



## **Three Keys to Success from the Olympic Sand Volleyball Coach**

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Unless you were living in a hole, it was hard not to see the dynamic duo of May-Treanor and Walsh win the Olympic Gold in Women's Beach Volleyball. Next to Michael Phelps, women's sand volleyball was one of the most watched Olympic sports. Credit needs to be given to their coach, Troy Tanner, whose presence was less noticeable, but power just as great. He described his 3-B's - Basics, Battling, and Breathing – as the keys to athletic success and I have adapted them to how important they are to mental performance.

1. Basics

With the complexity and advancements in sport, including technology, diet, strength training, and sport psychology, there still needs to be reliance on the basics of execution. It is easy to get fancy and try new things, but greater focus on the basics keeps things clear and simple. If you make things too complicated, your head will get in the way and prevent consistent, optimal performance. Focusing on keeping skills basic also keeps the mind simple – an important quality of successful athletic performance.

2. Battling

The ability to persist, overcome obstacles and battle through difficult times are some of the key features of great athletes. There are always times when you get knocked down, frustrated, and scared, but it facing these demons and battling against them that truly make the difference. Every athlete faces adversity, but not all of them overcome it. Preparing to win a gold medal is more a battle of the will than anything. Mental challenges are much more difficult for athletes than physical ones. Great athletes can withstand intense levels of physical pain, but conquering the emotional/mental battles are the most daunting. Thus, are you prepared to battle?

3. Breathing

Although I have preached for years to athletes the importance of breathing, it is solid confirmation when coming from an Olympic coach. Breathing is simple and yet so critical for athletic success. Effective breathing puts the body in a relaxed

state, thus allowing for fluid muscle movement and skill execution. Breathing can also counteract a negative mindset, such as one filled with fears, doubt, frustration, or worry. A negative mind creates muscle tension and tightness, but breathing can interrupt this path and allow for adequate athletic performance. Breathing and a clear mindset is the ideal, but it does not always happen in this manner, but having control over one – your breathing – is a huge mental edge. Thus, make effective breathing a part of your everyday practice!