



Goal Setting

Hi Wildcats,

In this edition of the “Mental Training” email series, we discuss the use of goal setting to create a course for your success. Many athletes are simply told to set goals but are not properly informed about WHY it is important or HOW to effectively set them. When an athlete has specific, well-defined goals, they are able to be more focused and driven in attaining them.

“PRESSURE”

THOUGHTS FROM MANNY OSBORNE-PARADIS
WORLD CUP CHAMPION SKIER

“PRESSURE IS ALWAYS A PRIVILEGE,” HE SAID IN THE FINISH AREA ON SATURDAY. “YOU SHOULD ALWAYS EMBRACE IT. IT’S NOTHING TO BE SCARED ABOUT. YOU DEAL WITH IT THE WAY YOU WANT TO DEAL WITH IT, AND IF YOU WANT TO BE SUCCESSFUL, YOU DEAL WITH IT IN A POSITIVE WAY.”

“I HAVE PRESSURE ON MYSELF TO DO WELL, BUT I DON’T HAVE PRESSURE ON WHERE I’M GOING TO FINISH. I DON’T HAVE ANY OF THAT. PEOPLE WHO ARE WATCHING ON TV MIGHT WANT ME TO WIN A MEDAL, BUT THE PRESSURE ON ME IS TO SKI THIS TURN RIGHT, TO SKI THIS SECTION BETTER, TO HAVE MY ELBOWS IN HERE, TO SKI THE FRONT OF THE BOOT HERE AND TO SKI THIS JUMP BETTER. IF ALL OF MY LITTLE GOALS COME TOGETHER, THEN EVERYONE ELSE’S GOAL CAN HAPPEN.

“MY GOAL ISN’T TO WIN A MEDAL. MY GOAL IS TO RACE THE COURSE AS WELL AS I CAN AND THAT SHOULD EQUAL A MEDAL.”



Goal setting can be the difference between being prepared and confident in a high pressure situation and being nervous when it matters most. Goals provide you with a direction. They tell you where you need to go and what you must do to get there.

Setting goals also provides you with valuable feedback. By using specific, measurable goals such as “getting eight rebounds per game” rather than “being a good rebounder” you can evaluate if you are making progress toward achieving your big goal.

Finally, goals provide you with support – motivation to continue persevering when you might be tempted to give up. When people are motivated, they are passionate about what they are doing and can propel themselves toward success.

Benefits of goal setting include: training more productively in less time; training flexibility, that is, working on many aspects of your training without getting stuck in one area; and competing in more focused ways and with less anxiety.



Goal Setting Essentials

When developing your goals, here are some guidelines to follow:

1 Develop fundamental goals to use as a “blueprint” to attain your ultimate goal

That is, create a series of supporting goals with each one more challenging than the previous one. For example, if your goal is to complete 60% of your passes, you must think about HOW you will achieve this. Break down the essential elements to effective passing. Then, develop supporting goals that attain these elements. By meeting these supporting goals you will soon be attaining your ultimate goal.

2 Make your fundamental goals specific and measurable

Goals are more effective if they are measurable such as “making 75% of your free throws” rather than “improving your free throw shooting.” Further, the effectiveness of goals are increased if they are set with a deadline, such as “I will make at least 75% of my free throws by midseason.”

3 Make your fundamental goals under your control

In sport, there are too many factors that are out of our control such as the ref calling fouls or the ball taking a bad bounce. If you select a goal that depends on factors out of your control, you are at the whim of forces that may prevent you from achieving your goal through no fault of your own. Thus, make your goals under your control. For example, “Make 5 solid tackles per game” is more in your control than “commit 3 less penalties per game.”

4 Make your fundamental goals challenging yet realistic and attainable

Setting goals unrealistically high leads to frustration and failure. Attainable goals lead to success and increased confidence. Goals should be difficult but not impossible to achieve. Be careful, too many goals can be overwhelming and cause frustration.

