

Mental Toughness: Enhancing a Sense of Control
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The concept of **control** basically refers to an athlete's understanding of **what factors are within his control and what factors are not**. Athletes who understand the difference and are able to direct their focus to factors within their ability to control are said to have "focus and concentration." Without this understanding, athletes spend time and effort thinking about factors outside their ability to control, often referred to as "worry and distraction."

A third category of factors exist: Prerequisites to control. These are factors that the athlete **"could control if. . ."**

For instance, controlling the time and energy put into the strength and conditioning training program will likely provide the athlete the strength to throw the ball further and faster or hit with more power or to run further and longer.

Having practiced a backup plan for defense allows the team to switch defense at half time if the original defensive strategy is not working. Attempting to switch to a new defensive alignment that has been rarely practiced during the actual competition is likely to have disastrous consequences.

Thus, high level performers and their coaches understand and act upon the following factors:

- * What you do control (effort makes a difference)
- * What you don't control (effort makes no difference)
- * What you could control if. . . (prerequisites to control)

The table on the next page provides a number of examples illustrating these three important categories. From your experience, add two or three examples in the blank spaces in the table. First, identify a sport performance important to you and your athletes. Second, identify a factor influencing that performance where the factor is outside the athlete's ability to control. Finally, identify a prerequisite factor that, if the athlete improved that prerequisite, the athlete's performance would likely improve.

Controllability

	The Issue	I Control	I Do Not Control	I Could Control If . . .
1	Work Intensity	How hard I work	How much fatigue I feel at the end of the workout	My post-workout fatigue if I train harder during the conditioning sessions
2	Officials' Judgment	Whether I complain after a "bad break"	Whether others complain after a "bad break"	Whether I look for advantages of a "bad break;" e.g., an injury restricts me but now I have time to study the rules of the sport in detail
3	Focus	My concentration	How many distractions exist in competing before large crowds	I were more familiar with large crowds because I attend as spectator before I am eligible to compete
4	Performance	My sport performance	An unfair score or official's call	My emotional reaction where I choose to "show composure and class"
5	Rest			
6	Equipment			
7	Rules			
8	Starter v. Reserve			
9	_____			
10	_____			

To cite this article, please use the following APA citation format:

Feigley, D. A. (2018, August 30). *Mental Toughness: Enhancing a Sense of Control*. Retrieved from <http://www.youthsports.rutgers.edu>