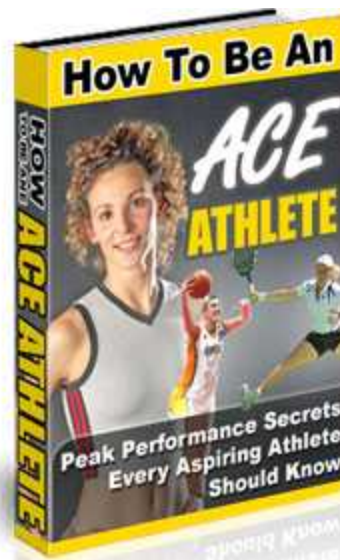


How to Be an Ace Athlete

Peak Performance Secrets Every Aspiring Athlete Should Know



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INTRODUCTION

WHAT THIS BOOK OFFERS

You have probably heard them all—tips and guides on how to be a champion athlete. But why waste time on practicing the hundreds, or even thousands, of them when there is something better than being just a traditional champion?

Ace athletes carve a niche in the hall of fame for all times. They even make their game a household word; even non-sports lovers know about them and their sport.

This book offers vital insights into the corridors of ace sportsmanship and helps you walk on the paths ace athletes take to reach sports success. This book does not dwell so much on the humdrum of athletic training to win a competition. Rather, it gives pointers on having a permanence of ace sportsmanship: It's good to be a champion once; it's better to be a champion for life. A champion for life is excellent not only in the arena, but also in all facets of life.

Victory is nothing without significance in real life. So what if you win a game for this bout? So what if you're relevant for this hour? Time has a way of leaving behind to oblivion those who choose the time being and ignore eternity. Triumphs must have meanings.

This book, aside from revealing life-long secrets in ace performance, puts more than just color, but life, into winning. The reader is led to realize that there is more to being the best athlete than winning a game.

CHAPTER 1

THE REAL ATHLETE

We often picture athletes as trim people clad in sporty get-ups, feet fitted with the latest running shoes, and under strict training for an upcoming sports event. Without these things, we hardly think of anyone as an “athlete.”

There are athletes called “**athletic players**” who fit the first definition—trim guys in sporty get-ups sponsored by big-time companies. They are out there to win and would do all to win. Though champions, most of them are not yet mature enough to understand why they are athletes. They just know that they are supposed to win a competition, so they must be fit.

There is a unique breed of athletes who we ought to know about and should try to emulate. They are the “**ace athletes**,” and becoming one is the measure of true success in sports.

TO BE THE BEST IN SPORTS, YOU MUST BE AN ACE PLAYER !

A real or ace athlete is not only athletic; his life revolves around sports. Though in and out of formal training for official events, he is always in self-training. Once an ace athlete, always an ace athlete; a real call to athletics is irrevocable. You not only train hard but, as the jests say, you die training.

But to be sure, the first step to becoming an ace athlete is to be an athlete first and decide to remain an athlete for life. You must determine with your heart and mind what sport you are going to pursue for the rest of your life.

Birth of an ace athlete

The moment you fall in love with a sport activity, the athlete in you is born. It starts in your mind. You may have read a sports book or an item in the sports section of a newspaper, or have watched a sports event in the TV or movies when you became interested or, at least, attracted to such sport. Your admiration may not be contained to just seeing the thing, but it may have stirred up your imagination and you may have actually began to see yourself doing the feat and becoming a champion at it. You may have researched more about the sports game, bought the equipment you need, and started on a journey to carve out a niche for yourself in the hall of fame.

Some abort their sports inclination by becoming mere **sports fans**. They love sports and sports heroes, but they seldom practice the game. Some people may call them “athletic” because of their familiarity with and interest in the subject, but they are nothing more than sports fans.

A sports fan who is actually an athlete inside will soon work his way out to become the sportsman he admires and even excel at it. He will strive hard to outdo his previously accomplished feats. This he does for life, with or without formal competitions.

If you decide to engage in a particular sports career, start to “grow up” in it, acquire new and higher levels of skills and agility (swift mind and body coordination), and later become mature in the game. Hard training separates men from boys (or women from girls), and you will soon become known as a competent player. You will no longer be regarded as an awkward neophyte in terrible want of speed, form, and accuracy, but you will be able to combine grace, precision, and lightning pace without much effort. You will be able to judge and decide maturely in the game. Soon, you will find yourself

the chosen bet of a special group, and regular competition will hone your skills to mastery. That's when you begin to train other aspirants to be like you. From being a "newly born," you become a "father."

Ace athletes must be "fathered"

Having a coach to see and guide you through a competition is not enough to be an ace athlete. Someone must coach you until you reach mastery. That someone ought to be a real athlete himself, coached or "fathered" through a long process by a qualified "father" in athletic training.

A "father" in training is a battle-hardened master armed with a wealth of experience in his chosen field. He is not only knowledgeable in it; he can be considered an epitome in the field. He has seen lots of actions and has been part of them, and he knows every nook and cranny of the arena. He is so familiar with the "feeling" of being out there where the action is. He knows that real sports encounters are alive; meaning anything can happen out there, and no pattern or formula can compare to live, on-the-spot events. It is only the accurate judgment and experience of the wise that can cope up with live events. He is also so sensitive to the right and wrong forms, including the executions of a technique, the timing, and the right effects. All these can only be available to a real "father" of sports training.

Some coaches are mere P.E. teachers, or at best, athletic players once upon a time. They can help some; but at times, they can be more of hindrances than wise guides for trainees. They will tend to be bookish and stick to "*what the book says*," or to what they have learned in school, or to what they have experienced in amateur contests. Without mastery (through real, professional sports encounters), they lack the sense to know that

aside from mastering basic forms or moves, you have to be flexible and adaptable to unexpected things that are likely to happen out there in the actual arena. Only seasoned sports “fathers” will be able to divulge these details and wisdom to trainee-“sons.”

In his skills and experience, a “father” trainer patiently raises up “sons” to continue his calling, or pass down his mission to succeeding generations. He knows too well that champions come from a relay of skills and wisdom, or a technology transfer, and not from those who start out from scratch.

You cannot train yourself, or train alone, and come out champion. You cannot also have amateur coaches train you to be champion. You have to feed from the experiences of those who *had been there* before, saw real tough actions, and really made it to the top. They may be likened to a lighthouse that points out what is right and what is wrong, separating fact from myth.

An athletic player acquires knowledge and skill mostly from his own experiences. He may upgrade that by joining competitions and by wearing colorful uniforms, and subjecting himself periodically to coaches. He occasionally reads books about the game. He may even be awarded best player. However, he does not make a career out of it. Eventually, he drops out from the scene and the sport altogether. He will have good stories to tell about how he used to be this and that, but people may not be able to trace his stories because of his now bloated physique due to the absence of training.

An ace athlete, on the other hand, is a “son.” He has a “father” who raises him up, and this athlete is aware that he is not just being raised up to win an event or a couple of events; he is being raised up to be a father to raise up other sons someday. Unlike the athletic player who would point to rusted trophies and medals and photos of victories as his proof of being once in the sport, real athletes point to actual “fathers” who have

trained them and from whom they have received “trade secrets” for success. They also point to actual athletes and champions they have personally trained and “fathered” to pass on the heritage for generations to come.

An ace athlete not only aims to be a champion, but lives to develop other champions as well.

An ace athlete’s philosophy

The drive to bring out the champion in himself and in others separates the ace athlete from mere athletic players. The philosophy is that,

*“The kind of champions you raise up
is dependent on the kind of champion you are.”*

This philosophy ought to be in your heart and mind always to bring out the ace athlete in you. You must strive to be the best you can be so that what you produce later in others will be the same as, if not better than, you. Hence, you must train for life. You must increase your level of excellence so as not to compromise the quality of the athletes you will train.

You may ask, “How can you excel in training and produce quality athletes when you get old?” You never get old by training others. That’s why many “retired” professional sportsmen write books. Or, they start gyms where their “sons” train others, and they assume supervisory roles. They share their wise counsels in old age. Through these legacies, they are, in a sense, still in training, still excelling, and still training others. They become legends, living or otherwise. These are the ace athletes or sportsmen who

really “die training.” They really contribute significantly to their chosen field of sports not only in their lifetime, but also beyond.

Without the above philosophy, you will just end up a fruitless, spent, and forgotten used-to-be in sports. You are reading this book precisely because you do not want to end up like this. As long as you live the philosophy of an ace athlete, you will not.

How to live out such philosophy is one of the concerns of this book. How can you excel and outdo your own excellence as time passes? How can you contribute significantly to your sport? Read on...

CHAPTER 2

THE MIND OF AN ACE ATHLETE

Being an ace athlete requires a mindset. You must believe in your heart and mind that you are meant to be an ace athlete. This mindset will put a fiery enthusiasm in each of your training sessions and performances. You will not settle for mediocre results; you will aim for the best results. Armed with this mindset, you are not just aiming to win competitions. You are aiming for a generation of ace players.

