



From The Courage to Win™ in Sport Mental Toughness Program

BREAKTHROUGH *CONFIDENCE*

**The Most Important Skill You'll
Ever Learn As An Athlete**

Lisa Lane Brown

Breakthrough Confidence
The Most Important Skill You Will Ever Learn As An Athlete

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Welcome to The Courage to Win™ in Sport

A Special Edition, “Breakthrough Confidence”, brought to you
by AthleticQuickness.com

Here’s How to Get Some Extra Help If You Need It...

Dear Athlete or Coach,

By going through this material you’ll find a very powerful strategy for creating breakthrough confidence in yourself.

This book is part of the Courage to Win™ in Sport program. For serious athletes and coaches who want to **completely master their mental game in the next 30 days**, try the complete Courage to Win™ in Sport program here - recommended by AthleticQuickness.com:

The first thing you’ll want to do is skim this material for parts that leap out at you, then go back and read it from cover to cover.

If you get stuck, or want help to continue your progress, you can email us at The Courage to Win office at info@lisabrown.ca.

We truly want you to be the best athlete you can be, and we’re available to help you.

Sincerely,

Lisa Lane Brown
Author, The Courage to Win™

AthleticQuickness.com has been given a free copy of “The Courage To Win in Sport” program to review, as well as this report, and is compensated for purchases made using the links in this report.

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Chapter 1

What Is The Courage to Win™?

All sport is led by the mind. That's why we define the Courage to Win™ in Sport as your *ability to perform your best under pressure*.

The Instructions You Are About To Read Will Show You Exactly How To Gain Breakthrough Confidence In Any Sport

Great athletes are not people who perform well under pressure. *Nobody* performs well under pressure.

Great athletes are people who create an internal environment for themselves in which they do not feel overwhelming pressure.

What all athletes (including your competitors) are doing is focusing on winning. They're wondering how they can look good to spectators, coaches, and teammates. They're wondering how to stop themselves from choking. Most of all, they're wondering how to avoid losing.

These impulses are a big disadvantage to winning. They are a big disadvantage because they put pressure on you by creating fear, because you cannot control any of these things.

Your edge will come from approaching your competition differently than your opponents.

You will learn how to do this through mental toughness training with us.

There's a lot that goes into developing your mental toughness, and it will help you believe in your athletic self, psyche up for your event, and be resilient in the face of adversity, setbacks, and challenges during your events.

Open Your Mind

****Warning:** This is not a re-hash of traditional sport psychology techniques such as positive thinking. It goes way deeper than most of these techniques and will literally 'blow the lid off' what you've been hearing for years...that's why I'm asking you to have an open mind.

Basketball superstar Michael Jordan admits how hard it can be to open his mind to new 'inner game' ways. When his coach, Phil Jackson, brought in a sports psychologist to teach the team about getting in the zone, Michael thought it was crazy: "When we first started meditating before practice, I'm closing one eye and keeping the other eye open to see what other fool is doing this beside me."

Eventually, Michael dropped his pride and opened his mind: "I became more accepting because I could see everyone making an effort. I opened my mind to these teachings."¹

Michael opened his mind because he is a winner. We can all do the same.

...My Story

I discovered my barriers to winning years ago as an athlete in the Canadian sport of ringette. (Ringette is a team sport similar to ice hockey played in several countries throughout the world.). When I skated on the ice, a powerful and graceful side of me came out.

Unfortunately, a dark side of me came out too. This self was insecure, egotistical, and selfish. My dark side manifested in extreme confidence swings. One week I was invincible; the next, my confidence came crashing down. I never knew why, and it hurt me all the time. My insecurity reached its zenith at the 1991 National Championships, where we lost with one second left on the clock.

It's hard to express my despair over this game in words. Losing hurt, but my deepest anguish came from the fact that I had choked in the biggest game of the year.

Worse, a friend of mine scored all 5 of our goals, but I wasn't happy for her. Outwardly, I pretended to be happy: "Well done, Shauna. Way to go." Inwardly, I was eating my heart out. I wanted to be a leader, but I had no idea how.

