



# MANUAL FOR BASKETBALL REFEREES' MENTAL PREPARATION



# MENTAL PREPARATION FOR BASKETBALL REFEREES

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## TABLE OF CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION .....	3
GOAL-SETTING AND DEVELOPMENT PLAN .....	6
CONCENTRATION AND ATTENTION.....	10
AROUSAL CONTROL .....	15
SELF – TALK.....	20
VISUALISATION AND IMAGERY .....	26
PRE-GAME PREPARATION .....	30
POST-GAME EVALUATION.....	33
REFERENCES .....	35

# INTRODUCTION



## INTRODUCTION

Nowadays, in **modern sport officiating**, beside good physical preparation and knowledge of the rules, mechanics and positioning, it is essential to be **mentally prepared**. Therefore, we have prepared this manual to provide you with basic information about psychological or mental preparation in basketball officiating.

It consists of both **theoretical and practical guidelines** on how to learn and improve some psychological skills which will help you perform better. You can read this manual as a whole or by chapter, depending on what you want to improve or understand better.

- In CHAPTER 1, you will find information on **GOAL-SETTING AND DEVELOPMENT PLAN** through your career. The intention of this chapter is to provide you with information on basic goal-setting principles that will help you to restructure your long-term, dream goals to process and development goals that will eventually lead you to the desirable outcome – your ultimate goal. Goal-setting is effective because it focuses attention, increases effort and motivation, encourages persistence, and regulates mind-set and behavior to develop strategies and problem solving solutions directed towards goal achievement. The more your goals are internally motivated and personalized the better is a chance to achieve them. Through one specific exercise explained in the chapter, you will see how goal-setting should be made and hopefully it will help you to do it by yourself for your career goals.
- CHAPTER 2 gives you an insight on **CONCENTRATION AND ATTENTION** as one of the most essential executive psychological skills. It is not unusual to hear referees say after the game “My performance was bad because of the low concentration I had during the game!”, “I could not manage to focus properly, so most of the time I was out of the game!”, “My concentration oscillated during the game and I didn’t feel comfortable!”. In this Chapter, you will find basic information on selective attention and attention shifting required for top performance. Attention control and selectivity are the result of your preparation through understanding the characteristics and demands of officiating. Attention should be focused as selectively as possible on relevant information and cues, excluding at the same time irrelevance and interference. Also, the more your skills are over-learned, the more you are prepared and experienced. You will be able to shift your attention according to the situation. Guided through some examples and exercises, you will be able to understand what is going on with the concentration and attention during the game, and what is essential to make a proper decision and control attention.
- CHAPTER 3 helps you find your **OPTIMAL LEVEL OF AROUSAL** and learn how to keep it under control. You will find both relaxation and activation techniques explained through examples and specific exercises. Techniques such as: relaxation breathing, imagery activation, self-talk and many others will help you adjust your activation level (by increasing or decreasing it) and reach your optimal arousal zone. If you learn to understand, change and control your arousal level, you will be able to perform more automatically and smoothly, and therefore more appropriately in various situations during the game.
- Through reading CHAPTER 4, you will discover how much your **SELF-TALK** and your interpretation style of specific situations and/or events can influence your performance. Used purposely, it can be a very powerful technique to improve your performance. To gain control over your self-talk, you must first become more aware of the words and sentences that you use. When you become aware of them and start to recognize your self-talk, particularly distorted thinking and irrational beliefs, you can change them into rational and affirmative ones. A big advantage of using positive/affirmative self-talk is that it helps you remain focused on the task (performance) at the present – here and now. **KEY WORDS** help you to eliminate the distracting, confidence-deflating effects of negative thoughts and self-talk. Key words or sentences can create a positive mental state and reinforce your performance, because the more you repeat a thought, the more automatic it becomes, and eventually lead to belief.

- CHAPTER 5 helps you understand and learn one of the most effective psychological techniques used in sport – IMAGERY. In imagery, we can construct scenes that never occurred in reality and rehearse events that have not yet happened. If you learn to do it correctly, it can improve and maximize the transfer from practice to performance. It can increase your self-confidence, reduce anxiety, re-direct and shift your attention properly so that you may feel prepared and ready for the game. Through presented imagery exercises in this chapter, you will learn to control and manage difficult problem situations, to rehearse skills, mechanics/positioning and concentration becoming prepared.
- CHAPTER 6 presents basic guidelines on PRE-GAME PREPARATION routines. Preparing for a specific event or a game by understanding what are the main characteristics of the teams I will be officiating, what are the characteristics of my officiating crew and what I can expect from this game/event, helps you warm up mentally and optimize your arousal level to be ready from the start.
- Finally, in CHAPTER 7 on POST-GAME EVALUATION, you will find how video game analysis is one of the most effective methods for self-evaluation after the game. By doing self-evaluation, it is important to focus on both the best performance situations and the areas of improvements.

# GOAL-SETTING AND DEVELOPMENT PLAN



## CHAPTER 1: GOAL-SETTING AND DEVELOPMENT PLAN

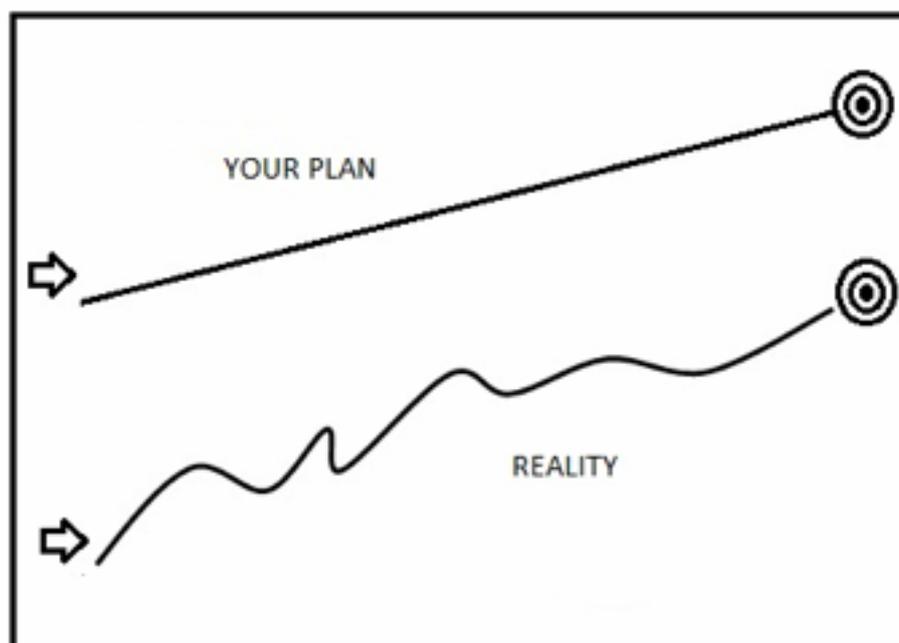
When thinking about our professional success and career development, we are usually highly motivated and driven by a desire for success. However, the main question should be “Am I willing to commit in order to achieve my goals? Am I willing to make any or all sacrifices required for goals achievement?” **Goal-setting** is a great starting point because it helps you to identify what you want and how you will accomplish it by developing a **systematic action plan**.