Olympic athletes, especially from nationalistic countries like the U.S. and Russia (especially the former U.S.S.R.), have been training hard with the prestige of their country in mind. Olympic bets are out to compete for posterity.

Nationalistic countries often produce a succession of world class champions because they train not only to be ace athletes and win for their countries, but they also aim to someday reproduce ace players of higher caliber.

Not all the international sports players are like-minded. Some athletes are near-sighted and they focus only on their present win. Once the medal is at hand, they go back to their countries and celebrate, and then retire.

On one hand, many international athletes can be branded as ace athletes. They start out young and train under a real master of the sport. They excel and beat their own excellent records, and finally come out champions. Then they themselves train others.

On the other hand, not all winners in international sports are ace athletes. They train hard for the present, even under masters, but lack foresight to live the philosophy of ace sportsmanship.

A mindset that carries the ace sportsman's philosophy has the following foundational components:

A. You are not your own.

You are not in training, or competing, just to please your ego. It's not just for some purpose; it's for a corporate mission—others are in it with you. The “others” besides you are your master-father-trainer, his “sons” in training, the trainer who “fathered” your “father,” and your future “sons” who will be training under you. All of you are keeping up to maintain excellence and a reputation.

It's actually a lineage. A founder up the line mastered the sport in a peculiar way. He became champion using a style of his own, and he had a secret formula for coming up with such a winning style. He had trained other selected few in this style, who also trained others. These others did likewise, and so on. You may find yourself somewhere down the line, and soon your turn to add to this lineage would come. Now, all of you in this lineage all fight for a common cause: To keep this peculiar style the champion of all styles.

It's really a battle of styles. Filipinos have a different style of playing a game compared to how the Chinese, Japanese, or Thais do.

However, the style develops and evolves, takes new forms, and comes out better than before. Due to the philosophy of aiming to be better, the style becomes updated due to the changing needs of the real arena, the real sports field “out there.”

Hence, you will see that being an ace sportsman is really a corporate or joint task done individually by members of a particular lineage style. You can just watch the difference of how basketball was played by a team ten years ago, and then by new

members of the same team ten years hence. You will also hear or read from sports commentators how boxers of a particular country take on a peculiar style and seem undefeated for a number of seasons, until another group of boxers from another country develop their style and come out ace champion boxers.

You must bear in mind that being an ace athlete means:

1. Cooperating with others with a similar goal and;
2. Committing to a peculiar sports culture and outlook

B. Embrace the whole sport - its culture and history.

An ace athlete does not only want to play the game according to its rules and regulations. An ace athlete absorbs the whole sport into himself, as a person. In a sense, the athlete becomes “it.” He embodies the sport and becomes closely identified with it, not only by being a champion of the sport, but also by learning everything he can about it.

Western players of Asian sports like Karate, Judo, and Tae Kwon do, often behave like their Asian counterparts. They adopt the same discipline and patience, use the same terms in their respective languages, same outfits, even the same battle cries and salutes.

But ace players will go even further in adopting the cultures native to the sports - the religions, philosophies, arts, and to a certain extreme, even the food and the way of talking. Some of them even re-design their offices or houses to look like a place where the sport originated. To most ace players, excellence in the sport includes getting the “feel” of everything connected to it. Some ace athletes based in California, USA who are winning championships upon championships, require their students among other things,

mastery of the history of their sport's country of origin. For a show of deep commitment to the sport and loyalty to their coach-father, they are also required to visit the said country and take pictures of themselves there as proof of their trip.

Some sports are closely related to their culture and history. You cannot fully appreciate their beauty and meanings unless you learn their backgrounds. Some fencers study the styles of historic fencing in Spain, France, and England. They try to know details of how the game was used in sports and in combat. Some serious baseball and football players even visit the town where heroes of the sports became popular and where they first made their feats.

You may do similar trips as the aforesaid, which however are not really necessary, but the main thing here—the working principle—is that ace athletes must be so serious as to know why and how the sport began and developed from a local game to a popular sport. Valuable secrets may be in store for the diligent researcher as historical backgrounds are uncovered, contributing significantly in the understanding of the mechanics or technology of a sport—which cannot be conceived if you merely play the sport by just knowing its rules and regulations.

It is helpful to know that Karate was developed when weaponry was outlawed by the Japanese, particularly the Satsuma and Shimazu clans, in Okinawa (the Ryukyu islands) sometime in 1470. The Okinawans secretly developed an imported hand and foot fighting art from China, making it relevant to the limited space they had and to the common preoccupations of Okinawans. Thus, an ace Karate player will train better if he meditates and focuses in thinking that his body and limbs are to be as effective (and deadly) as real weapons of war. And he will know, through research, that the real masters cross train in the art of weaponry by sharpening their skills in Karate. An adage says,

“When you’re good with weapons in hand, you’ll be invincible when empty handed.”

Thus, to be a Karate champion, the ace athlete is to seriously consider cross training in weaponry arts.

It will help to have a knockout punch in boxing if you know about a Roman boxing and wrestling champion during the peak of the Empire. Milo, a contemporary of Theagenes, then the most noted boxer of his time, lived sometime in the fifth century B.C. He carried calves as a boy and whole cows as a young man. He was able to punch cows dead with a fist blow to the head. Of course, in sports boxing, you’re not out there to kill foes with a blow to their heads. But you will have an idea how to develop a good, single action knockout punch. You have to cross-train in weight training. Jogging, shadowboxing, and punching bag workouts are not enough.

In ancient Egypt, the earliest sign of sports boxing was in 4000 B.C., when gloves were simply made of thin leather that covered the hands, arms, and elbows. From this, one can obtain some techniques of blocking using not only the hands, but also the arms and elbows.

Moreover, ancient Greek athletes really gave life and limb to win in sports events. Doesn’t this give you a clear picture of dedication and commitment? The earliest record of an Olympic event in ancient Greece is in the 23rd book of the Iliad. From this, the life and training of an athlete is seen as nothing falling short of ace sportsmanship.

C. There’s always room for improvement.

Be thankful for your skills now, but don’t stop there and maintain status quo. Each morning, go out and train. Try to beat your all-time highest record. Yesterday was

yesterday. Today is a different day. Yesterday's achievement was good only for the past. Today, you need a fresh round of achievements to last another 24 hours.

Room for improvement is often said to be the need of poor performers, but it is not only for mediocre players. This phrase of encouragement is also for top players. You may be doing excellently today, but there's still room for improvement to do much better tomorrow. This push to do a bit more each day instills in the ace player the:

1. Humility to accept his weaknesses – This frame of mind reminds the athlete to avoid having a swell of pride and thinking too highly of himself—and not being able to see his other needs and weaknesses. He is lured into believing in his “perfection.” Pride can often spoil a performance, especially on the Day. Yes, he needs to boost his confidence; but he must be reminded that, like all the others, he needs to push himself a little bit more forward to do much better. Nobody is good enough to ignore more improvement. This also prevents him from the pitfall of complacency that often attacks many achievers who tend to rest on their pedestals too long and be side tracked by blinding accolades. Yes, triumph must be celebrated, but it never equates to perfection. Victory does not eliminate weaknesses. After a short party, the athlete must go back to athletic sculpturing to weed out whatever weakness needs to be (or could be) discarded.

In the 1970s, world-renowned boxer Muhammad Ali once had a weak jaw from a smash and fatal jab of Ken Norton. He worked out the weakness, and soon became invincible once again, especially when contenders found that the frail jaw was weak no more. But a more apt

example is the boxing champ Manny Pacquiao who, though champion in the super feather weight division, and famous for his south paw (devastating left punch), worked hard on his right punch so that both his left and right punches are explosive like dynamites!

2. Drive to conquer weaknesses – Acknowledging your weaknesses is just one side of the story. You don't stop there. It's no use to be humble and then let it stay at that. Next step to humility is the practicality to launch forward to turn weaknesses into strengths. Some players try to hide their weaknesses from their opponents. This is effective for a time. But it will soon be found out. Many contenders are hell-bent on defeating you. They will carefully take note of your preferred moves. These moves are usually your strengths, and moves you seldom do are usually your weaknesses.

Example: A) Some Chess players are so obvious when they, for instance, are willing to sacrifice other pieces to save their queen and perhaps a rook or knight. They play well using these. Some opponents might counter such strength by devising strategies to trap the queen and other relevant pieces. A good attitude is to either:

- 1) Learn strong strategies using different pieces other than the queen.
- 2) Hide such strength by putting equal emphasis on all pieces to divert your opponent's attention. But make sure that you train yourself to be good with all pieces. Such camouflage tactic is only temporary.

Example: B) It is easy to spot whether you are a forehand or backhand tennis player. When you often use a right forehand to return a ball, your opponent will easily concoct a plan to fire all his shots to your left side, sometimes to your extreme left where your right forehand becomes unusable. When he sees this, he takes delight in his discovery and gives you a rapid succession of returns to your weak side. Or say, he tries a super top spin against you several times, and you fail terribly to return each time. Or, after a succession of his powerful swings that send the ball far to the back of your court, he notices that you have become comfortably settled there, just waiting for a fast ball, and very far from the net. For sure, his next stroke will be a very slight swing to send the ball just inches beyond the net, and that will send you scampering in vain to return to the ball.