Exhausted and depressed on the plane home, I broke, letting out the fear and shame I had been suppressing for years. I was only in my mid 20's, but my fearful self had become more dominant than my confident self in virtually every area of my life. There had to be something better.

I soon realized I was not alone. Many athletes are in a similar situation. They've worked hard on themselves, gained self-awareness and wisdom, yet are still underachieving. I embarked on a mission to find answers. I wanted to know: **"What do other successful athletes know about mental toughness that I DON'T?"**

I scoured self-help literature, absorbing over four hundred personal development books. I did personal counseling, cognitive therapy, Al-Anon groups, neuro-linguistic programming, energy medicine, acupuncture, telephone psychotherapy, hypnosis, and thought field therapy. I practiced sports psychology, meditation, yoga, positive thinking, and visualization. I studied food sensitivities, allergies, and nutrition to learn the effect of food on emotions.

I kept journals, set goals, listened to audio programs in my car, and attended self-improvement seminars. I got a job with a management consulting firm and studied under leadership coaches. I took certification training from four leading transformation gurus. I learned many valuable techniques and lessons, but the self-mastery I sought remained elusive.

I did have one thing going for me: the athlete's perspective. In sport, there is always another shift, another game, another chance. There is always hope. I channelled this perspective into the investigative journey of the **Courage to Win™**.

My story has a happy ending. I went on to play ringette for Team Canada for ten years, scoring the winning goals in the dying minute of 3 World Ringette Championships. I retired from competitive sport only when age forced me to, 30 years after the day I began.

The **Courage to Win™** concepts in this book have been researched, developed, and tested in applied work with over 2,000 athletes for proven results.

Today is the dawn of a new era for you. Your confidence will grow, your skills will improve, and your performance anxiety will fade. You will think competing is easier, but it will be you who has changed.

Chapter 2

What Is Confidence?

The most important skill you'll ever learn as an athlete is how to create breakthrough confidence for yourself.

What is Confidence?

Confidence is the belief that you can cope with the challenges of competition and fulfill your desires. It is a profound belief in your athletic self. The opposite of confidence is fear.

When you are confident, you BELIEVE in your athletic self. You have the conviction that you can do it - you can win. You might not always win, but you believe in your heart of hearts that you can, and this keeps you *aggressive* and gives you the *will to win*. When you are fearful instead of confident, you are passive.

You Do Not Choose Confidence

There is one crucial thing you must understand about confidence. It's this: *you do not choose confidence*.

What could this statement possibly mean?

It means that athletes don't feel confident because they *decide* to feel it. If you reflect on your competing experience for a moment and are brutally honest with yourself, you'll see that there are times when you've been able to summon confidence easily.

But, there are just as many times that you've asked yourself for confidence and you could NOT summon it 'at will.' I mean, if you could just *decide* to feel confident, you would not be doing mental toughness training. You would simply decide to feel confident and from now on -- 100% of the time -- you would feel confident every time you compete.

This is why we say that *you do not choose confidence*.

A good analogy is health. You cannot choose health either. You cannot go after health directly. You cannot get up in the morning and say, 'Today I'm going to be perfectly healthy.' Health is a *by-product* of other things such as eating well, exercising, handling stress, and getting plenty of sleep.

Virtually every athlete tries to gain confidence by trying to CONTROL. And this is what your competitors are doing: they're trying to control the

outcome. They're obsessed with winning, which is an outcome. They're thinking about how to perform well and look good, which is an outcome. They're especially obsessed with not choking, or being confident—which is also an outcome.

Maybe you've been there yourself. I know I have. Many, many times.

Here are some of the signs of an athlete trying to control:

1. He interferes with his technique rather than letting his body lead. If he's a golfer, he'll try to guide and steer the ball, which messes up his strokes and erodes his game. If he's a basketball player, he'll try to 'do it all himself' and drive to the basket every time instead of reading the defense. If she's a swimmer, she'll focus on her opponent instead of executing her own race plan.
2. She goes after confidence directly by telling herself to be confident. She pressures herself to be emotionally perfect. She wants herself to be calm, cool, and collected at all times, even when it's natural for her to be a little nervous or frustrated. Anytime she isn't feeling 100% confident, she becomes unglued about her mental game.
3. He pressures his teammates to play better, he pressures his coach to make changes, and he pressures the officials to shape up. He takes his focus off the event and puts it on stuff he can't control.