**Table 1.** Types of goals

TYPES OF GOALS	
<p><b>Process goals</b></p> <p>Task-oriented goals referred to improve form, skill, knowledge, technique or strategy. Helpful when you learn a new movement, skill or technique. For example, new positioning in 3PO mechanics or new signal and rule application.</p>	<p>Long - term yearly (1-4 yrs)</p>
<p><b>Performance goals</b></p> <p>Refers to improve overall performance. To achieve your performance goals, you must achieve a series of process goals. For example, if you want to be better in 3PO, you should learn and master new positioning movement and technique.</p>	<p>Mid - term monthly (3-6 mnt)</p>
<p><b>Outcome goals</b></p> <p>Result or product oriented goals. To attain them, it is required to achieve performance goals. For example, if you want to earn more nominations, you need to perform great 3PO officiating.</p>	<p>Short - term weekly (1-4 w)</p>
	<p>Daily</p>

It is important that you **evaluate your progress** in achieving short-term process goals. This will help you stay motivated, and gives you a feedback about possible adjustments on action plans. Sometimes, because of some unexpected and unpredictable life events (i.e. injuries, life, family and personal issues) or skill development process speed (you are progressing faster or slower than expected), you may encounter obstacles that will force you to **adjust your plan** to achieve the goals (Figure 1). You will need to adjust either process/plan, specific solutions or timeline.



**Figure 1.** Your plan to achieve the goal vs reality

#### REMEMBER

- Always restructure your outcome, ultimate and long-term goals to process performance and short-term goals.
- Set your goals in affirmative way, focusing on what you want to increase or include, rather than on what you want to reduce or avoid.
- Make action plans and write them.
- Make sure that you evaluate your progress, weekly or monthly.

#### EXERCISE 1.1: 3 GOALS

1. I want to become more physically fit
2. I want to be better in 3PO mechanics
3. I want to become Crew Chief

#### GOAL No.1. "I WANT TO BECOME MORE PHYSICALLY FIT!"

- **Be more specific:** I want to increase my muscle mass, especially in my upper body. I want to have a better endurance. (Now you have two specific goals).
- **Set the time relation:** Until the beginning of the season (short-term to mid-term goals).
- **Make a plan:** personalized program with a fitness coach. Going three times a week to the gym to work on my muscle mass. Running five times a week in the morning for 40 minutes.

### GOAL No.2. "I WANT TO BE BETTER IN 3PO MECHANICS!"

- **Be more specific:** I want to improve my movements in 3PO mechanics, especially cross-step and lead positioning.
- **Set the time relation:** Until the beginning of the spring season, I want to be better in 3PO mechanics (mid-term goal).
- **Make a plan:** I will download the application on mechanics for basketball officiating. Each day, I will take 60 minutes to work on the programme. Every second day, I will search for video clips and game analysis to see some 3PO mechanics at high level officiating. Each day, I will use imagery scripts to improve my movements in mechanics. I will imagine situations when I should do cross-step more often. I will prepare scripts for positioning when I am in a lead role and repeat them through imagery.

### GOAL No. 3. "I WANT TO BECOME CREW CHIEF!"

- **Set the time relation:** Next season (mid to long-term goal).
- Restructure it to fit the main CC characteristics – ask yourself: "What skills and knowledge are important for becoming a CC in officiating?" – performance and process goals. I.e. High level of rule knowledge, high level of rule application, fit body presence, good communication skills, game management skills, concentration consistency, team worker, etc.
- **What you need to improve the most:** For example: the most important to improve: Fit body presence, rule application and communication skills (three goals).
- **Make a plan:**
  1. FIT BODY PRESENCE (refers to the 1st goal you set earlier).
  2. RULE APPLICATION: each day (or every second day), I will use 60 minutes to read one segment of a rulebook. After reading, I will search some examples in video clips from a specific game and see what it means to apply the rules I have just read. Each week, I will take some rule knowledge quizzes to see the development of my knowledge. Each week, I will officiate at least on friendly game.
  3. COMMUNICATION SKILLS: I will find what are the basic principles in communication – communication process, types, rules, context, and others that will help me to be better in communicating with my colleagues, coaches, and players. Do I need to improve more my verbal or nonverbal communication skills? I will watch high level officiating games to see how more experienced referees communicate during the game.

When you restructure all of your process and performance development goals into short-term weekly and daily plans, you may be surprised by how many efforts, sacrifices and work is required to achieve some of the goals. At that moment, it is important to **remind yourself that this is Your goal and Your choice to do it or not**. If you want to become a great referee eventually, you will want to do this because by doing it, you are closer to your dream goal!

