



## DR. K'S MENTAL MINUTE

THE ATHLETIC MIND INSTITUTE

### What is Really Relevant on the Practice Field?

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As an athlete, it is extremely important to be able to concentrate in practice and games. How many times, however, have you made mistakes due to loss of focus? For example, how many times have you found yourself thinking about things outside of your sport and not the task at hand? If you are like most athletes, probably all too often. The inability to maintain focus on *relevant* factors is a mental error that can be quite costly.

Focus is simply being able to give your complete concentration to the task at hand. It is being able to give your full attention to what you need to accomplish on the athletic field. There are several different skills to improve your ability to concentrate on the athletic field. One is learning to pay attention to *relevant factors* – the things that are important to executing great athletic skills and great plays. Professional athletes might think about the outcome of the game, salary or bonuses, previous performance, crowd distractions, taunting fans, or a host of other things. *None of these things are relevant to the task at hand.* These things have nothing to do with whether you perform well or not. Many times athletes think that they do, but they are really not relevant to performing to your highest level. For example, a taunting fan at a soccer game has no relevance to executing great soccer skills. It does not matter if there are 100 taunting fans, the crowd has no control over whether you play well or not. The crowd has no relevance to being able to execute great soccer skills. Yet many times athletes pay attention to the crowd and become unsettled by the crowd. Athletes need to focus on the field – that is what they have control over and that is what is relevant to executing great skills. Whether there are 2 people in the stands or 20,000 people in the stands, it does not matter – they have no control over how you perform on the field unless you let them.

So what is *relevant* on the athletic field? Relevant factors are the ones in your control, such as attitude, preparation, strategy, and skills. Other relevant factors needing attention are weather conditions, game situation, and game strategy (i.e., you may want to play conservatively if you have a comfortable lead or aggressively if you do not). These are relevant factors and ones that you want to make certain to give your attention. If you bring your focus to these factors, you dramatically improve your chances of optimal performance. You have control of your attitude, how you prepare and how you practice, how much video of the other team you watch, what and when you eat on game day, and how much rest you get the night before. These factors influence your performance, need your focus and are in your control. Learn to pay attention to these relevant factors and watch your performance soar!

Play Hard, Play Smart and Play Well!