In the space below, write down ways you try to control the outcome, for example, trying to end an opponents rally by scoring a point in badminton.

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____

So the opposite of confidence is trying to CONTROL - your performance, winning, and your emotional state.

Trying to control these things will make you extremely anxious, and you'll quickly become clumsy, make mistakes, and become frustrated. This happens because you are sending yourself the message that you (and your body) cannot be trusted. In fact, you're actually overriding your natural ability to *express* yourself in your sport. Now, does this mean that you cannot influence your confidence? Not at all. While you cannot choose confidence, you can easily cultivate it.

Chapter 3

The Source of Unshakable Confidence in Sport

There are many sources of confidence in sport: winning, an excellent performance, your skills, your fitness, etc.

However, there is only one source of confidence *you can control*.

This is the most important point, because a source of confidence only helps you *if you can control it*. Otherwise, it just makes you anxious. For example, winning a match might make you confident for a day or a week...but the moment you start losing, your past win isn't much help.

The source of unshakable confidence in sport is having the RIGHT FOCUS. When you have the RIGHT FOCUS in training, you make major leaps in your skill development. When you have the RIGHT FOCUS in competition, you make excellent decisions, which leads to peak performance and winning. Peak performance gives you *unshakable confidence*: the conviction that you can cope with the challenges of competition.

Just like health is a by-product of eating well and resting, confidence is a by-product of having the RIGHT FOCUS and then trusting yourself and letting your body lead.

What do I mean when I say, "The RIGHT FOCUS?"

The RIGHT FOCUS

Have you ever noticed that a coach correcting you lowers your confidence? Have you ever wondered why?

I discovered the answer eight years ago teaching kids a lesson in my sport, ringette (if you aren't familiar with this sport, picture ice hockey in your mind). I was frustrated because we were trying to teach them to *speed up* when skating with the ring instead of *slowing down*.

But no matter how often we corrected them, they were still slowing down after picking up the ring. I realized that the more we corrected them, the less confident they got, and the slower they skated.

So I said, "Ok, I have an assignment for you. Just watch me skate with the ring three times. After each time, tell me exactly how fast I'm skating. If I'm skating fast, yell out the number 3. If I'm skating at medium speed, yell out the number 2. If I'm skating slowly, yell out the number 1."

After each time I skated through checkers, the players cried out their numbers in unison:

"Two!"

"Three!"

"Two! Three!" (sometimes the group disagreed)

"One!"

"Three!"

Eventually, they could all pick out exactly how fast I was skating with the ring.

Next, I had them to do the same drill, except I called out the speed I wanted them to skate at (a 1, 2, or 3). After the drill, I brought them back in. "So, what did you notice?"

"It's easy for the checkers to check you if you skate slowly!!" They cried.

"Hmm...interesting observation. Let's try the drill again."

They hustled back into the drill. I called out, "One! Two! Three! One!" and they mirrored these speeds exactly. Every time they skated at a 3 (the fastest speed), they were able to hold onto the ring.

The final test: I had them do the drill one last time. Except, no one told them what to do. *They* were allowed to choose their speed. Without exception, every one of them skated at top speed (a 3) while carrying the ring.

They got it! All of them!

Only 22 minutes had passed.

I was a bit stunned. How could this be? They all got it--in less than half an hour! No coaching, no corrections, no begging, no cajoling.²

What Happened?

These athletes learned a new skill in 22 minutes, all because we gave them the RIGHT FOCUS and let them *trust themselves* to figure it out.

The RIGHT FOCUS was their speed when carrying the ring -- and they did the rest. In sport, experience is the best teacher--*as long you focus on the right things during the experience.*

Another Right Focus Example

One time I was working with one of the best hitters on the Canadian

softball team because she had lost her confidence in hitting, but didn't know why.

We were casually watching her team scrimmage. I wanted to know what part of her batting had gone awry so I asked her to watch the pitcher carefully and tell me *exactly when the pitcher was releasing the ball* by saying the word "pitch".