# CONCENTRATION AND ATTENTION



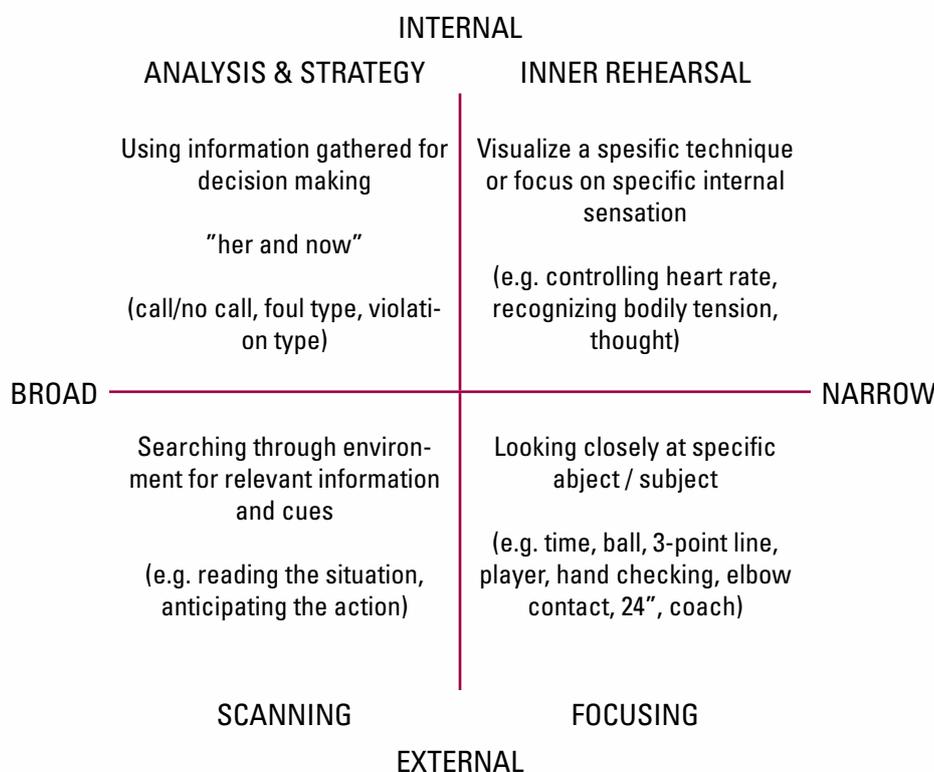
## CHAPTER 2: CONCENTRATION AND ATTENTION

Concentration in sport performance is usually called the executive psychological skill because on some degree controls all others. During the game your nervous system through all senses detects millions of information from various sources, so it is very important that you filter information that is relevant and vital in order for your performance to be successful.

**Table 2.** Relevant or helpful and distracting or harmful information

RELEVANT INFORMATION		
<b>EXTERNAL</b> related to information outside yourself that is relevant to your performance : sights, sounds, smells, touch, and other sensory feedback information (basket, ball, court, players, time table, 24" time, lines, co-officials, crowd, etc.)	<b>INTERNAL</b> related to any information that you can focus on inside yourself relevant to your optimal level of performance: affirmative thoughts, positive self-talk, emotions, physiological activity, optimal heart rate, breathing rhythm, and kinesthetic feedback.	<b>PERFORMANCE RELATED</b> profession and sport specific informations: rules, codes, norms, etc.
DISTRACTING INFORMATION		
<b>INTERFERING</b> Internal or external cues that hinder performance directly: negative thoughts and self-talk, thinking about past mistakes, thinking about possible future mistakes, increased heart rate, tiredness, fatigue, noise, co-officials mistakes, inappropriate behavior of coaches, players, fans, etc.	<b>IRRELEVANT</b> cues not relevant for exact situation and your performance but can take your mind away from an effective focus: work, private life issues, social plans for that evening, flight schedule, etc.	

According to Attentional Style Theory (Nideffer, 1976; 1990; 2001) focus of attention shifts along two dimensions: a dimension of **WIDTH (broad to narrow)** and a dimension of **DIRECTION (internal or external)** which results in four different attentional styles (Figure 2).



**Figure 2.** Four attentional styles

**During the game** while you are officiating, **many shifting is required**, from external-broad (i.e. scanning the whole situation in your AoR) to *external-narrow* (i.e. hand checking or elbow contact) and *broad-internal* (decision making – call/no call). Because high level officiating requires a good reaction time and decision making, it is really important that you do not "stay" or "stuck" into one attentional style too long!

**TRY TO SHIFT YOUR ATTENTION QUICKLY AND ACCORDINGLY TO SITUATIONAL DEMANDS!**

**EXAMPLE 2.1:** When you start to think about your previous mistake (self-doubt and negative thought) arousal increases, shifting breaks down, and attention begins to narrow involuntarily and becomes more internal. You can stay too long in your internal focus and lose a chance to see and recognize the important information that is in front of and around you during the action that is going on "here and now" (external-broad and external-narrow). If this happens it is important that you shift your attention as soon as possible to broad-external (to see the "big picture") and search for information outside the court when action is actually going on. This shifting usually happens in a few seconds, sometimes in a second or two, depending on the situation's characteristics and demands. Using some **key words** and **affirmative self-talk** can help you to **speed up the shifting** from a "stuck" area to other required cues and areas of attention. The more your skills are over-learned, the more you are prepared and experienced and you will be able to shift your attention and be better in performance.

## CONCENTRATION EXERCISES

### **EXERCISE 2.1:** GRID WITH NUMBERS AND SIGNALS

Your task in this exercise is to connect (with a line) all numbers, by order, beginning from number 1 to number 2, then from number 2 to number 3, from number 3 to number 4, and so on, until you connecting number 49 to number 50.

You can start with 2 minutes and see how many numbers you can connect during that time.

After the 2 minutes have expired, your task is to search for the signal (Ø) and count how many signals are there.

5	12	34	Ø		29	1	16	50
47		48	8	23		Ø	42	
	33		41		3	28	15	32
		21		35			Ø	49
11	40		14	Ø	18	10	26	43
		Ø		17		Ø	6	
24		20				44	7	36
	Ø	38		2	37	31		25
39	4		45	Ø	27		19	
Ø	22	46	13			9	Ø	30

This type of exercise can help you learn to focus your attention and scan the whole picture for relevant cues. You can modify this exercise with higher numbers or a different sign, even letters. Also, when your concentration improves, you can add different types of distractors such loud music or TV. Also, you can reduce the time required to connect the numbers from 2 minutes to 1:45 min.

### **EXERCISE 2.2 :** EXPLORING ATTENTIONAL STYLES

Search for video clips from any game you prefer. Then choose one scene and freeze it. Sit comfortably and let your exploration begin:

1. Study the scene closely and scan the whole situation. Observe the position of the referees according to their AoR. Look at how the players are standing and try to anticipate what will happen next.
2. Now, select a specific object or subject – i.e. 24" clock and see how many seconds is left for this action.
3. Now, shift your attention to your heart rate, and try to control your breathing rhythm in a few seconds. Search for the specific sensation while doing it – i.e. air flow during the inhalation.

4. Now, again, scan the whole situation and by anticipating the next move in this scene make a decision in a way as how you would you do (movement or decision) if you were one of the referees.
5. After you made a decision, press play and see what actually happens in the next action.

This type of exercise helps you to experience different attentional styles by shifting your focus through external – internal – broad – narrow dimensions. You can use different scenes and in each of them you can choose different information or cue to focus on.