Example: C) No matter how good you are, if you use only your right or only your left hand to dribble and shoot the ball, you can't be a basketball champion for long. Foes will easily take notice and be able to accurately guess your next move and intercept or interrupt whatever you are up to with the ball in hand. The best thing is to train both your right and left hand in handling the ball.

Thus, an ace athlete will never be caught resting on his laurels. He always sees a level higher than where he is standing, and he will always go for that extra mile.

D. Unleash the immeasurable potentials.

The last foundational component of ace sportsmanship philosophy is that the athlete believes he is an asset to the team and the sport as a whole. He intently believes that there are potentials in him waiting to be drawn out through training. His potentials are like the seeds of a fruit covered by husks and skin that must be peeled off. The thick, ugly husks make it look like no edible fruit can be found inside it. You have to pull off fiber after fiber and peel off the skin until the very fruit, which is the real essence of it all, finally appears. Inside the fruit are seeds that have the potential to reproduce bountiful harvests.

An ace athlete knows that inside him is a champion. Through training, he sculpts his body to get rid of hindrances that delay the perfection of his skills until gradually, the champion in him emerges. Being a champion, he can then reproduce himself in others by helping others draw out their potentials.

A mere desire to win in a sports event may enable you to be champion for a while. This makes you a temporary champion. However, this does not necessarily mean the immeasurable potentials in you have been uncovered and released. The more latent potentials will only surface once you aim to be a champion for life—always aim to be better with or without competition.

There are athletes obsessed about being champions because they want to prove to everybody that they are the best. They will even compete against teammates to prove that they alone are responsible for the win. They want to show that without them, the victory would not have been possible.

Obsession with winning to prove oneself is not a quality of an ace athlete. It is purely obsession – selfish, destructive, and greedy obsession. It goes against teamwork because its sole motive is to prove “I’m the best!” Obsession can produce champions and

win the over-all championship for the team. But the champion it produces is often the kind that people hate. Some players would try to make all the scores for the team. They work so hard, but they are usually very demanding, hot headed, and manipulative. They treat teammates as props for the show where they get the lead role—in fact, the only role. Obsessed players have no loyalty but to their ego. They approve of anything that will make them stars.

Basketball often is a breeding place for obsessed players. You see players who try to be forward, center, guard, and even referee and scorer all rolled into one. Some of them want to play audience too, if they could. An obsession to prove self-worth is one of the dismal signs of immaturity, and this can be hardly termed as something of an ace.

Ace athletes work for a common good. They will pour all for the prestige of their team, school, or country. They may prove that the style or technique of their father-trainer is better than the rest, but they will never compete for selfish ends. They cannot claim that “I am the best!” because they workout hard to beat their weaknesses—and admitting weaknesses is something non-ace athletes cannot do.

Hence, the mind of ace players never strives to prove they’re anything except athletes who realize they need to train more and more.

CHAPTER 3

THE BODY OF AN ACE ATHLETE

Majority of sports requires physical ability, but even board games need you to have a healthy body. The human mind functions much better when uninterrupted by body functions gone haywire. An unfit body can give you the proverbial “headache.”

Hence, ace athletes know well the importance of a body fit for their particular sport. Different sports need different body forms and conditionings. The muscle group to be used varies with the kind of sport you are engaged in. Thus, a fit body in sports does not always mean a lean, pure-muscle-no-fat body built. Many times, it also depends on the weight division you belong to.

Your bulky muscle mass may be perfect for bodybuilding, but you will be in real trouble if you use the same in a marathon. Your fat proportions may be perfect for Sumo wrestling, but imagine what it will do for you in gymnastics or cycling. Your lean, well defined, and all-muscle figure may help you in boxing, but not in weightlifting.

So what’s the perfect body for an ace athlete?

What’s an ace athletic body?

Earlier on, we have discussed that to most people, an “athletic” guy is one who has a trim and muscular body. This may be so, but for a more apt definition, the ace athletic body we’re talking about is one that fits the athlete into the kind of sport he is playing in. To be an ace athlete, you don’t have to be particularly muscular or slim. It really depends on what game you are playing.

It will be funny to see a guy in serious weight training to build bulky muscles because he is a chess or tennis player. It is pointless to aim to run fast because you are a billiards player. Thus, you must know your game well and know the body mechanics involved in it so you can define the fit body you need, and design your workout accordingly.

A sample summary of sports and the kind of fit body they need is shown in the table below:

SPORT	BODY FITNESS	MUSCLE GROUP
1. BASKETBALL & VOLLEYBALL	Semi-muscular, trim, ideal weight	Arms, shoulders, back, legs, and forelegs
2. TENNIS	Lean body, right muscle tone, ideal weight	Arms, shoulders, back, forearm, legs, forelegs
3. HORSE RACE	Lean and short body	back, waist, and legs

From the example above, we can see how the definition of a fit body differs with the sport being played. Basketball and volleyball players do a lot of jumping; thus, they must develop their leg power and have weight control. The body need not be heavily muscular; minimal muscle power is needed for ball handling and for some pushing and

pulling actions. However, some basketball players opt for extra muscle bulk and definition, especially if they play as center or guard. This extra muscle add-up is tolerable, but a heavy muscular built is a definite no-no.

Tennis players do not jump much but they are heavy on sudden body shifts that require explosive leg and foreleg muscle contraction and expansion. These sudden body and weight shifts (to give leeway to sudden and constant movement) require a lean body that the legs and hips can easily carry. Unlike basketball that seldom uses explosive arm, shoulder, and back actions (except during a fast break), tennis demands constant full arm swings and circles, and at times, rigid muscle tensioning, that give much work to the shoulder and back muscles.

The horse carries the brunt of muscle punishments in a horse race, but the rider has to be short and lean to lessen the burden of the beast. The rider also has to control the horse and doing so means some muscle power in the arms, forearms, hips, and legs. The lean body also minimizes the shock a rider has to endure when the horse is halfway down the whole stretch and in full speed. The rider often has his buttocks raised a bit to minimize the shock, and his body weight has a lot to do in maintaining the said position.

Being in sports does not always mean building big and powerful muscles that nearly tear open your shirt. You can be lesser or bigger than lean or trim, and lighter or heavier than the ideal weight, and still be an ace athlete.

General and specific workouts

Whatever sports you are in, be it mainly physical or mental, you have to workout to be an ace player. Even if you don't really need those well-defined or bulky muscles, if you aim to be an ace, you need to workout.

The workouts below can serve as checklist for everyone striving to be an ace athlete.

Athletic workouts are either general or specific.

A. General workouts

General workouts may vary in intensity, depending on the urgency and type of sport you are in. They may be heavy or light

1. Heavy workouts include all the works - weights, aerobics, and gymnastics.

They are often used in preparation for an upcoming sports event.

- a. Weights lifted by both hands must be about half your total body weight to be effective. This of course depends on how physical your sport is. For a sport mostly mental, like chess and billiards, it would do the player a lot of good to regularly engage in bench presses and squats using about one-fourth to one-half the bodyweight. Say, you weigh 70 kilos, use 15 to 30 kilos. For dumbbell training, use 5 to 25 kilos each hand. Concentrate on repetitions. If your sport is mainly physical, you may have to use heavier weights. As an ace athlete, you will have to do these things under the supervision of a competent physician. The above-mentioned are mere suggestions to give you an idea. The point is you must have regular weight training.
- b. Push-ups and pull-ups are part of gymnastics. Gymnasts use these for calisthenics. But these can also be considered part of weight training. Such exercises are ideal for both physical and mental sports. They offer enough strain to your muscles without overworking them unnecessarily. Like weight training, these “up” exercises are also done

in 4 sets with a number of repetitions each set. Say, you do 30 push-ups. Rest for one minute after that. Then do another 30. Increase the number of sets as your endurance increases. Many ace athletes do 120 push-ups with a one-minute rest each 30 repetitions.

- c. Aerobics is an excellent way of improving blood circulation. Be it physical or mental sport, air and blood circulation is vital. Aerobics strengthens the heart and lungs. Strong heart and lungs make breathing control easy, which is a big plus in handling emotionally stressful events.

2. Light workouts are workouts you engage in when no sports event is anticipated. Intensity of training is decreased. Weights and repetitions, or lengths of time, or distance covered, are lessened. This is aimed primarily to just continue limbering up the muscles and conditioning the body to avoid abrupt changes when the time comes to prepare for a tournament. The absence of a regular light work out will cause trauma to the body once you start to work out again. A long period of dormancy after a competition is a big minus factor when you prepare again for an upcoming event.