The first two times she said it, she was late - instead of saying "pitch" exactly when the ball was released, she said it a fraction of a second after the release.

I told her this, and she quickly corrected it and said "pitch" at the right time.

We then chatted for a few minutes until I asked her to resume the exercise. Once again, she was late calling the pitch too late, but didn't realize it. I had to point it out to her.

This told me what had gone wrong with her hitting - she was obviously reading the pitch too late, and therefore swinging her bat too late. Why was she doing this? ...probably because she was a little afraid of the pitch. By bringing her focus back to the timing of the pitch, she was able to self-correct her timing and hit with confidence again.

When you are not succeeding in an outcome like scoring goals (hockey), putting a ball (golf), scoring a point (tennis), winning a rally (badminton), or sweeping a stone (curling), it's because you are not paying enough attention to a RIGHT FOCUS that is needed to execute—but you don't know it.

Usually, we lack a RIGHT FOCUS because we're a bit anxious. Performance anxiety lowers awareness. The more nervous we are, the less we're able to take in the information we need to excel...our self-trust plummets, we try to control, we experience failure...and our confidence erodes.

Mental Toughness Exercise

Please answer the following two questions. Write down what you were thinking about/paying attention to during your **best performance** in a high pressure competition:

Write down what you were thinking about/paying attention to during your **worst performance** in a high pressure competition:

Consider your answers. If you're like most athletes, in your best performance *you were simply paying attention to many different tactical elements of your event that were under your control that also helped you achieve your outcome*. Here are some examples of the RIGHT FOCUS:

Basketball: "I was trying to stay between my check and the basket at all times."

Baseball: "I was watching the pitcher release the ball to predict the timing of the pitch."

Volleyball: "I was extending myself to go deep with my arms on the block."

Soccer: "I was keeping the exact right gap between me and my opponent so he couldn't dribble the ball by me."

Badminton: "I was paying attention to the mistakes my opponent was making, particularly the fact that his backhand was weak."

Golf: "I was connecting to my swing rhythm, particularly its speed."

Hockey: "I was thinking about driving to the net as aggressively as possible before shooting."

Skiing: "I just went out and had fun and attacked the hills. I wasn't even thinking about the race."

Football: "I was watching his mid-section so I could stay with him and get the tackle (and not get sucked in by the fake)."

Figure skating: "I was holding my prep stance long enough so that I was prepared to jump."

Tennis: "I was completely focused on *when* the ball was hitting the court so I could take the ball early and get my timing down."

Your Worst Performance: The Outcome Focus

Now, consider your answers to part two. If you're like most athletes, in your *worst* performance you were probably thinking about the *outcome* of your

performance (or worse, life outside sport!). When I say outcome, I mean things like winning, losing, scoring points, making a shot, scoring goals, making baskets, etc. Here are some examples:

Basketball: “I really wanted to nail the three point shot.”

Baseball: “I was worried about getting a hit.”

Badminton: “I was thinking about trying to smash and score a point fast.”

Volleyball: “I kept watching their star player because I was scared he would spike.”

Soccer: “I was trying to steal the ball.”

Golf: “I was trying to two putt the hole.”

Skiing: “I was worried about how big the ruts in the course were.”

Hockey: “I really wanted to score a goal.”

Football: “I wanted to sack the quarterback.”

Figure skating: “I wanted to land all my jumps.”

Tennis: “I wanted to blast the ball by him and end the game.”

A Personal Example

Years ago, in a ringette game, I was frustrated because I wasn't scoring. I was repeating positive affirmations to myself like crazy, but nothing was helping. In frustration I turned to a teammate and said, “How do you get your confidence back when you're not scoring?” She said, “I study the goalie to find out why I'm not scoring. Then I change the way I'm shooting, and I shoot more. Once I score, my confidence comes back.”

This is a fantastic example of the RIGHT FOCUS in competition.

Mental Toughness Exercise

I want you to select three RIGHT FOCUSES for competing that are under your control for your next big event. The best way to come up with this is to ask the question, “When I'm performing well, what I am doing tactically and is under my control that works?”

For example, if you are a badminton player, you might set a goal to move your opponent around by mixing up your shots. If you are a figure skater,

you might set a goal to really connect with your music and the feeling of your routine.

