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Today's Topic

Welcome back to the Coach's Corner!

No matter how long you've been involved in sports, there has undoubtedly been a time where things didn't go your way, right? This is one of the most interesting aspects of competitive sport to me. There is so much that can happen that we could never expect or prepare for.

So instead of trying to prepare for every possibility under the sun, why don't we focus more on preparing to handle these

situations effectively? We may not be able to prepare for everything, but we can set ourselves up to handle these unpredictable situations in the most effective way possible.

In this edition of the Coach's Corner we are going to take a look at **Resiliency** and figure out how we can instill it in our athletes through our practice and preparation.

Simply put, resiliency is the ability to recover quickly from a difficult situation. Being a resilient athlete or coach allows you to handle tough situations better, stay more focused on the task at hand, and prevent one mistake from snowballing into a 'doomsday' type of scenario in a game.

For the majority of people, their sense of resiliency has been built over the entirety of their life. Resiliency is built through adversity. If someone has had every single thing in their life go their way and they've never had to 'fight uphill', they are going to have quite a bit less resiliency than someone who has had to fight some real battles throughout their life.

This doesn't mean that we can't still teach and instill resiliency in all of our athletes, however. Regardless of the past life experiences they have had, we can always work to build up this 'bounce-back' power in our athletes.

The common saying is that we may not be able to control everything around us, but we can control how we react to them. This is the backbone of resiliency.

Resiliency is all about how we respond to what is going on around us, especially when the situation around us is not in our favor.

When talking about Resiliency, I like to break it down into 2 major pieces.

1. How we respond mentally and emotionally.
2. How we refocus.

## How we Respond

Immediately following a mistake or something not going our way is a very vital time. In those few seconds we have the chance to control how we are going to respond. We are likely to feel angry, upset, sad, etc. at what just happened whether it was our fault or not. We also might look for excuses right away and try to point the finger at someone or something else for being the cause of the mistake.

When we take this route and allow our reactionary emotions to take control, we are likely to make a very emotional decision leading to a negative response to the mistake.

Instead of allowing this 'knee-jerk' reaction to control how we respond, we can be much more analytical about it and move past the mistake in a much more effective way.

Don't get me wrong. I don't expect everyone to be a robot and not have emotions. I expect someone to be angry or upset after making a mistake. The difference is that I don't want them to act on that emotion and allow it to control their response.

Instead, I teach a 5 step approach to 'Resetting' after a mistake or adverse situation:

1. Recognize the Mistake- Own up to what happened, and determine what you could have done differently to avoid the mistake.
2. Feel The Feelings- How do you feel? Are you angry, sad, upset, etc.? FEEL that emotion, but don't act on it yet.
3. Accept the Feelings- Instead of acting on the emotion you're feeling. Simply accept that you are feeling upset. Allow yourself to be mad for a minute... BUT DON'T ACT ON IT!
4. RESET- Develop a saying or trigger that helps reset you and allows you to move on from the mistake and the emotions that come with it.

5. Focus Forward- What's next? Determine what you need to do next. Figure out the next task and focus all your energy toward it.

Following these five steps does as much work as possible to keep the emotion out of the next decision you make. If we can take the emotion out of our decision-making, we are giving ourselves the clearest picture possible and allowing our minds to function properly.

This process contains quite a bit of information, but it needs to happen within just a few seconds in most cases. That is why it is so important for us to develop tools to help us refocus as quickly as possible.

### **How We Refocus**

Learning to refocus effectively is pretty difficult. That is why it is so important to have tricks that we can play on our minds to help us move past mistakes and focus on the next task at hand.

Developing a 'reset trigger' for yourself or your team is usually a process of trial and error because we are all so unique and there isn't a one-size-fits-all solution here.