B. Specific workouts

Specific workouts are geared towards body sculpturing or the weeding out of certain weaknesses that impede total performance and skill perfection. Specific workouts are done in addition to general workouts when ace athletes are preparing for a competition. Ace athletes cannot afford to do away with either. They must have a rigid schedule for both, for life, even when there is no impending sports

event to be prepared for. There will only be variations in intensity when undertaking light workouts.

Specific workouts, to be truly beneficial, must be under the tutorship of a genuine professional, a real father-coach or father-trainer. They may want to improve the limbs or muscles involved in pitching a baseball, or make that twitch in the toes or ankles snappier to gain an edge at the start of a sprint, or make that regulated pulse better when releasing a dart from the hand. Improvement of a sport performance doesn't happen by chance or with age. Improvement will only come after hard, repetitious, and specific or specialized training.

Every athlete engages in general training. It is in specific workouts that ace athletes are separated from mere athletic players. It is mostly in specific or specialized workouts that “trade secrets” are used or passed on by father-trainers to their son-trainees as secret weapons, and these may decide the fate of the competition.

A list of very valuable general workouts

As already said, general workouts are for everybody, athletes or non-athletes, ace or non-ace athletes. For ace athletes, a regular general workout is as good as a car that is always in use. Stop using the car for a long while and everything gets bogged down. The list below is necessary for ace athletes.

1. Run regularly. To sharpen body mobility and mind, running regularly is a must. It keeps muscles worked out especially for very abrupt body maneuvers, and keeps the mind alert due to the good oxygen supply brought about by running.

WARNING: Be sure to fix running schedules according to what your body can tolerate. Never overwork your body to exhaustion. Exhaustion damages rather than improves skills and health. Make sure you use shoes that are very comfortable to your feet, ankles, and forelegs. Replenish your body fluids with clean and healthy water each time you thirst in a workout. Run where fresh air is abundant. Never run where traffic is congested or where there is industrial pollution.

2. Lift some weights. Either by barbells or by lifting your own weight through push ups, pull-ups, or squats, regular weight lifting is essential. It tremendously tones up the needed muscle for strength and endurance. If you have the right muscle proportion for the needed performance, and such muscles are well stretched and firmed up, your body will function as your will commands it.

WARNING: Don't over-train with weights, nor should you under-train with them. Lifting weights too heavy for you might damage your bones, especially your spine. Lifting weights too light for you, on the other hand, will not produce the needed muscle bulk to support a demanding athletic performance. Often, the weight you can lift safely is based on your body weight. Bench press, squats with weights, and dead lifts are usually done with a weight equal to your body weight, or half of it. Make sure you are supervised by a sport professional.

3. Muscle stretching. This not only prepares your muscles for a major workout (like in warm-ups and calisthenics), but also keeps your ligaments flexible and obedient to how your mind pictures yourself while doing a performance. An

imaginative mind is not enough in sports. What good would it do for you if you understand what needs to be done, but your body refuses to comply with the needed performance? Flexible muscles and tendons ensure completion and perfection of any athletic performance. Finally, muscle stretching eliminates painful strains in the muscles. In some cases, too much excessive pulls and twists may result to permanent damage.

WARNING: Don't try to stretch your muscles all the way overnight. Over stretching too soon causes muscle and back pains that may result to sleepless nights. Stretch your muscles slowly but surely. Don't try to produce your desired results in one session.

The above general list can be improved to include other general workouts but the point here is that running, lifting weights, and muscle stretching must be included in any workout program, be it for a very physically strenuous sport or a mere board game.

A good workout program done for life will ensure that the body stays in tip-top shape in and out of competitions, and ready to take on any challenges, any time.

CHAPTER 4

LIFE OF AN ACE ATHLETE

This may come as a surprise for many athletes. Ace athletes not only train for a competition; but more importantly, they live a life fit for being ace athletes. Their lives are ran by certain philosophies, rules, regimen, and motivations aimed at remaining as ace players.

In ancient Greece, during its peak as a world civilization, there were sports competitions held in the city of Olympia in honor of their gods. Participants from various city-states of Greece joined the event, and the Spartans were noteworthy for their strict adherence to rigid discipline. They were both dedicated sportsmen and fierce warriors. They started training for war in their childhood, and started with a strict training in sports. Sports then took the forms of running, jumping, boxing, wrestling, weight lifting, and all other activities that may be helpful to a warrior.

Soon, the whole of Sparta (then a city of Laconia) became practically a training camp. Citizens were professional warriors. According to Greek History, children were taken from their families at the age of 7 and were put in strict training under state control. They were raised up in barracks in both the hardest and simplest way possible.

There was even an oval for racecourse, the Dromos, which was converted into a kind of gym where Spartans took part in strenuous foot races and other athletic competitions.

Thus, the earliest record on ace athletes is traced back in the ancient Greek civilization when it was a federation of city-states. The Spartan ace athletes made life a sports training, and sports training a life. They started out in childhood and ended up, not

just winning honors in contests, but as battle-hardened warriors. This kind of life became a state law and employed the “father” and “son” system of tutoring ace athletes to perfection. They were so serious that children who fell short of the needed physical capabilities were said to be brought to the woods and left there to die.

Today, ace athletes need not train for war, nor leave incapable children in the woods to die, but they can draw out some positive traits from the Spartans—they lived a life aimed at being champions for life.

FOUR FACTORS THAT INFLUENCE THE LIVES OF ACE ATHLETES

The daily lives of ace athletes are founded on four important elements that ensure, maintain, and upgrade their sportsmanship quality:

1. Life philosophy of ace athletes

Philosophy is your concept of truth about life. We all have our philosophies, often in almost every aspect of our lives. We have our ways of seeing finances, religion, family, work, leisure, and hobbies like sports. But ace athletes do not treat sports as an aspect of life. It is life.

Viewing life as a sport is a commitment—you commit everything into it. In childhood, where it usually starts, you begin to have a strong leaning to the game. People around you begin to realize your “call” to the sport. When playing it, they easily see your natural knack for it. In junior high, the calling intensifies, and finally, the thing sinks down deep and all of life starts to revolve around it. Your college course, future job, future wife and family, future business, future office, future house and property, etc. must all fall under this sports-career heading.

Every decision and direction in life begins to be based on your sports call. Even your rights and privileges (and even opinions and ideologies) as a citizen begin to be shaped by this outlook. You choose electoral candidates who have sports (especially your sport) included in their political agenda, you are sensitive to issues that have a bearing on your sport, and you watch how your sport is being promoted by your local government, and so on.

You also begin to envision your family in the same way—how you should have an athletic wife and kids (or at least playing your sport), a house with a mini but impressive gym, and an office where a number of your trophies and medals will be displayed, along with handy gym devices. Even your family wardrobe will be stocked with the latest in sports wears and accessories.

Then there's your diet. Real ace athletes stick to a healthy diet, not really because of health per se, but they want to be exceptional in their sport. They form health principles in preparing their food - in what to eat and what not to eat.

You gather around people of similar sport leaning and make them your friends or associates. You may even join clubs to this end. You may also befriend the shop owners where you frequently buy accessories.

Your library will be stocked with books and CDs on every sport related to your game, among others. You will keep abreast with the latest news on your game here and abroad, and probably keep clippings from dailies and magazines and make elaborate albums of them.

This kind of living instills in you the very heart of the sport you love. Figuratively, the sport will become you, and you will become the sport. When people around you come across the topic in their talks, they will mention your name for sure.

The above may sound far out, but that is what aficionados really do. A world-renowned champion and grandmaster of Japanese kendo, Karate, Judo, and Arnis GM Ernesto Presas, runs his hectares-big training resort and is finishing on the drawing table the blueprint of his world-class museum of martial arts. He pours millions of dollars to promote his pet sports and to train ace players to be champions. His sons and daughter have likewise followed his example. Real ace players (and masters) like Presas are not only undefeated champions for countless years, they have become living legends—real ace athletes for life.

You can feel the passion of an aficionado: real book lovers will have books all over their places, as will real wine lovers and real stamp and antique collectors, and real animal lovers.

This outlook is essential to lead the life of an ace athlete.