If you are a basketball player, you might set a goal to “box out” and stay between your check and your defensive hoop. If you are a curler, you might set a goal to have supreme awareness of ice conditions and hog to hog times so you can make strategy and sweeping calls.

Remember, your RIGHT FOCUS is always under your direct and immediate control and gives your body the information it needs to succeed. NOTE: a RIGHT FOCUS is not a super-technical focus on a certain body part. For example, if you’re a golfer, a RIGHT FOCUS is not to think about keeping your wrists stiff while putting. This would make you clumsy, because you’re interfering with your body. A better RIGHT FOCUS would be to imagine that your arms and wrists form a triangle, and you want to swing them like a pendulum. This image in your mind will automatically cause you to stiffen your wrists without thinking about it directly.

Sometimes your coach can help you identify the RIGHT FOCUS you need to improve a skill. For example, a basketball coach recently told me that the reason her star forward wasn’t scoring was because the arc on her shot was too flat. Her player *thought* the arc on her own shot was fine, but it was too flat. So the coach said to her, “Ok, if a perfect arc is a 5 out of 10 in height, I want you to try shooting a really high arc - show me a 10 arc.” When her player tried to shoot a 10 arc, her actual shot levelled out a 5, and she was shooting perfect baskets. Obviously, this player always *thinks* she’s shooting a higher arc than she actually is! Her RIGHT FOCUS would be to practice her arc until she can shoot any kind of arc her coach wants - a 5, 7, 10 - whatever. When she can do this, she will naturally shoot a 5 in competition quite easily.

Create three RIGHT FOCUSES for yourself here:

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

RIGHT FOCUS Success Story from Lisa

In my early twenties, I went into a scoring slump in my sport, Ringette. I became obsessed with whether I was scoring or not. Of course, I started scoring less, not more.

Finally, I decided I needed a new strategy. I stopped thinking about whether or not I was scoring and started focusing on how to score. As soon as I started thinking about how to score goals, I started to notice some interesting things:

- *I saw that most goals were scored from right in front of the net. I had been shooting from too far away, and the goalie was reading my shots.*
- *I noticed that the best goal scorers use certain dekes to get around the low defence in the triangle. My dekes weren't that crisp.*
- *I realized that I had to develop a couple of speciality shots to score on the best goalies in the world. My shots were good, but not that fast and not that accurate.*

Suddenly, instead of obsessing about goal scoring, I became fascinated with these new things I noticed. By watching the best snipers in the world, I slowly started to imitate their moves.

Eventually, I realized I was scoring more. The great thing is the goals felt like a bonus. The real joy was in learning new things. I learned that when I focused on goal scoring (something I couldn't control), I scored less. When I focused on things I could control (shooting from the right place, taking the right shots), I scored more.

The Right Focus and Confidence

Confidence is your belief that you can cope with the challenges of competition. The primary reason we lose confidence in our self is because, at least temporarily, you're not sure you can solve these challenges. And the reason you doubt yourself is because your performance anxiety is making you less aware of what's happening in your event. Your lack of the RIGHT FOCUS has destroyed your confidence.

By setting a firm, unequivocal goal to maintain your RIGHT FOCUS, you are setting yourself apart from all the other athletes in your sport, who are fixated on outcomes or other distractions. Having the RIGHT FOCUS makes you extremely powerful, gives you the mental edge over others, and gives you the breakthrough confidence you need to consistently provide peak performance.

Final Thoughts

Thank you for being part of the Courage to Win™ in Sport. This AthleticQuickness.com special edition is part of the complete Courage to Win™ in Sport program, which contains dozens of strategies for fortifying your mental toughness. For serious athletes and coaches who want to **completely master their mental game in the next 30 days**, try the complete Courage to Win™ in Sport program here - recommended by AthleticQuickness.com.

www.aqrecommends.com/thecouragetowin



Your friend, Lisa Lane Brown

Endnotes

¹Michael Jordan and Mark Vancil, *For the Love of the Game: My Story*, Crown, 1998.

²Tim Gallwey, *Inner Tennis: Playing The Game*. Random House, 1976.