Every athlete and team is different and will possibly need a different 'reset trigger' so I will provide you with a few of my all-time favorites:

1. **Russell Wilson**- After working with famed sport psychologist Dr. Michael Gervais, Wilson discussed his 'Reset Button' technique. He says that after he throws an interception or makes a mistake he pictures a giant red button in an empty white room in his head. The button says 'RESET' on it in giant letters. To help him move past that mistake he smashes the giant imaginary button with his fist and that signifies to him that it's time to move on and forget the mistake that just happened.

2. **Augie Garrido**- While coaching baseball at the University of Texas for decades, Garrido developed his 'Flush' method. In the dugout he started keeping a miniature (6 inch tall) toilet. When his players struck out or made an error and came back to the dugout upset Garrido would walk up to them with the toilet and make them actually flush the toilet. This signified to them that the mistake was flushed away and gone for good, so they could now refocus on what's next and not be held back by this prior mess-up.

These are two of my favorite examples because they are pretty creative and 'out-there'. Yours doesn't have to be this complex. It can be as simple as saying 'RESET' or another trigger word to yourself, or making a physical movement that signifies it's time to move on.

As I said earlier, everyone's reset might look a little different, but the key is finding what works for you and your athletes, then practicing it over and over again until it becomes automatic. Developing resiliency is a long process, but it is one that is well worth the journey.

### **How Can I Apply This?**

I hope you now have a little better understanding of how we want to respond to adversity and how we can start building resiliency within our teams, but like I said earlier... This is a process that takes a lot of practice and repetition before it becomes automatic and we have an extremely resilient team. So what can I do, as a coach, to provide this type of 'practice and repetition'?

Resiliency is built through adversity. It really is that simple.

With that in mind, we have to put our athletes through some sort of adversity so they can practice these techniques and learn how they respond.

I'm not talking about the 'old-school adversity' of running athletes until they puke or yelling and screaming at them to get their adrenaline up and force them to react. These tactics don't translate to what happens in games. Instead, we want to create a sense of adversity that emulates what they will see and feel during a competition.

In our daily team practices and training there are tons of different ways we can create adversity for our athletes. It can literally be almost anything that makes a drill or exercise more difficult or puts the athletes at a disadvantage.

### **In Drills**

- Make them tougher than a game-situation
- Use an over or underinflated ball
- Create severe mismatches
- Mix in brand new drills they have never seen before

### **In Scrimmages**

- Mix up teams randomly in the middle of competition
- Make an intentionally bad call as the 'official'
- Use unbalanced teams
- Create high pressure situations

### **In Weightlifting/Training**

- Use new techniques to challenge them
- Make the workout high paced and hectic
- Don't allow them much downtime

As these adverse situations are playing out in practice it is also important to monitor how your athletes are responding. Are they getting upset and allowing their emotions to control their

responses? Or are they analyzing the new situation, refocusing, and adjusting accordingly like we want them to?

This is the perfect time to figure out what type of resiliency your team has and teach them how to improve it using the techniques and tips we discussed earlier.

Just like everything we do in sports, resiliency is a skill. If we never practice in adversity, we are never going to build resiliency. If I had never practiced shooting a free throw, how can I expect to go make the game winning free throw with no time on the clock in the State Championship game?

The same idea applies here. If our athletes have never had to battle back or fight uphill in a bad situation, how do we expect them to react when these situations pop up during a competition?

If we're able to intentionally create adverse situations in practice and training, we're allowing our athletes to practice how they respond and learn new techniques to respond effectively.

Building resilience in athletes is a long and difficult process, but by teaching them tools they can use and providing a practice environment that allows them to try those skills out, we are setting the stage for athletes to build their resiliency higher than it's ever been before.

Sports are wildly unpredictable. Which is why it's so important to be able to respond effectively no matter what happens.

### **This Week In Sports**

#### **1. Baseball is simply poetic.**

On Tuesday night, the New York Yankees went to Boston to play the Red Sox in a single-game elimination AL Wild Card matchup. If you are a baseball fan, you already know that this rivalry is

unparalleled in baseball and we expected an amazing matchup between these two clubs.