2. Life rules of ace athletes

Each one of us has life rules we impose on ourselves. At times we extend these to people really close to us. Life rules are made to protect a valuable thing that is reflected in the rule itself. For instance, we tell our kids not to play with fire. We tell them this because:

1. We don't want them to get hurt with fire.
2. We protect our properties from fire.

Here are the life rules of some ace athletes, in addition to the usual “don't smoke” and “don't drink liquor”:

1. Be extra careful with your eyes, ears, wrists, and ankles. Abstain from activities where these will be jeopardized.

2. Drive carefully. You don't want serious injuries to your neck, arms, legs, and other vital limbs due to an accident.
3. Never wet your eyes, arms, hands, fingers, feet, legs, and other limbs when they are tired to avoid rheumatism.
4. Avoid illegitimate sex. Sexual intercourse can give you deadly blood infections. Thus, the safest sex is legitimate sex.
5. Avoid living a sedentary life. Always move around; take the stairs, walk, do things your self, and take a hike after a full meal. Remain standing for at least 30 minutes after every meal. These are all to avoid a protruding belly.
6. Keep your tummy in most of the time, and even exert abdominal muscle tension as you do so. This is to firm up abdominal muscles, aside from your abdominal exercises during workouts.
7. Keep a good posture. This helps for a proportioned body, and burns some cholesterol in the body when coupled with keeping your tummy in.
8. Don't wear tight shirts and pants during most of the day, especially when traveling keeps you from moving around, like in a plane. This prevents a good blood circulation.
9. Don't restrain a sneeze or a cough. These are natural ways your body gets rid of unwanted foreign elements like dust, viruses, etc. If you do sneeze or cough, use a hanky or small towel to cover your mouth.
10. Learn to say no to unnecessary social invitations. Never be busy with things that do not help you achieve your goals in ace sportsmanship, especially the nightlife. Your main preoccupations are training, researching, and keeping healthy.

3. Life regimen of ace athletes

The life of an ace athlete has a routine. Daily, he completes his training schedule. This is his priority. Other things take the back seat in his daily life. Once the routine is done, then other things may be considered.

Although hectic, the rigid routine has breaks. He provides himself periods of rests. He takes leisure walks or trips with loved ones. He meditates to relax his mind and body. Often, he uses his breaks to watch movies or documentaries that enrich his sports knowledge, or read books on the same topic. But after the limited and calculated breaks, he diligently resumes training.

Ace players train and keep up their schedules rain or shine. Only an injury or ailment will stop them for a while. Yet, even in confinement, their sport is still ingrained in their mind and heart.

A black belt champion who is recognized by the hall of fame in California, Di Shao Lung was once confined to bed due to a serious spine injury in the middle 1960s. His physicians told him he ought to quit his sport for life if he wanted his spine to heal. For six months, confined in his bed with spine correction apparatus, he wrote his book, drew sketches of his techniques and moves, and even conceptualized films about his sport. As soon as he felt comfortable, he started training again (against his doctors' advice), and soon was back to the arena answering challenges from contenders. Nothing could stop this ace athlete from fulfilling his athletic call.

Here is an example of a daily regimen of a known ace boxer in the U.S. when he's NOT due for a competition. He wakes up at 4 in the morning and runs for 2 hours - sideways, backward, and in swift zigzags. He throws jabs and hooks in different

directions while running. Then, back in the gym, he lifts weights and does abdominal exercises. He shadow boxes, plays with the speed ball, and works out on the punching bag, and then spars with 4 partners for a couple of rounds each. The whole workout takes almost half the day. This rigid daily training is necessary, he once said, so that in actual combat your body can flow fluidly and obey every command of your will. Your will judges and concludes situations. At the split second, when it sees, decides, and gives the command, the body must be able to respond.

The ace chess player must take on different challengers regularly, and even study the moves of popular players in previous bouts. While mastering superb moves, he must also learn to control or hide his temper, excitement, irritation, impatience, and nervousness; revealing these to the opponent during the contest may be to his disadvantage. If the foe learns what things irritate you, for example, he may capitalize on that to worsen your irritation and ruin your focus.

Mastery of moves and self-control (and learning to assume a poker face) takes long, long periods of daily practice and the right workouts to keep yourself healthy and free from the weakening effects of ailments.

4. Life motivations of ace athletes

What runs your life? What wets your life appetites? What can move you to do something out of the ordinary?

If you are not an ace athlete, either selfish motive or fear would likely manipulate you. Here are samples of wrong life motivations (the opposite of which are the right motivations ace athletes have):

1. Fear of making errors. This is among the top wrong motivators of people.

Many of them are determined to do their best because they dread making a mistake. Often, they think they can protect their image and dignity by avoiding errors. Ace athletes also do their best and even aim for perfection, but they do not fear mistakes; they readily accept them and are determined to do better next time. Many who fear errors never get to discover their full potentials because they stay within their comfort zone or they stop when they have won, fearing that they may forfeit their achievements once they continue aiming higher. Ace athletes are not afraid to “lose” any title or award; they are not out to win seasonal or momentary awards but go on beyond mere winning and seek other means to conquer weaknesses, and pass on their strengths and victories to others.

2. Fear of losing. Another reason for staying in their comfort zone is people’s dread to lose. Ace players strive hard to win, not just for themselves, but for others in the team or the sponsor or school or company or the next generation of players. Yet, they are also fearless in defeat. Defeat is a revelation of other hidden weaknesses that would not have surfaced had it not for the defeat. Defeat, though painful, is another chance for a major breakthrough for ace players. Mostly, ace players are distinguished by their selfless attitude in a game: They do not desire winning or dread losing; they just want to face the battle the best they can. Ace archers, kendo players, Wu Shu performers, and other ace participants of meditative sports are often disciplined to desire nothing except bravely face the event with all they have. This selfless attitude eliminates all pressures and is a good cushion against frustration. Ace players

not only apply this selflessness in sports but in every life situation. They aim for perfection, not really to win or not because they fear defeat, but because they want to give their best in any task they do.

3. Fear of challenging the status quo. Ace athletes are radical. They spearhead the intro of revolutionary ideas in whatever they are doing. Once they enter the scene, ace athletes turn tables so that the sport is never the same. Most people just accept things as they are and are prepared to live with how things have always been. Imagine how the world would be if there are no new challengers to dare the existing order? Billiards used to be dominated by Western players, until a new crop of Asian players stole the scene. Basketball used to be a man's sport, until women hopped in the bandwagon and gained wide support. Just because a team has been champion for years doesn't mean they are unbeatable. Most newcomers won't dare come against the veterans. But ace athletes find more thrills and they are more inspired when they are up against stronger opponents, more so "undisputed" champions. They want to prove that no one person or race has the monopoly of power. Someone else is bound to have more imagination, perseverance, and guts to outdo the present titleholder. Thus, always try to come up with a new style or technique that is better than the latest one, but make sure it is effective.
4. Self-conceit. To go out there and prove you are superior is one of the worst motivations. Sports can sometimes be a venue for racism and sexism. Nationalism is different from the previously mentioned beliefs; so is the love or honor accorded on one's family, company, school, or sponsor. Nationalism is simply love of country. It is not going out and proving to everyone that

other countries are inferior to yours and you aim to humiliate them. This is called extreme nationalism. Racism and sexism have the same intent: to treat others as inferior and humiliate them. Ace athletes do not compete to prove anything except that they train harder than others do. They also understand the fact that others may someday be able to do better than they do if they train much harder. At times, ace athletes compete to prove their style or technique is better, but this does not make them better persons than others, or that their race or sex is better. How an athlete trains decides whether he wins or loses an event, not his race or gender. Hence, an ace athlete also knows that in life, everybody has a chance to win, depending on how hard one tries. He lives the truth that he does not belong to a supreme race or gender—he only trains and tries harder.

5. Good luck. Ace athletes do not believe in luck or in accidents. They believe in choosing their own destinies. If you want to win, you must train to win. If you train to win and yet lose, you train again, and again, and again to win. And in life, they believe that nothing happens by chance or accident. Everything is a consequence. You are overweight because you eat too much. Being chubby may be due to genes, but ace athletes do not succumb to such explanation. You still decide your fate, and you can aim to at least decrease considerably your weight, if not have your ideal weight. You aren't promoted or are jobless not because you're a loser; you just have to try and try again until you get what you want. Alternatively, probably try another direction. It is all in the timing, not luck.

6. The family genes stalemate. An athlete is good because his grandfather and father were good in sports. This idea sometimes can serve you somewhat, but it can also make you drop your guard. If you rely on your genes to help you win your games, and you go easy on your training, you might end up losing everything; and worse, you might even blame it all on your family. Alternatively, this genes idea might make a big quitter out of you because your great grandfather was a weakling, so was your grandfather and father, and even your uncles and aunts; until you think you are also destined to be one. Thus, you believe that no amount of training or trying hard would make a positive change in your life.

Ace athletes do not let anything get in their way to success, not even their family genes, and not even a crippling disability. They know that genes have a lot to do with ability, but they insist that in the end, it's how hard you trained that really counts. They like the idea that the only thing permanent in life is change.

7. Lack of funds. Most people let money control them or decide things for them. No matter how important a task is, they shelve it away for lack of funds. Training may cost you some (not to mention the high cost of the latest equipment in the market), but this ought not to be the deciding factor why you cannot go on having quality training. Ace athletes refuse to let lack of money hinder their goals. If they can't improvise on training equipment, they tap sponsors. In addition, they doggedly save funds even if slowly. Ace athletes always save money of their own as a life principle. You cannot be ace in anything and go on being very dependent, especially in money matters.

Moreover, most ace sports teams or individuals find tapping sponsors easy because the latter would only be too happy to support ace players, besides getting a good promotion. They want to be identified with the winners. This is one of the benefits of being ace in sports. Just look at the awesome pays NBA players get each year.

