

SETTING "SMART" GOALS

- S** *Specific.* Be as concrete as possible in describing your goal.
- M** *Measurable.* Make sure the goal can be measured.
- A** *Adjustable.* Is your goal adjustable (i.e., can be raised or lowered)?
- R** *Realistic.* Goals should be challenging but realistic.
- T** *Time-oriented.* Set a definitive time to reach your goal.

Optimal Performance Consulting

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Optimal Performance Newsletter

Goal Setting for Peak Performance

The "Road Map" to Success

Sam Maniar, Ph.D.

As some of us begin a new season, I thought goal setting might be an appropriate topic for the first *Optimal Performance Newsletter*. Goal setting is one of the foundations of optimal performance, and when done correctly, it can help improve one's performance, improve one's quality of practice, clarify expectations, reduce boredom, increase motivation, and increase pride/self-confidence.

Unfortunately, many individuals who try goal setting are unaware of "how" to set goals. Goal setting may sound easy to you, but consider these questions:

- Do you set both short- and long-term goals?
- Do your goals lead to your overall goal or mission?
- Are your goals process-oriented rather than outcome-oriented?
- Do you set daily goals?
- Do you write down your goals?
- Did you set your own goals (i.e., rather than a

coach telling you your goals)?

If you answered no to any of these questions, then you may be making some classical goal setting mistakes.

Ten Essentials of Goal Setting

Below, I have listed what I refer to as the "nuts and bolts" of goal setting.

1. Develop a mission, or overall sense of purpose for your sport.

Think about why you are competing in your sport. What is your ultimate desire? Some examples might be "to be a starter," "to win my conference," or "to be an All-American."

2. Set goals that help you get to your overall goal. Goals should serve as a "road map" to your mission.

Imagine you have 48 hours to drive from Columbus to San Francisco. Without a map, you may never reach your destination, and even if you did, it may not be the most efficient route. Goals help you find the way to your destination, just as maps do. In addition, "routes" can be modified or adjusted along the way.

3. Set S.M.A.R.T. goals.

Goals should be **Specific**, **Measurable**, **Adjustable**, **Realistic**, and **Time-oriented**. See

the box on the left of Page 1 for a description. And, remember the “M” in SMART! Many people set goals, such as “try my best” or “try hard,” but how can these ever be measured? It needs to be apparent to *everyone* when you have reached your goal.

4. *Set daily goals.*

Goals should be set for each day of the week, whether it is practice or competition. These daily goals should be small goals that lead to your larger goals. In other words, goals should never be arbitrary; they should be selected because they are leading to some bigger goal or purpose. Remember, only the present can help you get to the future.

5. *Set process-oriented goals rather than outcome-oriented goals.*

Outcome goals (e.g., winning, placing, scores) are not completely in your control. Thus, research has shown that the most effective goals are those that are process-oriented. Process goals focus on the process of execution, such as those focusing on skills, routines, or preparation.

6. *Write down your goals.*

Unless your goals are written down, you can always convince yourself that the goals were never set. I used to hang my goals on my locker for all my teammates to see. Others prefer to write them down and share it with a coach or trusted teammate.

7. *Write goals in a positive manner.*

Goals should be phrased positively. For example, it is more effective to set goals in terms of “do” or “at least” rather than “don’t” or “no more than.”

8. *Visualize yourself accomplishing your goals.*

Visualizing (future topic in the *Optimal Performance Newsletter*) helps you reach your goals quicker by creating neural pathways in the brain. Essentially, through visualization, you can “trick” your body into thinking it is actually accomplishing the goal. This will make your targeted skill more efficient and automatic.

9. *Make sure your goals are your goals.*

Coaches, captains, friends, and family often like to set “goals” for you. But something can only be a goal if you set it yourself. You have to want to reach the goal for yourself.

10. *Reward yourself for accomplishing your goals.*

For some people, crossing off an accomplished goal is rewarding enough. But for others, it is helpful to set-up a reward when you have accomplished a goal.

If you incorporate these 10 essentials into your goal setting program, you will be well on your way to peak performance!ψ

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ANNOUNCEMENTS

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