### **EXERCISE 2.3: FIND THE DIFFERENCE**

This exercise refers to looking for the differences between the seemingly the same pictures. Some differences are more visible and clear than others, and your task is to find as many differences as you can within a given period of time.

With this type of exercise you improve your attention shifting and also your patience.

You can find this kind of exercise online for free and practice on your smartphone or computer.

# AROUSAL CONTROL

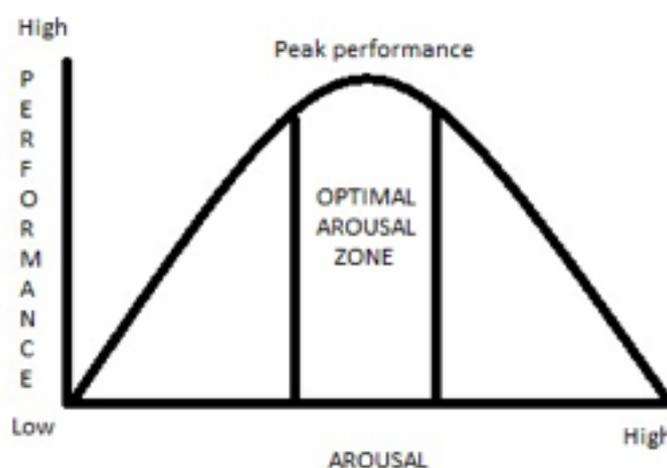


## CHAPTER 3: AROUSAL CONTROL

It is alright to have “butterflies in the stomach” as long as they are “flying in formation”. Finding the balance between feeling over-excited and feeling over-relaxed – your optimal arousal level – is essential for your peak performance.

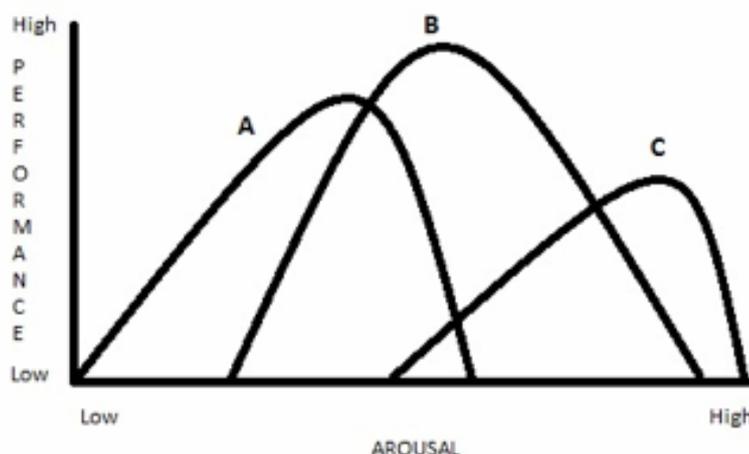
Arousal level refers to a person’s general physiological and psychological activation of the body that ranges and varies on a continuum from on the one hand deep sleep and on the other hand to panic or intense excitement.

As arousal increases from low to moderate (PSYCH-UP ZONE), performance improves, eventually reaching a zone where performance is at its best (OPTIMAL AROUSAL ZONE). But when arousal is too high and increases beyond the optimal zone (PSYCH-OUT ZONE) it will reduce performance quality (Figure 3).



**Figure 3.** Inverted - U model of arousal performance-relationship and optimal zone of functioning (Burton and Raedeke, 2008; Landers, 2001; Weinberg and Richardson, 1990).

Individuals function differently, and each person has a unique arousal curve (Figure 4). It is important that you do not compare yourself with other officials and that you understand that some of them need to psych-down or relax before the game to achieve their optimal level of arousal, while other need to psych-up or activate.



**Figure 4.** Individuals difference in optimal arousal (energy) zones. Person A, B and C (Burton and Raedeke 2008; Hanin, 2000).

While preparing for the game and actually officiating, it is important that you find your optimal level of arousal and learn how to keep it under control.

**Table 3.** Arousal control techniques

<b>AROUSAL CONTROL TECHNIQUES</b>	
<p style="text-align: center;"><b>RELAXATION TECHNIQUES</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• helps you control your arousal level by decreasing it</li> <li>• decrease unwanted muscular tension, guides your concentration and increases enjoyment.</li> </ul> <p style="text-align: center;">↓</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Psych-down relaxation breathing            Progressive muscle relaxation (PMR)            Self-talk and key words            Imagery and visualization            Music            Stretching</p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>ACTIVATION TECHNIQUES</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• helps you control your arousal level by increasing it,</li> <li>• enhance your concentration and focus, and elevate your mood state and confidence.</li> </ul> <p style="text-align: center;">↓</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Psych-up activation breathing            Self-talk and triggers            Imagery and visualization            Music            Physical activity</p>

### AROUSAL CONTROL EXERCISES

#### **EXERCISE 3.1: PROLONGED RELAXATION BREATHING:**

Relaxation breathing rhythm means that exhalation interval is longer for at least two intervals / seconds than inhalation interval. I.e. if your inhalation interval is 4 seconds, than your exhalation interval should be 6 – 8 seconds. Usual relaxation rhythms are: 3:5, 3:6, 4:7, 4:8, etc.

- Sit comfortable and close your eyes. Turn your attention to your breathing and concentrate on sensations in your body while taking each breath. Further, and in conjunction with your breathing, you should focus on the muscle groups of your body where you feel tenser.
- Inhale through your nose into your abdomen, so that your stomach muscles and abdominal membrane spreads (like a balloon), and then let the air fill and expand the central upper chest. You may stop inhaling when you no longer feel comfortable taking air.
- As you exhale, tighten your stomach muscles and the air should be pushed out through your stomach and mouth. Imagine that you are emptying the air from the balloon. Associate each exhale with your key word for relaxation (i.e. relax, calm, smooth, easy, float). Exhale until you cannot comfortably continue to breathe out.
- Breathe smoothly and comfortably repeating your key relaxing word. With each breath you will feel more relaxed and comfortable with your body. Pay attention to the sensation in your body while you inhale and exhale. Try to only concentrate on your breathing rhythm and body sensations. Remind yourself that you will feel as relaxed and alert as you want to be for the next task.
- Continue this exercise for about 5 to 10 minutes.

You will find out that as you breathe in this way, you will quite naturally come to be comfortable, relaxed and calm.

### **EXERCISE 3.2: SHORT RELAXATION BREATHING – THREE BREATHS TECHNIQUE**

In a situation where you do not have much time for prolonged relaxation techniques, this short breathing exercise can help you to relax quickly and effectively.

