

Glasgow Rugby Development Officers
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Mental Preparation Strategies

Strategies to maximize pre-game, game and post-game situations.

Routines for your mind & body to establish a rhythm and a focus of attention which prepare you for training and competition.

- *Mental and physical routines prepare you for doing the right job*
- *Routines optimise the use of thoughts(self talk), emotions(feelings) and actions(behaviour)*
- *Routines can be used to bridge warm up gaps*
- *Routines can direct attention and focus;*
 - *away from dwelling on the negative or unsuccessful aspects of performance*
 - *onto positive aspects of performance which will help get the job done*
 - *where routines are pre set there is less room for distractions*
 - *identifying what to think, how to feel and what to do directs focus on to the task*
 - *routines direct focus at performing (the process) rather than the outcome, i.e. 'staying in the now' rather than worrying about the result*
- *Focus and 'mental energy' is directed at controlling the controllables*

What should you think about

- *What helps you play at your best?*
- *What are your strengths/weaknesses as a player?*
- *How focused you need to be*
- *Where you are going to direct that focus?*
- *How you are going to re-focus?*
- *How to deal with situations - both positive and negative*
- *Being prepared for unexpected situations*

Tools to use

- *Positive 'self talk'/'trigger words'- say things in your mind that will encourage you e.g. 'BIG HITS, PACE, SMASH etc'*
- *Visualisation - see yourself performing well in all aspects of the game and training*
- *Set yourself objectives/goals - have a clear understanding of what you are trying to achieve and what needs to be done to reach that goal.*
- *Physical routines - eating food and drinking fluid that makes you feel good for the game. Warming up in a manner that allows you to take the field knowing you are as ready as you can be.
What 'gets you going'? Quiet time in the changing room before the game or banging your head off the wall!*
- *Review - monitor and learn from what you do well and what you do poorly. Key in this is to be honest with yourself.*
- *Communication - talk to people with whom you have respect for and ask for feedback on your performance.*

COMPARING BEST AND WORST PERFORMANCES

When comparing performances you should ask yourself the same questions for both your worst and best games. Write down the answers to these questions and see where the differences lie. Once differences have been identified you can look to focus on them in order to perform well in your next game. Soon you will find that you settle on a routine that is working for you and because of this your performances will become more consistent.

Below are questions to ask yourself and details to consider when compiling information on your best and worst performances.

*What game am I thinking about?
How did I want to play?
How did I actually play?*

Remember; *your initial thoughts when you got up that morning, what the weather was like, how you prepared at home, your journey to the game, your warm up, what your team mates and coaches were doing, the changing room, your equipment, sights, sounds and smells.*

What you have done is to create a vivid 'picture' that will help you to remember details about what you were thinking, feeling and doing in the build up to the game.

All of this will help in the quest to play the perfect game.

Mental Approach

The following are my own thoughts and relate to how I prepare myself for a match. What must be remembered is that we are all individuals and because of this some but hopefully not all of the entire paper may not work for you. You should try to devise your own way of preparing for a match and stick to it so long as it is working.

You should not start to think about the game on game day - this should be done throughout the week leading up to the game.

Thinking about the game involves going over; the moves, team plays, objectives (both collective and individual) - basically how you are going to play the game.

I believe that visualisation is the key to the above. See the pitch that you are going to play on in your mind. Focus on all the things that you are going to do well e.g. giving good passes, making big hits, smashing rucks, pumping your legs, clean takes at lineouts, scoring etc.

Enjoy being part of the team and playing competitive rugby. When you think about the game let these feelings come through as a 'knowing' smile on you face.

It is natural to feel nervous before a game but do not let this emotion worry you as you could start to question yourself and think negative thoughts. Being nervous is actually a good thing as it shows you are thinking about what lies ahead - learn to enjoy this feeling as it will be there in the lead up to all the matches you will ever play.