

THE UNSTOPPABLE ATHLETE

Unlock Your Full Potential: 12 Keys for Teen & College Athletes to
Perform with Confidence, Conquer Stress & Fear, and Break Records

Chapter Titles:

Key #1: Do NOT Be Stopped: Your Game Plan Against Stress, Anxiety, and Injury

Key #2: Run Your Own Race: Ignore The 3 Lies That Increase Pressure and Fear

Key #3: Implement The Habits of Mentally Tough, Healthy, Happy, High Performing Athletes

Key #4: Play Multiple Sports, Develop More Skills

Key #5: Learn to Master Your Mindset IN THE MOMENT

Key #6: Think LONG-TERM

Key #7: Sharpen Your Ax and Get 1% Better Everyday

Key #8: Balance Patience and Persistence

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Key #11: Maximize Your Ultradian Rhythms

Key #12: Take Action and Forge Your Path to Sustained Greatness

Key #7

Sharpen Your Ax and Get 1% Better Everyday

If you are going to reach the top of your game, you must develop the habit of sharpening your ax. Unstoppable athletes did not become unstoppable overnight. They developed the habit of getting 1% better everyday, which doesn't always look flashy or make SportsCenter Top 10!

Let's be honest. The crowd is not going to cheer for you for taking time to sharpen your ax. That is because sharpening your ax is what happens *before* you step into the spotlight and have consistent, all-star performances.

The Story

There was a tree-cutting competition in Cotoberry, Michigan. Josh Devoir was the clear favorite to win.

For months, he had been beating the rest of the competition by a landslide. It seemed that Josh was the *ultimate definition of success*.

The day came for the competition and a new challenger, Terry Sharper, made his way onto the scene. The difference with this particular event was that the trees were about 60% bigger than they were in normal competitions.

As Josh typically did, he peered over at the new guy and with a look of pity and said, "You can just go home now, Terry. Don't waste your time."

The competition began and Josh, with lightning speed and tenacity, began taking huge hacks at the tree with his ax.

Crack! Crack! Crack! Josh was so powerful and skilled it was like watching perfection.

5 minutes and 30 seconds into the competition, Terry was gone.

“Rookie!” Josh said to himself.

3 minutes later, Terry was back on the scene smacking away at the tree.

The only problem was that Josh was halfway done and Terry was only at 30% completion.

5 minutes and 30 seconds after returning, Terry vanished again.

“Ohhhh this is like taking candy from a baby. Some people just aren’t built for this!” Josh smiled as he exclaimed.

At that moment, someone in the crowd nudged a fellow spectator and said, “Does Josh look a little fatigued to you?”

3 minutes later, Terry was back. He looked better than when he started, His posture was strong, his swings were perfect, and he was even smiling and connected with the fans as he was chopping away.

Josh was at 79% completion, Terry 71%. It was getting close. But how could that be?

Josh had taken twice as many swings and had been working for ~50% longer than Terry had been!

Terry looked at Josh and gave him a nod as he smiled. Josh's swing frequency was down significantly. His power was clearly diminishing. Terry set his ax down gently and walked away one final time.

3 minutes later he returned, picked up his ax, and took 10 final, powerful hacks at the tree. The crowd watched in awe as the last 3 hacks toppled the tree over.

"8...9....10...timber!!!!!!"

The crowd went wild.

Josh fell to his knees. He was exhausted. He was defeated. He had placed all his eggs in this basket. He had trained 7 days a week, 30 days a month, 365 days a year for this. How could he have lost!?!

It was impossible to even imagine that Terry had trained as long and hard as he had!

And then, Josh noticed something.

Terry's ax looked wildly different from his...

It was still sharp.

"What were you doing every time you left the scene?" Josh asked Terry.

"Sharpening my ax of course," Terry said in an obvious tone.

How To Sharpen Your Ax:

Sharpening your ax is taking time off of playing your sport in order to focus on **recovery, habits to renew your passion, strength and speed training, skill development, strategy and watching film, etc.**

Just as your muscles grow *in between workouts*, your abilities as an athlete grow *in between* performances. But only if you do the right things, frequently enough, for long enough, to sharpen your ax.

Two words come to mind when I think about the way an elite athlete sharpens his or her ax:

Consistency + Intensity = UNSTOPPABLE

The two reasons most athlete's never become unstoppable and reach their full potential is a result of either a lack of *consistency* or a lack of *intensity*.

Consistency is how frequently we do something over time. Intensity represents *how* we do something. Consistent intensity is how frequently we do something with peak focus and effort.

Your speed, strength, power, and conditioning training comes to mind.

Consistency:

Have you ever gotten really motivated after going to watch a college game?

Or maybe you get really motivated after a big showcase where college coaches are coming to watch.

You decided *that day*, "I'm going to be consistent!"

But then, your motivation ran dry.

You must decide every single day that no matter how "motivated" you feel or don't feel, you will remain consistent.

Consistent stretching. Consistent with your water intake. Consistent with putting your phone down 1 hour before bed and getting a good night sleep. Consistent in all the areas that matter most to you.

Motivation gets you going, habits keep you growing. You must decide that you will stay committed and consistent long after the *feeling* you had when you initially became motivated, has left you. This is key to becoming the best you can be.

- If you stick to quality strength training for one year two-three times per week, you will put yourself into an elite class of athletes.
- If your sport requires amazing endurance and you follow a consistent plan to get a little better and a little faster everyday, every week, you will become unbeatable.
- If you can commit to studying for your tests and doing tutoring for one full semester consistently, you'll blow your parents away with your grades.

Ask yourself today, "How committed and consistent have I been over the last year? Not just the last 3 weeks, but the last year?"

Consistency will get you far, but what exactly are you being consistent with? Do you need to upgrade *how* you are doing what you're doing?

Intensity:

When I went to college my freshman year to play basketball, I thought I was in great shape. After all, I had worked out and played basketball five or six days a week for the entire summer, and for a long time leading up to that summer.

I was very *consistent*.

When I got there, I noticed something about the *way* the upperclassmen were training, conditioning, recovering, and doing their skill development. Their *intensity* was way different.

How do you *hone your how*?

These guys were doing drills in a way that I had never seen, at an intensity I did not know existed. In addition, they had their teammates filming them during their drills. I thought this was a little crazy and over the top.

That is what people say who really don't want to change, put in more work, or do what is needed to become UNSTOPPABLE. They say things like, "That's over the top."

If you want to become a world-class swimmer, avoid plateaus, experience *continual improvement*, and continually level up your results, it will take *far more* than swimming five days a week for two hours a day, year after year.

In fact, you will probably want to do less, better, over a long period of time.

PAUSE TO REFLECT:

1. What would it look like for me to raise my intensity, lower my duration, and stay more consistent over long periods of time?
2. What do I struggle more with, consistency or intensity?
3. Do I take intentional time to sharpen my ax? That is, do I consistently prioritize rest and recovery? Do I renew my passion and energy by taking time off? Do I invest time and energy to repair and rebuild my body after tough seasons/games/etc?
4. If yes, what do I do that would be considered “sharpening my ax”? How do I approach getting 1% better everyday?
5. What changes do I need to make to be “sharper” so that I can remain healthy and become UNSTOPPABLE?

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