8. Applause. Most people live on men's recognition. They do not do anything that society will not approve of. Nevertheless, remember that many well-approved things today used to be taboos before. Lifting the ball when dribbling used to be a no-no in most basketball tournaments. Using barbells was believed to hinder your performance in other sports like weightlifting because the extra muscles were said to restrict the free movement of your limbs. Cross training in other sports activities was never heard of until kinetics experts discovered the value of the benefits some sports have to other sports. And a long time ago, science had no place in athletics. Sportsmen in ancient Greco-Roman athletics just did anything to have a semblance of training—they even lifted and punched cows—and they ate anything that gave them bulk. But once in a while, ace athletes would show up in the scene and introduce new and better ways that most people would mock or reject. There is a record (in Nebuchadnezzar's reign) of Jewish young men who bested all of Babylon's best scholars and athletes by having a diet different from what the rest were having; they only had vegetables and water, while the rest had the king's food and wine. No matter how the Babylonian diet officials opposed their food preference, they persisted and proved them all wrong. Ace

athletes do not care if the majorities do not see things as they do. They will always try new ways of doing things.

A lot more incorrect motivations in life may hinder athletes from being ace players. Right life motivations governing an athlete (in training and in life) are vital to sustain an athlete's ace sportsmanship. Motivations that are part of your life principles (practiced everyday) become automatically applied in every situation. This enables you to do things smoothly without stopping to think whether this or that is right. Often, that minute delay spells win or lose.

CHAPTER 5

UNSEEN NEEDS OF ATHLETES

Professional athletes are often well taken care of especially when preparing for a tournament. However, there are still some blind spots that are mostly overlooked or neglected, but are very necessary to achieve peak sports performance. Good coaches and trainers see these things and carefully check them out, but others often miss them. Here is a checklist of some of those *other* frequently unchecked needs.

A. PHYSICAL

1. Breakfast. Athletes, and in fact everybody, need a good breakfast to start the day. It is definitely wrong to be in training and skip breakfast. Some think that skipping meals is a good idea for reducing weight. Experts have found that skipping meals has little to do with weight loss and may actually even do the reverse. They say eating 3 meals a day in moderation (minus in-between meals or snacks) is the answer to effective weight loss, and that *moderation* means not too much on carbohydrates and fats (macro nutrients), and more on veggies, fruits, and nuts (micro nutrients). Other nutrition experts think that supper could be skipped now and then, or could be limited to vegetables or fruit salad. However, breakfast is the most important meal and must include a balanced diet.
2. Rest and recreation. All work, and no play makes everybody (not just Jack) a dull boy or girl. Rigid training is good, but equally important are rest days to let the body recover from muscle sprains or injuries, and to let the mind and

soul recuperate from pressures. In fact, some athletes say doing some artwork helps ease the mind. (Even if you are not good at drawing or painting, just scribble away!) Treat yourself out for a vacation trip occasionally. See a comedy show. Go boating with friends. Better yet, read good books. It will sharpen your mind some more.

3. Sense of humor. Hard training is needed and can be enjoyable, but it's different when nobody's laughing anymore. It has been reported that some athletes actually die while training, not because of any ailment, but because of intense pressure that became too much for their hearts. Laughing can ease pressures, put sense again into winning, and make you human again. Too much training turns you into a robot and degenerates into nothing more than input and output. It pays for trainers and trainees to have good laughs together while training now and then.
4. Cross train. Not only can other sports help you do better in your own sport (which is often done today), but other activities also can help tremendously.

Some traditional cross-training activities:

- a) Mountain climbing or hiking. No matter what your sport is (Tae kwon do, boxing, skiing, football, swimming, polo, or even chess, billiards, or golf), you should try mountain climbing or hiking on the countryside or forest every now and then. Taking up different challenges will enrich your spirit and imagination. It can also help your stamina.
- b) Tai chi. Most training programs teach your muscles to flex and be rigid. Very few teach them to relax and rest. A long time

ago, Chinese kinetics discovered that agility is really perfected once you have mastered the combination of muscle tension and relaxation, among other things. Tai chi teaches you to masterfully combine the hard and the soft, the fast and the slow, working out and at the same time relaxing. Athletes in any sports will find tai chi very helpful in controlling breathing, in concentration, in conserving energy, and in adding speed. Tai chi is getting popular as a cross training tool.

- c) Swimming. Not only swimmers should swim, but also any athlete who wants a complete workout of all his muscles without sustaining muscle injury. Swimming is an excellent cross training tool for chess, table tennis, and billiards players, and also for car racers and horseback riders, among others. It keeps them fit without getting too tired or muscular.
- d) Running. Like weightlifting and gymnastics, running is one of the most common cross training sports for all athletes.

Some non-traditional cross-training methods:

- a) Ballet dancing. Helps firm up muscles and makes them flexible. Martial artists will find this activity very beneficial to their form, balance, grace, and leg and hand reach. Pole vault players, high jumpers, divers, gymnasts, and hurdle runners will similarly benefit from this.
- b) Hang gliding. A view from high above affording a panoramic scene always clears the mind and improves perspectives, aside

from getting fresh air. Climbing mountain peaks gives peculiar self-elation, but flying high above gives you a strong feeling of conquest. Hang gliders often say, “It seems everything is possible when you’re up there.”

- c) Cooking. Now, this is a real eyebrow raiser. Expertly cooking elaborate dishes (the more foreign they are, the better) helps your accuracy, timing, organization, focus, and judgment while in the “arena” that is the kitchen, says athletes who have tried making cooking a part of their routine. It also improves logic and good taste, of course.
- d) Carpentry and making crafts. These activities help your mind and hand coordination in trying to figure things out. It’s a kind of problem solving that uses acumen and hand skills. Ancient civilizations usually had warriors who were also metal or wood artisans. Carpentry in itself teaches teamwork and cooperation. The two also strengthen the will and patience.
- e) Fishing. Either by the deep sea or by the river (fresh water fishing), fishing affords relaxation but keeps you still at work, nonetheless. While relaxing, it sharpens your senses and judgment. It is a gentle workout too.

Physical needs of a trainee are not addressed in rigid training alone. Some needs are met outside the gym and training schedules. They are met in non-athletic venues. Some needs, on the other hand, are met partially in rigid training, and still need follow up through other vehicles. These needs are better met if done with your father-trainer.

B. MENTAL

Intellectual need

Most people think athletes, especially good ones, are dumb. Yes, some athletes may have dropped out of school to pursue full-time athletic training. But many athletes manage to finish schooling and even end up as professionals, aside from being professional athletes. Some of them even end up being champions, giving great honors to their institutions.

Some all-out athletes try to compensate for their prejudiced schooling by shifting to Education, major on Physical Education. However, at times, this does not solve their image of being dumb. Not many people see P.E. professors as smart or intellectual, though many really are.

Athletes will be better off by finishing their formal education. There is no other solution to this chronic problem than to have their father-trainer (FT) in on it. The FT must include in his checklist for his son-trainee (ST) his academic standing. The FT should personally see to it that his ST is studying, and should really give him enough time for this. It will greatly help if the FT himself is a college graduate. Therefore, he will be in a position to demand from the ST the same or even coach or tutor him a little on this.

Some may react and say that this is too much work for coaches. Imagine the coach doing this to all his players. We are not talking of traditional coaches here, but of FTs. Father-trainers are different from your traditional coaches who train players only for a win. Father-trainers choose sons (and that means only a handful, at most 5) to train to be champions for life.

Ace athletes must pursue their intellectual training. If school has really become out of reach, there are other means such as books, short courses, teaching tapes and CDs, and home schooling through the internet. Intellectual training is very much a part of being an ace athlete.

Mental need

The mind is often clogged by many needs and concerns; and a clogged mind is the last thing you will ever need in a competition. Players mostly ignore this need, not knowing that often this could make or break a performance. An ace athlete needs to learn how to free his mind from worries, especially during play.

Setting the mind free takes some getting used to, but the real need is how to have a free mind at the spur of the moment—or better yet, how to have it always. A free mind frees the body also to perform an artwork, not a program. This means, such mind desires nothing—specifically, it doesn't think about winning or losing. A desire automatically assigns the spirit to a particular bias or leaning, and there it becomes bound, consciously or otherwise. Once a desire to win (or a fear to lose) is present, the mind is bothered by options, and a mental shackle keeps it narrow and mechanical.

It's something like a mind that wants to spell "ACKNOWLEDGE" but then is too rigid and mechanically puts an "A" always with a "B" and thinks a "C" cannot come after an "A," more so a "K." Thus, it takes too long to finally spell the word correctly.

But a free mind can write the word almost without even thinking of it. So what if it was misspelled a bit? There's always an eraser. With such a mind, the whole task of writing becomes smooth and free flowing. It ceases to be a spelling job and becomes a composition. Likewise, the competition ceases to be a win or lose situation, but the

athlete takes part in a drama where he actually gets to write the script and the plot, if he chooses to. An internationally acclaimed, undefeated ace athlete and superb actor, Bruce Lee once wrote in his book that a state of “nothingness” (desiring nothing) can give the athlete full authority on the whole play or drama that the competition has become, and actually write the script and even decide the plot. Storywriters assign roles to characters. They don’t think about winning or losing.