5 Use positive talk

Goals such as “I will get the last three outs of the game” rather than “I won’t blow the lead” are more effective because they focus on what you want to accomplish, not on what you want to avoid.

6 Commit them to paper

Goals should be written and placed where they can be easily viewed. Put them on your mirror so you can see them every day. Also, by recording your performance every day, you can assess your progress and know if you need to be working harder.

7 Review, evaluate, and if necessary edit

By reviewing your progress you can see the speed at which you are progressing towards your goal. If you are progressing at an appropriate rate, it means you are training properly. If you are not progressing toward your goal or not at the necessary rate of improvement, you likely need to adjust your training, or maybe even your goal, which might be too demanding. So many unexpected changes (such as an injury).

8 Reward yourself when you achieve your goals

It is amazing to me how unequal athletes overly punish themselves for making an error in comparison to how little they reward themselves when they achieve their mission. Thus, it is important to reward yourself when you attain your supporting goals as well as your ultimate goal. Plus, recognizing your efforts in a positive way will make the mission more fun. Remember, most people will have goals different from yours, and will progress at different rates. You should set goals that are appropriate and proceed at a rate that is appropriate for you. Coaches and teammates can often be helpful as you choose goals and they can spur your motivation to reach them.



To help you get started with your goals, use the worksheet below to record your ultimate goal, fundamental goals, and tasks. This can be a good starting point for setting your own goals.

Ultimate Goal

Your ultimate goal should be your final quest. Specifically, it is what you want to achieve.

Fundamental Goals

Fundamental goals are smaller goals that if accomplished will increase the likelihood that you will achieve your ultimate goal.

Tasks

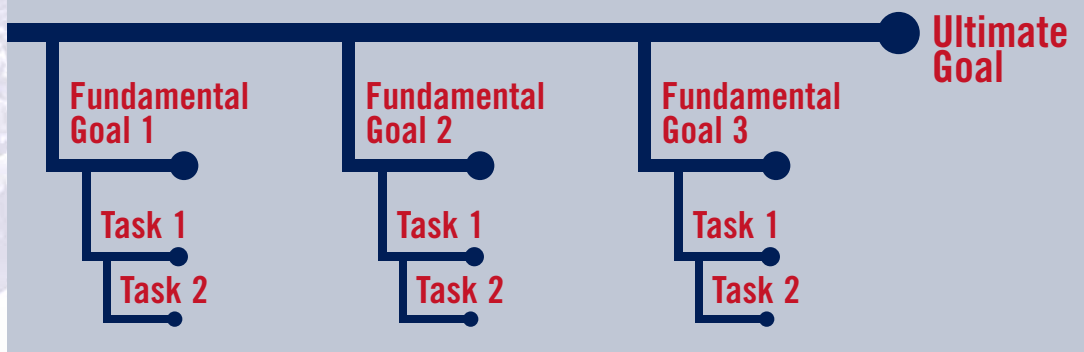
Tasks are exercises you engage in to attain your fundamental goals.

Here is an example:

Step 1 Identifying your Ultimate Goal, Fundamental Goal, and Tasks

- **Ultimate Goal** = Make First Team All-PAC-10
- **Fundamental Goal 1** = Make 75% of my free throws for the season
- **Task 1** = shoot 100 free throws before and after every practice
- **Fundamental Goal 2** = Increase my rebounds per game average to 8
- **Task 1** = add 7 inches to my vertical jump
- **Task 2** = watch 30 minutes of extra film to study habits of the shooters on opposing teams

Step 2 Filling in the chart



If you would like some assistance in setting your goals for this season; if you would like to feel more confident; if you would like to discuss other techniques for anxiety; if you would like to meet and discuss other benefits of sport and clinical psychology; or if you are feeling overwhelmed, exhausted, stressed out, frustrated, worried, sad, or lacking confidence, please contact Angie at 621-8805 or ask your athletic trainer to schedule an appointment. I look forward to working with you.



Best Wishes,
Scott Goldman, Ph.D.

Sport and Clinical Psychologist for Student-Athletes

WILDCATS