As a Yankees hater myself, I was glad to see Boston win and move onto the ALDS. But, when I say baseball is poetic, I'm not talking about the result of this game. Instead I'm talking about something that happened in the home half of the third inning of this game.

In the third inning of the American League wildcard game Kyle Schwarber of the Red Sox hit a massive no-doubt homerun off Yankees ace Gerrit Cole. Back in 2015 during the third inning of the National League wildcard game Kyle Schwarber of the Chicago Cubs hit a massive no-doubt homerun off Pittsburgh Pirates ace Gerrit Cole...

No. That wasn't a typo. Six years ago, in the same inning, of the same round of the playoffs, Kyle Schwarber hit an absolute moon-shot off the exact same opposing pitcher.

This is one of the craziest 'coincidences' I've seen in sports and it blows my mind when things like this happen. That's why the only word I can find to describe it is simply, poetic.

## **2. Bryson DeChambeau impresses in Long Drive.**

Immediately after winning the Ryder Cup for Team USA last weekend, Bryson DeChambeau hopped on a plane to Las Vegas to compete in the World Long Drive Championships for the first time.

If you're unfamiliar, the World Long Drive Championships (WLDC) is exactly what it sounds like. It is a competition between a bunch of massive men to see who can hit the longest tee shot in the world.

Anyone who plays golf knows that there is a lot more to the game than simply bombing it off the tee. Because of this, no WLDC contestants compete on the PGA tour and there has never been a



PGA tour pro to compete in the WLDC until DeChambeau did this week.

DeChambeau entered the event to see how his PGA tour leading driving distance stacked up against some of the longest hitters in the world. Realistically, no one expected Bryson to make it very far in the competition.

DeChambeau shocked us all when he took 3rd place, one round short of the finals. In a field of 80 professional long-drive hitters, DeChambeau was able to make it all the way to the semi-finals showcasing drives reaching 412 yards!

Seeing Bryson DeChambeau make the switch over to the world of Long Drive and being extremely successful was impressive and speaks to the man's work ethic and dedication to changing the game of golf. I look forward to what else DeChambeau has in store in the coming years.

### **Other Sport Psych Resources**

#### **1. The Ingredients to Building Team Cohesion**

Taylor Staden hosts a podcast called the **Mental Dive**. In a recent episode he had on Dr. Mark Bruner, a professor of Physical Education and Health at Nipissing University. During the podcast, there is a clip where they discuss what a healthy team environment looks like.

In this clip they discuss multiple things that play huge roles in our teams' cohesion and the majority of them are things that take place outside of team-based activities.

Team cohesion is such a complex idea, it's always nice to hear a new perspective on it and learn from as many credible sources as possible.

This podcast provides a great insight into what all goes into building healthy team cohesion. As a coach, it is important to not only build a strong team environment within the confines of

practice and competition, but to also do your best to build a strong team environment outside of team activities as well.

I recommend listening to at least this clip from their podcast, the full episode is also linked on that page.

[Check out the podcast clip HERE.](#)

## 2. [Athletes' Mental Health Resources](#)

As the world continues to destigmatize mental health, we are starting to have access to more mental health resources than ever. Athletes and coaches are very susceptible to suffering from mental health issues due to the stress and expectations that come with sports in America.

**The Athlete Network** published this article to help provide us with some more of these resources for athletes. While this article doesn't dive into the world of mental health issues in athletes, it instead provides a solid list of resources that could help you or your athletes that may be suffering from some mental health issues.

The more resources we have at our disposal, the better equipped we are to help those in need.

Check out this article to see the list of resources they provide for people!

[The article can be found HERE.](#)

### **Quick Quote**



"Obstacles don't have to stop you. If you run into a wall, don't turn around and give up. Figure out how to climb it, go through it, or work around it."

**-Michael Jordan**

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Thank you for reading and until next week, remember:

***Today is a great day to change a life!***

Cheers,

Bryce Strecker M.S.

Applied Sport Psychologist | Mental Skills Coach

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