- Breathe in and count to three. Then allow your neck and shoulders to relax as you breathe out while counting up to six. Use your key relaxation word (i.e. calm).
- Breathe in and count up to three. Then allow your abdomen and back muscles to relax as you breathe out while counting up to six. Use your key relaxation word (i.e. relax).
- Breathe in and count up to three. Then allow your whole body to relax as you breathe out while counting up to six. Use your key relaxation word (i.e. calm).

For example, you may feel some tension in your shoulders and arms areas. While breathing use the relaxation rhythm breathing with a prolonged exhaling breath. As you breathe out allow your shoulders and arms to relax by saying one of your cue relaxing words.

### **EXERCISE 3.3: PROGRESSIVE MUSCLE RELAXATION (PMR)**

The purpose of PMR is to help individuals to develop an awareness of the difference between tension and relaxation, and how to let go of this tension.

- Tense all the muscles in the neck area (while you breathe in) and hold it for a few seconds.
- Then gradually start releasing the tension (while you breathe out). Repeat this twice.
- Pay attention to the contrast between tensed and relaxed muscles and be aware of the feeling when your muscle area is relaxed.
- Then repeat this with other muscle groups in your body.

### **EXERCISE 3.4: RELAXATIONAL AND ACTIVATIONAL SELF-TALK**

You can create or change your arousal level by controlling your thoughts through self-talk. To use self-talk to create or change your mood and arousal level you need to find an appropriate phrase or key (cue) word as a trigger. Triggers in conjunction with breathing and/or imagery can be very effective to control arousal levels.

- To calm down and relax you can try to use this trigger words: calm, relax, loose, chill, breathe deeply, or any word or phrase that you can associate with the relaxed feeling.
- To psych you up and activate you can try using this trigger words: action, focus, ready, go, move, search, or any word or phrase that you associate with a high energy feeling.

### **EXERCISE 3.5: “PEACFUL PLACE” IMAGERY SCRIPT**

In imagery relaxation you imagine taking a mini vacation to a place where you feel relaxed and comfortable – “peaceful place” script. The more you can transport yourself into that special place, the more relaxed you will be.

- Sit comfortable, close your eyes and start with the abdominal breathing. Find your relaxation rhythm and concentrate on every breath.
- Allow your eyes and face muscles to relax. Concentrate on your relaxation breathing and be aware of your relaxation through your entire body.
- Now, imagine your favorite peaceful place, when you feel relaxed and calm (i.e. riverside, white sand beach, mountain, forest, etc.).
- Recall the feeling of relaxation when you are at that place. Allow yourself to drift back to that place and immerse yourself in it once more.

### **EXERCISE 3.6: ACTIVATION IMAGERY SCRIPT**

- Sit comfortable, close your eyes and start with the abdominal breathing. Find your optimal activation rhythm and concentrate on every breath.
- Then think back to a situation where your arousal state was optimal and produced a great performance.
- Recall precise states that led you to that arousal level (i.e. focused, under control, full of self-belief, prepared and ready).
- Recall a specific situation during the game when your performance was at the peak.
- Capture that sensation with the key word, image or feeling and use it to every time when you feel that you need to increase your arousal level.

### **EXERCISE 3.7: ACTIVATIONAL BREATHING**

Activation breathing rhythm means that your exhalation interval is the same (or one interval longer) than inhalation interval. I.e. if your inhalation interval is 3 seconds, then your exhalation interval is 3-4 second. Usual activation breathing rhythms are: 2:2, 3:3, 3:4, 4:4, and 4:5.

- Inhale through your nose into your abdomen, so that your stomach muscles and abdominal membrane spreads (like a balloon), and then let the air fill and expand the central upper chest. You may stop inhaling when you can no longer take in air comfortably.
- As you exhale, tighten your stomach muscles and the air should be pushed out through your stomach and mouth. Imagine that you are emptying the air from the balloon. Exhale until you can no longer continue to breathe out comfortably.
- Continue this exercise for about 1 minute.

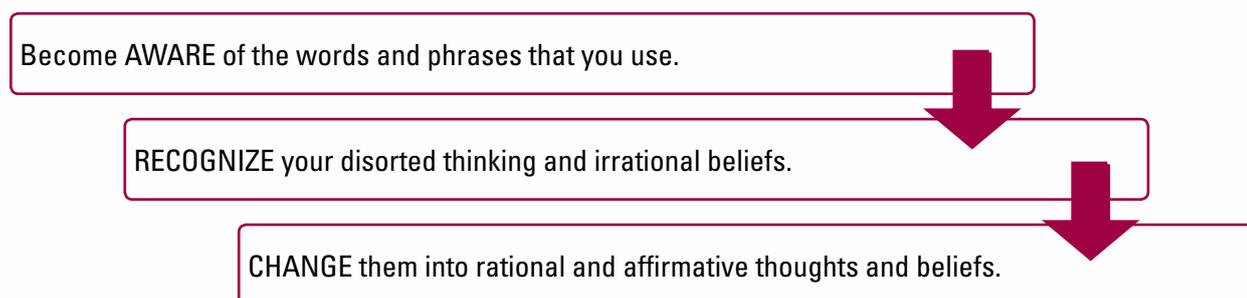
Short activation breathing (2 – 3 breaths) can help you feel strong, focused, and ready for the action.

# SELF - TALK



## CHAPTER 4: SELF – TALK

When you think about something and have an **internal dialogue in your mind**, you are actually doing self-talk. Thinking about yourself and saying something to yourself is crucial for your performance. Self-talk can sometimes become a self-fulfilling prophecy; either positive or negative. The more you repeat a thought, the more automatic it becomes, and eventually leads to a belief. It is therefore important to control your self-talk in a way of how you think, what you think about and when you will use it.

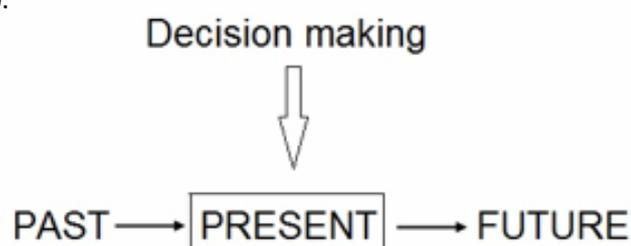


### TRIGGER SITUATIONS FOR NEGATIVE SELF-TALK:

- Missing a call
- Doubtful decision
- Listening to coach and players complaining
- Listening to the crowd
- Losing your concentration
- Bad teamwork between co-officials
- Forgetting a rule
- Forgetting the mechanics and the positioning
- Fatigue and tiredness

Positive self-talk, task-oriented, and encouraging will boost your confidence and performance. Negative self-talk, on the other hand, can hurt your confidence, and cause more anxiety and lead to poor performance.

