. Information about the Banner Concussion Center can also be found on the Banner Health website www.bannerhealth.com