

Playing the Game One Play at a Time

MASTERS OF THE MENTAL GAME SERIES BOOK

The Mental Game of Football
Playing the Game One Play at a Time

MASTERS OF THE MENTAL GAME SERIES BOOK

This book is being given to

Because I care about you and your success



Brian M. Cain, MS, CMAA
with Daniel C. Nolan

Brian Cain Peak Performance, LLC

**WHAT CHAMPIONS ARE SAYING ABOUT BRIAN CAIN
AND *THE MENTAL GAME OF FOOTBALL***

"Cain gives you a system for communicating and teaching more effectively about competitiveness, mental toughness and the skills athletes need to succeed in college football and in life. His program made a huge difference in our 2010 Big South championship season."

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Coastal Carolina University
2010 Big South Champions

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Arizona State University

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Mt. Greylock Regional High School

If this book has had a positive impact on the way you coach or play football and you would like to have a testimonial featured in future editions of *The Mental Game of Football*, please e-mail your testimonial to admin@briancain.com.

We look forward to hearing how this book has positively affected your game and life. We would also welcome the opportunity of working with you to become a master of the mental game, and to helping you DOMINATE the day, one play at a time.

In Excellence,

Your Mental Conditioning Coach for Football

A stylized, handwritten signature in black ink, consisting of a large, flowing 'B' followed by a smaller 'C' and a horizontal line extending to the right.

Brian M. Cain, MS, CMAA



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The Mental Game of Football

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**Brian M. Cain, MS, CMAA
with Daniel C. Nolan**

Brian Cain Peak Performance, LLC

Brian M. Cain, MS, CMAA
Mental Conditioning Coach
Peak Performance Publishing
Brian Cain Peak Performance, LLC

The Mental Game of Football:
One Play at a Time

A Masters of the Mental Game Series Book

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One Play at a Time

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PREFACE

Every play in football has a life and history of its own. In most games there will only be a handful of plays that determine the outcome of that game. As a coach or player, you never know what play will be the one that makes the big difference, so you have to treat them all as if they are going to be that big play.

Playing the game of football one play at a time is what the mental game is all about. Giving yourself the best chance for success on this play in turn gives you the best chance for success on the scoreboard at the end of the game.

This book is an extensive collection of my experiences working as a mental conditioning coach in the game of football and is a body of work that, when put into action, will unlock your potential and take your game to the next level.

This is a book about the process of becoming a person with a program of excellence.

This is a book about becoming a champion so that you can win more championships.

This is a book designed for you to become more so that you can get more out of yourself and others.

This book will provide you with the guiding principles that will give you the best chance for success in football and in life.

The material in this book has worked for real football players and coaches in real college and high school programs around the country. This is not a book on theory; it is a book on APPLICATION!

Whether you are a veteran of mental conditioning and football or just getting started, this book will provide insight and information you can use IMMEDIATELY to start becoming and creating masters of the mental game.

DOMINATE THE DAY!

DEDICATION

This book is dedicated to all of the football players and coaches out there who realize the value of the game and the amazing life lessons you learn through participation.

This book is dedicated to you, the reader, because you are committed to excellence. You have chosen to invest the time it takes to be different, abnormal or uncommon, in order to take your game and life to the next level. You want more, and my mission through this book is to help you establish a process so that you can become more.

By signing your name below, you are dedicating yourself to reading and, more importantly, to applying this book and making the commitment to enjoy the journey to the summit of The Mountain of Excellence.

I _____
(print your name) have been given everything I need to become a person of excellence. I am fully capable of living the life of my dreams and leaving this world and the game of football more than it was when I got here. I am a one-play warrior who lives and competes in the present and chooses to focus on the process over the outcome, and I will stay positive in the face of adversity.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

It is with sincere and deep appreciation that I, Brian M. Cain, acknowledge the support and guidance of the following people who helped make this manual possible:

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It is with sincere and deep appreciation that I, Daniel C. Nolan, acknowledge the support and guidance of the following people who helped make this manual possible:

Special thanks to Bob Davis, Brian Cain, Doug D'Olimpio, Eric Johnson, Aaron Grondin, Ben Bouffard, and my incomparable family – Kate Dale; Maura, John, Tim, Jack and Carolyn Nolan; and Tiffany and Davan Russell.

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FOREWORD

This is a book about excellence - excellence in football, and more importantly, excellence in life. If you have this book in your hands, it is my mission that this book will become “that book” – that book that changed your life.

For me, that book was *Heads-Up Baseball: Playing The Game One Pitch At A Time* by Dr. Ken Ravizza. Reading that book changed my life as a baseball player and as a man. I spent two years with Dr. Ravizza in his graduate school program in sport psychology at Cal State Fullerton. Those years and my four years of high school football playing for John T. Allen were the most influential time period of my life because of the growth, self-discovery and model that these men set for me to follow.

This book contains the principles and lessons I have learned from these two great coaches about mental toughness - the same principles and lessons that I teach in the execution of my mission as a mental conditioning and peak performance coach with the top college and high school programs in the country.