Using **positive / affirmative self-talk** can help you remain focused on the task and the performance at the present moment – **here and now** (Figure 5).



**Figure 5.** Decision making at the present situation

It is important that you stay focused on the situation “here and now” – the action happening in front of you on the court. That is the time and the place where the decision is made.

**Table 4.** Non effective self-talk

<b>THINKING ABOUT</b>		
<b>NEGATIVE PAST EVENTS</b>	<b>NEGATIVE FUTURE EVENTS</b>	<b>DISTRACTIONS</b>
<p>mistakes or bad decisions you had 10 seconds, 2 or 5 minutes ago</p> <p>“How could I do this?”            “Why I did not see that contact?”            “I made a terrible call!”</p> <p style="text-align: center;">↓</p> <p>anxiety starts to increase, attention starts to narrow and directing too internal            and            you are not able to concentrated on the present action and you’ll probably not be able to make a proper decision</p>	<p>what will the consequences be if you do make mistakes</p> <p>“I hope I will not do make a mistake again.” “Will I make it the last two minutes under pressure?”, “What if I blow a big call?”, “What will the observer say after this game?”</p> <p style="text-align: center;">↓</p> <p>anxiety starts to increase, attention starts to narrow and directing too internal            and            you are not able to stay concentrated on the present action and you’ll probably not be able to make a proper decision</p>	<p>thinking about so many things, and paying attention to too many cues, especially the distracting and irrelevant ones</p> <p>crowd, flight time, private life issues</p> <p style="text-align: center;">↓</p> <p>Attention starts to spread and becomes too broad-external            and            you are not able to stay concentrated on the present action and you’ll probably not be able to make a proper decision</p>

Many people believe that emotions and behavior are products of a situation in which you perform, but on the contrary, it is your **interpretation of the situation** that determines your mood, emotions and behavior. How you perceive possible consequences of your performance it is essential. If you start to think that you will fail in this game, you will start to feel anxious, and eventually perform under your abilities.

Generally speaking, each situation can be interpreted as a **CHALLENGE** or a **THREAT**.

Perceiving a situation as threat can lead to some physiological and cognitive changes (i.e. increased heart rate, muscle tension, narrow focus of attention, negative thoughts, etc.). Perceiving a situation as a challenge can give you an additional energy burst and shift your attention towards achieving the goal – managing the challenge.

**EXAMPLE 4.1:** If you are nominated to the FIBA U19 World Championship and you will officiate the opening game you may perceive the information as a challenge or threat (Table 5).

**Table 5.** Situation perception – challenging or threatening

SITUATION / EVENT: Nomination for U19 World Championship perceived as:	
THREAT	CHALLENGE
<p><b>THOUGHTS</b> (i.e. “OMG this is so important!”, “I cannot make any mistakes!”, “What will everyone think if I blow up at the opening game?”)</p> <p style="text-align: center;">↓</p> <p><b>REACTIONS</b> <i>(emotional, physiological, behavioral)</i></p> <p>Anxiety and fear Self-doubt Confidence loss Increased heart rate and breathing rhythm Choking Narrowed attention</p> <p style="text-align: center;">↓</p> <p><b>PERFORMANCE</b> Poor</p>	<p><b>THOUGHTS</b> (i.e. I earned this nomination due to my great officiating during the last two seasons. I will physically and mentally prepare for this event. I will try to do my best when once there!”)</p> <p style="text-align: center;">↓</p> <p><b>REACTIONS</b> <i>(emotional, physiological, behavioral)</i></p> <p>Pride Excitement Optimal heart rate and breathing rhythm Calm and ready Confident Proper attention shifting and re-focusing</p> <p style="text-align: center;">↓</p> <p><b>PERFORMANCE</b> Good</p>

#### CHANGING NEGATIVE SELF-TALK TO POSITIVE SELF-TALK

When you become aware of your negative thoughts and inappropriate self-talk, it is important that you change them into positive and affirmative ones (Table 6). You can do this by using a thought stopping and solution mode thinking!

Self-talk should be affirmative in the direction of what you want to do, not what you don't want to do. For example, instead of saying "I don't want to make any mistakes" you should say "I am prepared to do my best.", "I will pay attention to my AoR and be ready for the decision".

**Table 6.** Changing negative self-talk to positive self-talk.

Negative self-talk	Positive self-talk
That was a terrible call	It can happen to anyone
I will mess up with the mechanics	Search for the best position to see the action
I cannot make any mistake	I am prepared to do my best
If I do mistake everyone will think that I am a bad referee	I am not in control of others. I am in control of my performance and will concentrate on that
I hate when I feel that he starts to provoke me	Keep calm - take a deep breath and regain control
I can't make any mistake last two minutes!	Last two minutes I will keep my concentration at the highest level
I will never be a top referee	I can make it if I set my goals properly, step by step, and continue to work hard.
Nothing is happening at my AoR. When will I make a call?	Wait, be patient, follow the action focus on my AoR!

## TRIGGERS

The term trigger indicates a word, action, phrase, or stimulus that reminds you to stay relaxed, calm and focused in a particular situation. Triggers can be something general or something very personal for you that will help you in some particular situations (Table 7). The more the trigger is personalized, the more effect it will have on your concentration, your task orientation and it will reinforce your performance.

**Table 7. Triggers**

KEY WORDS AND PHRASES	i.e. relax, calm down, focus, pay attention, move, control, wait, be ready, search, re-focus, etc.
SIGNALS AND SIGNS	i.e. red stop signal, green light, blue arrow, etc.
ACTIONS OR STIMULATIONS	i.e. pinch on a leg, snapping fingers, touch on the belt, eye contact with co-officials, etc.

**EXERCISE 4.1: CONTROLLING SELF-TALK**

In order to change negative thoughts into more constructive and positive ones, it is important to:

- Become aware and recognize a negative thought or self-talk (i.e. "This was a bad decision. How could I make such a mistake? I am a really bad referee")
- Stop and interrupt negative thought with a trigger or physical action (i.e. red stop signal, touch the belt, pinch yourself)
- Regain control with 1-2 breaths

Use the affirmative self-talk (i.e. "Ok, this was a bad decision, but for now I will put it in the "pocket", and analyze it after the game. Stay focused on the action in front of you! Search for the best position to make a best possible decision!")