Athletes should learn how to let their minds and bodies just flow with the present situation in a game, after a good training. Such freedom from the desire to win or fear to lose will give his whole person leeway to compose rather than compete.

We will discuss more on the topic of freeing the mind in Chapter Six.

C. SPIRITUAL

This need is somewhat similar to mental needs, but spiritual needs go deeper. The spirit is where courage and stamina, among others, are deep-seated. The mind and body may be weakened by exhaustion, but if the spirit is strong, it can command both the mind and body to gather some more strength for the last stretch of action, which is often the decisive round.

There is a phenomenal influx of Westerners since the 1990s into Eastern mysticism or spirituality; and most of this is mainly connected with either having a philosophy of life or a philosophy of sports. Many people, among them ace sportsmen, are beginning to see their need to “feed” their spirits, and see Eastern philosophies as the answer.

A determined and undying resolve for conquest is a mark of a strong and unwavering spirit. It does not think twice about what it takes to conquer—even if the task

demands life itself. It shocked the world in the Second World War when Japanese “Kamikaze” pilots plunged their damaged planes directly into enemy targets. They could not bear to live defeated lives and would rather sacrifice themselves for the cause.

But of course, war is different from sports (where actual dying is definitely out of the question), though the same selfless, self-denying, and self-sacrificing attitude or spirit that never gives in to defeat is important.

Though most athletes train hard to win, many still lack the zeal or fire to do whatever it takes, not just to win a round or an event for the present season, but to conquer the game, his weaknesses, and life itself. This undying resolve to overcome everything is the mark of genuine ace athletes. Their spirits are such that nothing can discourage them or quench the flame of excellence in their hearts.

Ace athletes excel because they work very hard to find meaning in life. Thus, they have the head-on drive to conquer their weaknesses, pains, and desires in life. Athletic players just want to win and get the medal.

Many athletic players became champions one time but never have the passion to excel further. Moreover, many athletic players are losing simply because they lack the strength to give it all they got. They see how strong and good the opponent is, and simply buckle down in spirit and settle for second place or the silver medal, or worse, simply be a contestant in the prestigious event. They give up on the competition or the sport altogether and never go back to the gym to redress or weed out bad points to face up the challenge a second time and return to the arena. Their shame for losing once or twice (or even 10 times) is stronger than their spirit to excel and conquer. They lack real courage. They have a weak spirit. Such are often mere stage players—they are all show but have

no inner resolve to be better. On the other hand, ace athletes work hard even when there are no competitions.

D. EMOTIONAL

Emotions can make or break an athlete. It is best for them to settle whatever emotional burden they have before training and competition. On the other hand, emotions that fire up inspiration to win or conquer are essential.

A coach can do a good job at firing up an athlete's emotions, but what is often overlooked is the explicit encouragement from the athlete's loved ones. While training for a competition, an athlete will have a better emotional bearing if his loved ones (family members and close friends) would be physically present to show support, more so during the competition. Cheers from the audience can do some wonders to players out in the field, but this is just supplemental to the foundational inspiration, which is given by loved ones. Audience applause can do little compared to visible support from special people.

But the other emotional need athletes must have, and which must be dealt with effectively, is the need to control emotions. Negative or positive, emotions run high during competition. And whether positive or negative, too much emotion can have adverse effects on an athlete's performance. Too much inspiration from loved ones and the audience may tend to produce a strong and uncontrollable desire to win in the players and ruin everything. Inspiration or positive emotion must be maintained to a manageable level and must be seen to it that such do not transpose into an uncontrollable obsession. Inspiration should merely inspire, and encouragement should merely encourage; when these things get out of hand and explode into an obsession (to please the inspiration giver), objectivity is lost and judgment is impaired because everything becomes a

personal obsession, a mere strong emotion. The only thing you will have in mind is to win. Then, the fear of defeat sets in and becomes a wrong motivation. Two things can happen here:

1. If the athlete wins, he embraces his present win so much that he would opt to stop and enjoy the victory and applause and make it a lasting memory. He might not compete again for fear of losing his hard-earned pedestal—he is afraid of losing the admiration of his inspiration givers.
2. If the athlete loses, humiliation drags him further down because everything has been founded on emotions. He might not train again or compete again for a second try because he could not afford a second round of humiliation.

Emotions of whatever kind, if not kept to a tolerable degree, will eventually result to a player's gross drawback.

E. SOCIAL

An ace athlete must always be in touch with reality. If he is confined to his cocoon of training programs, schedules, and gym practices, exposed only to his coach and teammates, he will tend to form a false image of himself and his team. He might deceive himself into thinking he or his team is the best without any basis for it. When competition day comes, he might get the shock of his life when faced with the decisive moment.

The rigors of training often makes the athlete miss the necessity of stopping a while to look around and see what others are up to lately. It pays a lot to watch other players in a competition, see how well or bad they play, see them in training, meet them and befriend them (this can later ease tensions when you face each other in a game), meet

their coach, and learn lots from all of them. These things are necessary gauges you can use to form a realistic image of yourself and your team. Then you can determine where your weaknesses and strengths really are. Muhammad Ali, a champion boxer in the late 1900s, studied the fights of his would-be foes in person and in films. You can even collect clippings from magazines and newspapers about events and other facts about your sport and broaden your view. This will keep you broad-minded and updated in your chosen field of sport.

This chapter ought to have given you an idea that ace sportsmanship does not only mean rigorous workouts. It is much more than that. In fact, it is a life to be lived. It has many needs that must be looked after—some of which are non-athletic, but also important. Many athletes often overlook these things and pay a painful price.

CHAPTER 6

SECRET WAYS OF HONING SOME SPORTS SKILLS

Here are some non-traditional and rarely heard of techniques by which athletic skills could be improved considerably. Some are taken from ancient secrets of masters who used them not only for athletics, but also for warfare.

1. The Secret Power of Your Achilles Tendon

Jumping sports like basketball, volleyball, high jump, diving, etc., and sports that need your toes to have a firm grip of the ground, like sprints, tennis, relay runs, gymnastics, and the likes, all require training that strengthens the legs and forelegs. These are views held traditionally. Yet, experts have found out through modern kinetics that what need strengthening – more than legs and forelegs do – are our Achilles tendons. These are the ligaments found directly behind our ankles. When you make a jump, the link between the take off from your heels and toes, and your forelegs and legs, is that narrow, vertical tendon behind your ankles. It is between your heel and your calf muscles. That is what really needs strengthening more than anything else, especially if you want to jump really high or get a real firm grip of the ground through your feet. Mere leg and foreleg exercises, like squatting with weights or running, will not develop your high jump and firm foot grip. They will make you stand firmly and give you shapely legs, but not the needed athletic prowess. Here are some ways to strengthen the Achilles tendons:

- a. Do squats with your barbell by standing on tiptoe or on the balls of your feet. Better yet, do these squats by standing on a firm edge (of a stair, for

instance) on tiptoe, with your heels suspended or off the stair. Be sure to have a weight spotter (one who assists you in your weight training).

b. Stand, feet apart just right. Then jog sideways in place, on tiptoe (always), putting your whole weight on the sole of your foot on the ground. When you are on the sole of your left foot, tilt your body slightly to your right and raise your right leg behind you (see Figure 1 below). Then swiftly shift to the sole of your right foot, careful never to let your heel touch the ground, and tilt your body a little to the opposite direction. Your left leg raised behind you (see Figure 2 below). Do this motion smoothly and try to gain speed and increase the distance between where your feet land and the tilt of your body. Keep your arms steady to your sides and your hands clipped in front your chest—like in a running position. At first, try this for a minute or two without stopping. Then increase span of time. This is also an excellent aerobics exercise.

Figure 1

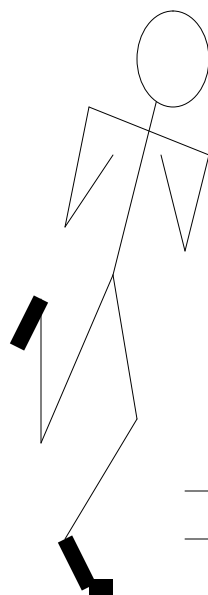
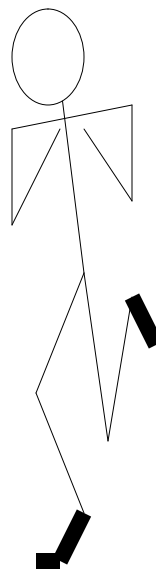


Figure 2



c. Rotate your ankles. While standing, keep your left foot on tiptoe (Or raise your left heel. Keep the ball of your left foot on the floor), and from that center, rotate your ankle and heel. This action will make your heel go round in circles, up and down. As you lower and raise your heel (without touching the ground), press the left portion of your body weight against the ball of your left foot. Do the same with your right foot.

d. Jog and sprint on tiptoe.