By doing this you will tell yourself that you did make a mistake but you will think about it after the game. Also, you shift your attention to present action and task oriented thinking!

**EXERCISE 4.2: SOLUTION MODE THINKING**

For each worry and possible problem situation create a possible solution.

- What is the problem situation? i.e. "Coach A usually starts to provoke me."
- What can I do and how can I properly react? i.e. "I will stay calm and concentrated on the action on the court. If he starts to be too rude, I will give him a warning."

By doing this, you give yourself directions and regain control.

This kind of thinking requires that in any problem situation you set your mind to solution mode. If we start to think that everything is going to be perfect and that there will be no problems during the game, this will not be productive nor effective, as we do not know that for sure, as we cannot predict events. What can we do is to prepare for some problem situations that can usually occur during the game (more about preparation for the game in Chapter 6).

# VISUALISATION AND IMAGERY



## CHAPTER 5: VISUALISATION AND IMAGERY

You may not have realized it, but you’ve probably already used imagery in your life – when you thinking about game you will officiate, when you remembering the great performance you had day before, the good communication with colleagues, the firm signal showing, and so on.

**VISUALIZATION** refers to only “**picturing or seeing**” something in your mind, where **IMAGERY** refers to using of **all senses** – sight, hearing, touch, smell, taste, and movement, as well as thoughts, emotions, and reactions. Images of some situations can be very vivid and can evoke many feelings and mood states (e.g. fear, anxiety, happiness, pride, confidence, etc.). The more you can control imagination, the more you can expect to control your performance.

**Table 8.** Imagery

IMAGERY SCENARIO	
Skills development, rehearsal and mastering Signals presentation Mechanics and positioning Emotional and behavioral control Game management Specific situations Problem solving	
IMAGERY PERSPECTIVE	
INTERNAL	EXTERNAL
imagining yourself performing from your own eye perspective, like being inside your body and experiencing those images and sensations which you usually experience when performing in the actual situation.	imagining yourself performing from outside perspective, like you see yourself on TV, or from camera view – looking at yourself from outside.
IMAGERY SPEED	
SLOW MOTION	REAL TIME
usually used for problem solving situations and learning new skills or movements in mechanics. E.g. If you are learning new signal presentation or new mechanics movement, start in slow motion (until you improve and learn it) and eventually move to real time imagining.	used for mastering and coordinating skills into complete performance. E.g. imagining the game situation of post play and required movements and positioning during that action.

It is important that your imagery is **vivid, clear and controllable**. When you are imagining specific situation scenarios it should be also detailed as much as it can.

Using imagery as a coping technique helps you anticipate potential problems (e.g. distractions, negative emotions, possible mistakes, etc.) and refocusing to solutions and next actions after their occurrence. You can use **solution mode scenarios** for some specific situation you usually have problems (e.g. difficult coach behavior, losing concentration after first mistake). Imagery with the positive and solution mode scenario cannot guarantee a good result but it makes it more likely. You will probably be most controllable over some situations if you rehearse them also through imagery.

Imagery can be effective as a supplement rather than a replacement for real situation practice, but it can also be used when you are not able to practice physically due to fatigue, injury, or lack of nominations.

**Table 9.** Imagery before, during and after the game

BEFORE THE GAME	DURING THE GAME	AFTER THE GAME
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>to improve your skills or mechanics,</li> <li>to prepare for game characteristics (team characteristics, player style of play, coach behavior, etc.)</li> <li>for specific situations that may occur</li> <li>on the game day to recreate a key signal</li> <li>to control your arousal state.</li> </ul> <p>Using imagery for preparation can increase your odds of successful performance.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>during the time outs or other short breaks</li> <li>for next task or action required for the next situation.</li> <li>recall on situation that happened before</li> <li>situation that is likely to occur when the time starts</li> </ul> <p>(e.g. player management, preparing for new team strategy, etc).</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>you create a replay of your performance and</li> <li>helps you recall the good aspects and memorize them</li> <li>helps you recall and visually change bad decisions and search areas of improvement</li> </ul> <p>Effective way to analyze and review your performance.</p>

## IMAGERY EXERCISES

When you start to use imagery technique make sure that you are not too tired or sleepy. Make yourself comfortable at some quiet and private place. Sit in a comfortable position and gently close your eyes, and focus on your breathing pattern. Find your breathing rhythm that is comfortable and try to control it. Repeat breathing with five to ten breaths and switch your focus to imagining a specific situation you want to rehearse.

### EXERCISE 5.1 : MANAGING A DIFFICULT SITUATION – PROBLEM SOLVING

- Find yourself a quiet and private place with no distractions.
- Start your imagery exercise with breathing rhythm that is most comfortable for you. After you manage to direct your attention to breathing prepare yourself for the next move – imagining scenario of a situation that usually gives you trouble.
- Go through the situation like you usually do and find what is that you are doing wrong.
- Then think about the best possible solution for that situation and try to imagine doing it like that. See, hear and feel your proper response to this situation.
- Repeat it 2-3 times and always try to retain the image of what you want to do.

### **EXERCISE 5.2 : ROLE MODEL WATCHING**

- Search for a video record or clip with the performance of your favorite role models in officiating.
- Focus on their mechanics movements, body presentation and game management skills that you would like to add to your presentation. Watch them performing a particular move or reaction and repeat it several times.
- Then try to repeat that same movement imagining yourself doing it on the court. First, you can do it from external point of view watching yourself from the outside (camera view). Then, you can try it from internal point of view (eye perspective).

### **EXERCISE 5.3: IMAGINING DESIRED OUTCOME**

- Find yourself a quiet and private place with no distractions.
- Start your imagery exercise with breathing rhythm that is most comfortable for you. Concentrate on controlling your breathing and repeat it several times until you become ready to start the imagery.
- Mentally rehearse a play or action first in slow-motion and then gradually faster to the real-time speed. Execute every movement and decision successfully, and fully anticipate what is going on during the action.
- Then practice the same action under various circumstances to ensure that you are adopting it appropriately.
- Focus on making sure that your movements are fluid and lead you to desired outcome.

# PRE-GAME PREPARATION



## CHAPTER 6: PRE-GAME PREPARATION

Officiating at top level is usually the result of a great knowledge and experience, but also of top pre-game preparation. Mental preparation before the game helps you warm up mentally and optimize your arousal level to get ready for the game. You feel more concentrated, more confident, ready, and in control while doing your pre-game preparation plan.

Although pre-game routines are personalized, and different for each referee, in this chapter will be presented some general guidelines.

### **Psychological or mental preparation for game involves:**

- Rules knowledge and interpretation preparation – this knowledge is essential and basic, and should be at the highest level. The better you know the rule book, the better you'll be able to apply it in a real game situation. So, if you feel that you need to renew some of the rules' knowledge, you should read the rule book, repeat them visually through imagery and watch them on video clips.
- Game characteristics preparation – it refers to venue and teams characteristics (i.e. specific type of team strategy and play, current team position, coach behavior, player behavior, playing style of specific player, injured players, statistics of the team, fan zone characteristics, etc.) This kind of information can help you prepare for possible specific situations – i.e. player who usually likes to flop – and your reactions and game management solution for those situations.
- Crew characteristics preparation – knowing the characteristics of your co-officials and their officiating style will help you to know what to expect in a point of view of game management and criteria, and also, your reaction to their behavior and performance during the game. Knowing your co-officials' characteristics helps you prepare for the pre-game conference topics and establish the required criteria.
- Arousal control preparation – refers to your individual preparation through imagery, self-talk and solution mode thinking.
- Focus on performance (not on outcome) – during the preparation for the game it is really important that you are highly focused on your performance (What should I do and how will I do it?) not on the outcome (Will I officiate good?).

**EXAMPLE 6.1:** If before the game you start to think “How will I be evaluated by the observer?” or “How many good or bad decisions will I make?” you are not focusing on your performance but on the outcome. By changing your outcome goals for that game, i.e. “I want to be highly evaluated by the observer”, “I want to officiate this game without any mistakes” or “I want this game to end without any conflictive situations” to performance goals for that game, i.e. “I will concentrate on my AoR”, “I will search for the best position in each situation to make a good decision”, “In any conflictive situation with this challenging coach I will try to find the best possible solution to manage it” you are putting your focus and attention to your performance, to what you want to do in specific situations. By focusing on your performance you are getting closer to a better evaluation from the observer, higher number of good decisions, better game management.

### EVENT PREPARATION

If you are nominated to officiate at some tournaments during the summer (U16, U17, U18, U19) it is important to also prepare for your expectations and focus on your daily and performance goals – How do I want to officiate? How will I prepare for each day for every game I'll be nominated?

**EXAMPLE 6.2:** If you start thinking that you want to officiate finals (outcome), it is important that you prepare for each game as if it were the finals itself. You should prepare for each game, step by step, you should not think about the final game until it comes. Because, by focusing in each game separately (game characteristics, crew characteristics, arousal control and performance goals) you are able to perform (officiate) better, and by officiating at your highest level you are closer to your ultimate goal – officiating the finals.

The more you're prepared, the more you'll feel confident and ready, but remember, as much as you are prepared be ready for the unexpected. The better you're prepared, the better you'll find the solutions for the unexpected situations.

### **EXERCISE 6.1: "WHAT IF" SCENARIOS**

While preparing for a specific game, you can use "what if" scenarios to prepare for possible difficult or unexpected situations (i.e. fight between players, broken time machine, one referee is late for pre-game conference, etc.).

- Scenario: what you expect that can happen?
- Describe the situation
- How should I react in this situation? – your self-talk, behavior and actions

This type of preparation helps you to stay calm when something unexpected happens and focus you on solution mode thinking. Also, when something actually does go wrong, you will have a clear blueprint for dealing with it.

### **EXERCISE 6.2: MANAGING A DIFFICULT COACH OR A PLAYER**

- Put on paper what are the characteristics of the coach/player that is troubling you in the last few games
- What are the situations that trigger his/her inappropriate behavior?
- What is your reaction to this behavior?
- How do you usually deal with him/her?
- Now, search for a better reaction and a possible game management scenario for that situation.
- How should I act, behave and talk to him/her?
- Think about the strategy as to how you will you deal with it more successfully. See yourself acting in a calm, firm and professional manner.

# POST-GAME EVALUATION



## CHAPTER 7: POST-GAME EVALUATION

Self-evaluation after the game can help you to **learn** from your experience and **improve** your performance for the next game. By doing a self-evaluation you can recognize some patterns of your performance and behavior that contribute to a good or a bad performance.

The best period of the game analysis is **within 24 hours after the game**. Your memory is still fresh and you can easily recall many situations that you'd like to reconstruct. Use this information to maintain or modify your pre-game preparation and behavior.

**EXAMPLE 7.1:** You may find that bad team work and different criteria among the crew is a result of a poor pre-game conference between crew members. According to that finding you can think about possible solutions for the pre-game topics for the same (or other) crew at some other game.

While doing the self-evaluation it is important to be honest to yourself, as well as objective and constructive. If game was video recorded you can also see the game more objectively and more detailed. Video analysis information will help you understand some situations even better when you are watching them from the "camera point of view", with some time delay.

**EXAMPLE 7.2:** By watching the video of the situation in the 3rd period of the game, you find out that you did a bad decision (no call) because you did not do appropriate mechanics position and did not have a good angle to see that contact. Then, for each situation that you find wrong, search the solutions and put on the paper in a way "What can I do differently next time in the same or a similar situation to prevent the same mistake from happening again?!"

While doing the self-evaluation it is important to search both the situations where your performance was great, and situations you are not satisfied with. You can identify strong and weak areas and find the underlying reasons for your performance (either good or bad).

### EXERCISE 7.1: VIDEO – ANALYSIS COMBINED WITH IMAGERY

After the game search through video for the situations that you would like to analyze more than others.

1. Search for 2-3 great situations – where you were at your best and made a very good decision.
  - See what did you do good and what was your decision or move.
  - Repeat the same situation once more, and store it in your memory.
2. Search for the 2-3 poor situations – where you were not done a good job – bad decision or movement.
  - See what did you done wrong – bad decision or movement.
  - Search for the solution for the same situation – what will you do if this or similar situation happen again? Be specific and affirmative! - What you should do, not what you should not to do! Change the script of that situation so that the outcome is better.
  - Repeat that solution and changed script also through imagery scenario, first from external point of view – to see how this should look like, if you watch it on the TV. Then, repeat it through internal point of view – like you are doing it in the real situation.
  - Continue rehearsing this new outcome until you feel confident being able to cope with the original circumstances.

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