Other sports that can benefit from this are Karate, Tae Kwon Do, Judo, wrestling, boxing, football, soccer, and baseball or softball (especially in pitching).

2. Broomstick techniques

Use a broomstick, or any stick will do. These exercises will strengthen your arms, back muscles, and shoulders (even develop canon-ball shoulders for you). The fingers will also be strengthened for strong grips.

a. Stand while holding the stick with two hands behind you. Put a distance of 2 feet between your feet. Then, bend your back forward as far as you can (try to touch your knees with your forehead) without bending your knees, and raise the stick behind you with your two hands still behind you. Freeze in this position for one minute, trying to pull your hands farther back.

b. Stand straight and hold the stick with one hand. Stretch that hand to your side, and with only your fingers moving, move the stick up and down for several times. Do the same with the other hand.

Any sport that needs special hand and swinging abilities like throwing darts, ping pong, baseball or softball, boxing, boat rowing, basketball, etc. can benefit from this.

3. Pendulum target

Put a rubber ball the size of your fist in a sock or net and tie it with a long string. Tie the string firmly to the ceiling and let it swing freely. Try hitting the ball with a bat or tennis racket, or with your kicks or punches. Hit it while it swings wildly. This will sharpen your accuracy. Sports that can use this training include boxing, the martial arts, and sports that hit balls.

4. Air Punching

a. A “Makiwara” is a padded wood designed for hitting with the hands and feet. This is especially used in practicing martial arts. Another effective procedure is tying a piece of paper on one of its side near the corners with two long strings that are then tied to the ceiling. As it is suspended, try to tear it by hitting the bottom part with your punches or kicks. Don’t cheat by hitting it on its top side.

b. Light a candle and try to extinguish the fire with the wind that comes from the force of your punches and kicks. Don’t cheat by touching the wick to put off the light.

When you are able to tear the paper or extinguish the fire with just the wind from the force of your arms and legs, you develop good arm and leg power. Hence, this is also applicable to boxing and other sports that require arm and leg power.

5. Focus without focusing

Eye sharpness is vital to any sport, except when you compete in a sports festival for the blind. It is important to see the main object and the backdrop simultaneously. In sports like basketball, football, and hockey, assaults can come from any direction. Hence, it is important to see the opponents both near and far, while at the same time knowing where your teammates are, and where the ring or goal is.

But we only have two eyes. Both cannot take opposite directions. How can you see everything in front of you while keeping them focused at what's directly under your nose?

An ancient secret of keeping your sight glued to nowhere yet seeing everything is a must for ace athletes. The principle of the training is reflected in the writings of Lao Tzu, a legendary philosopher in ancient China who said that a finger pointing to the moon would tend to fool you into focusing at the finger and losing all the glory of the heavens. The finger is telling you to look at the moon, not to itself. He also urged that one must be like the still lake that reflects everything in the sky clearly yet does not focus on anything specific. He wrote, "*The spirit is everywhere yet clings to nowhere.*" The training goes this way:

Stand erect and relaxed in a quiet place. Try to focus on a single, stationary object, like a leaf, a pebble, or a dot on the wall. As you focus on the object, try to move your eyesight to your extreme left without moving your eyeballs. Then move your eyesight to your extreme right, then to your extreme top, then to your extreme bottom. Then, try to "throw" your eyesight in every direction, at the same time still seeing your center object, all without moving your eyeballs. Do this for long periods several times a day. You can do this anywhere you are, even while commuting. At first, you may find it

hard to maintain and at the same time separate your visions. But with practice, you will be able to reflect everything as a clear lake. Thus, in competition, you will have both a photographic mind and a natural yet accurate surveillance system monitoring everything in front of you. How can you miss being an ace athlete with that edge over the others?

6. *Free spirit*

A free spirit can command the body and soul. As earlier explained here, in exhausted moments, your mind and body can still do excellently if your spirit is strong. Defeat is sure once the opposite becomes true—the spirit being controlled by what the body and mind feels and wants.

How do you strengthen the spirit? How do you feed it to nourish it?

Western sports can be very scientific and systematic. Yet, many Western sportsmen feel a lack of something. And they believe they found the answer in Eastern mysticism, because their science cannot tell them how to feed the spirit. It cannot give information on something that it cannot explain.

As earlier mentioned here, spirit is where courage and the other great virtues are deep-seated. A free spirit, therefore, will be able to release these virtues especially in critical times. One way of strengthening and freeing the spirit is through meditation.

a. Eye meditation - Stand in a quiet place, preferably early in the morning, and focus on small details—a bird in flight or standing, a walking ant, things in a leaf, bees at work, the grass, or the slow breaking of dawn. Just watch. Lessen your mental activity. If you can, try your best not to think of anything. Don't let your mind wander. Enjoy what is unfolding before you. Do this for 10 to 15 minutes.

b. Breathing meditation – With open or half-closed eyes, look afar and slowly do deep breathing. As you inhale through your nose, imagine that you are inhaling all the pure oxygen in the atmosphere, and imagine it to be going into your nose, your brain, your lungs, and down to every limb, and finally to your feet, turning them into steel. Hold your breath for a short while, and then release it slowly, imagining that every carbon dioxide in your body is being taken out. Repeat the cycle 40 times.

Eastern monks of long ago were said to have very strong spirits due to these prolonged meditations. One legendary figure, Bodhidharma, was said to have traveled on foot from India to China through the Himalayas (almost impossible even today), and overcame the difficulty by meditation—making his spirit strong to overcome the weakness of his body. In China, he was said to be champion in all athletic challenges he was dared with. This may just be a legend, but Buddhist monks in Chinese and Japanese monasteries were known for their perseverance, courage, and stamina in doing athletic feats that made them also invincible in actual battles.

7. Training in water

Go into neck or chest deep water and try to kick, jab, and swing your arms repeatedly. Try to “run” while submerged in water. This will strengthen your limbs for any athletic performance.

8. Foothold

Most sports employ the legs, and it will do you good to learn how to have real leg power. Even golf uses leg twists and firmness. In general, it is important to learn how to stand properly.

The foothold is a simple leg exercise that will make you stand like a wall of steel if practiced for a long time. Stand erect, keep your legs apart, about 2 and a half feet wide. Bend them slightly at the knees so that you look like you are riding an invisible horse. Make sure your butt is out, back is straight, and your shoulders are relaxed and drooping evenly. Look straight ahead and try to meditate. Put your hands on your waist. Your body weight must be evenly distributed to both feet, and mostly carried by your heels. Don't put too much weight on your toes—if you do, it means you are leaning forward, which is bad posture. Do this stance for a minute, then increase the time as long as you can tolerate it.

9. The restrained blow through the mouth

A heavy workout usually keeps you puffing and gasping for breath. Expanding the lungs will help ease your air gasps and make you extend your endurance without easily running out of breath.

To expand your lungs when you feel you are running out of breath due to a workout (like a long distance run or sprint), inhale deeply and then blow forcefully through your mouth but inhibit your exhale by limiting the exit of the air. Do this by opening your lips just a bit, then draw your lower lip a bit farther inside your mouth, creating a small gap between your lower and upper lips. Through this gap, blow your exhale as hard as you can, narrowing the opening further, so that your exhale creates a ballooning effect on your cheeks and upper lip. Do this often to expand your lungs whenever you run out of breath in workouts.

The 9 secrets above are terrific techniques by which you can hone your athletic abilities to perfection. They are simple and require no special equipment—anyone aiming to be ace in sports can do them.

CHAPTER 7

CONCLUSION

Every trade under the sun has secrets; and in this book, several important and very effective secrets have been revealed. They have been used secretly by both trainers and trainees and have been continually used for their effectiveness. If followed religiously, the secrets divulged in these 6 chapters will produce extraordinary athletic skills in you.

However, this is not all. Most importantly, you will have a life perspective that will not only make you an athletic champion but a life champion. Ace athletes are champions because they are real champions in life. Temporary champions will workout hard for a season and then sit down the rest of their lives to celebrate the victory and keep memories of their wins. Ace athletes train constantly to always improve themselves. They are likened to ace businessmen who will not close shop just because they hit break-even after selling hard for a month. They will sell and sell until the last breath of their lives, and will even pass their life of selling and selling techniques to their sons and daughters to make a niche for their family or company in the business world.

Aside from the regular heavy workouts, strict diets, and health habits that we all know about, ace sportsmanship is not all about training and techniques. It is a lifestyle of doing everything in consonance with your goal of ace sportsmanship.

If you decide on starting your trek to ace athletics after reading this book, keep at it and never stop to look back. Go look for a worthy trainer and go with him for life. Have a one-track mind - never to stop mid-way and rethink what you are doing. Just do it, without desiring to win or fearing to lose. By the way, by being ace, there is nothing to lose.