In most ways, this manual is the product of my experiences throughout this great journey and learning process. It represents the accumulation of the knowledge I have gained and wish to impart to those who strive for daily excellence and who want to become more so they can have more.

Being in the dugout during the NCAA College World Series in Omaha; working as a mental conditioning coach

with Team USA Baseball and NCAA Champions; cornering Ultimate Fighting Championship World Champions in Main Event bouts in Las Vegas; working with athletes competing for their home country in the Olympic Games; and working with coaches and athletes in Major League Baseball, the National Football League, the National Hockey League and in the National Basketball Association as a mental conditioning coach - these are just a few of the standout moments I have been fortunate to experience in my career. Still, to this day, my greatest memories are from high school football. I hope this book helps coaches and players to get even more out of this great game and the greatest athletic experience available to young people in our country.

I am humbled by the privilege I have to live the life of my dreams, and I move forward in life with an attitude of gratitude. I understand, however, that this privilege is not guaranteed to me, and any success is the result of having had the opportunity to surround myself with successful and selfless people who have shown me the way.

Human growth and development happen through experience - the experience of the events in your life, the teammates you have, the people you meet, the programs you watch, the music you listen to, and the books you read. It is my sincere hope and desire that this book becomes a life-changing experience for you on the greatest field in the world, the football field, and in life.

Compete One Play At A Time!!!

AUTHOR'S NOTE

The intent of the author in writing this book in The Masters of the Mental Game Series was to create a comprehensive mental conditioning manual that could be used by football players and coaches as their blueprint for mental conditioning.

Mental conditioning and peak performance are all about searching within yourself to see what you are made of as a person. When you search within yourself, you learn that all the answers to life's questions and challenges live inside you. As you work your way through this book, you will learn what drives you to embark on this self-transformative journey of self-improvement by continuously reflecting upon your attitudes and actions.

While reading this book, you will recognize the mental adjustments and changes you must make to access all the untapped and limitless potential that resides inside you. Tapping into every ounce of combined mental and physical potential is the art of peak performers, and this book will teach you this art form by coaching you to search from within.



This photo has impacted me since I first saw it in 2002, and it illustratively captures the concept of one's ability to search within oneself. My life's mission is to help you uncover the excellence that lies within you and to coach you to develop the tools necessary to achieve your best in football and in life by taking a look inside.

INTRODUCTION

INTRODUCTION TO PEAK PERFORMANCE, MENTAL CONDITIONING AND THE MENTAL GAME OF FOOTBALL

“Football may be the best-taught subject in American high schools because it is the only subject that we haven’t tried to make easy.”

*Dorothy Farnan
English Department Chair
Erasmus Hall HS, Brooklyn, New York*

What is peak performance in football? What does it mean to play your best one play at a time? What is mental conditioning and why is it essential to both understanding and answering those two questions?

This is your mental conditioning program for football. A 10-chapter/10-week off-season training program that will give you the knowledge and techniques to unlock all of your performance potential on the gridiron.

The coaches and athletes I have worked with at national championship-winning college programs; state and national championship-winning high school programs; the Olympic Games; Ultimate Fighting Championship; National Football League; National Hockey League; National Basketball Association; and Major League Baseball have all experienced one thing in common: ***As you elevate to higher levels of competition, success becomes less about the physical skills and***

more about your mental game.

This truth is essential to acknowledging and appreciating the importance of mental conditioning, and the more you think about it, the more obvious it becomes. At the highest levels of competition, everyone has the physical skills to be successful or else they would not be competing at that level. Talent is simply just not enough. If it were, every 1st round pick in the Major League Baseball Draft would make it to the Major Leagues, but less than half of them ever do.

Thus, on top of developing the physical skills to compete at the highest level, coaches and athletes must devote more time to the development of their mental game that will allow them to perform consistently at their best.

To further emphasize the significance of mastering the mental game, there is a simple two-word sentence to convey the significance of mental conditioning as it relates to football: ***Consistency wins.***

"Discipline breeds consistency and consistency is the father of success."

Tony DeMeo
College Football Head Coach

CONSISTENCY IN PLAY TO PLAY

Consistency is the significant difference between the good and the great coaches, players and teams. Those who compete at the highest level on a consistent basis are the legendary and iconic figures in the game like

Peyton Manning, Walter Payton, Lawrence Taylor and Jerry Rice.

Super Bowl winning head coach Jon Gruden was amazed at Rice's consistency and work ethic, which he observed firsthand when they were both with the Oakland Raiders.

"I had never seen anything like the work ethic of this thirty-nine-year-old Hall of Famer-in-waiting. He would get our practice scripts, and through every second of the pre-practice stretch, he would have a coach quiz him on the pass routes we were going to run that day. Between every period he would be off to the side, on one knee, concentrating and studying the next grouping of plays we were going to run. He hated making mistakes. He had so much pride in getting every detail right; it was amazing."

Anyone who has the physical prowess necessary to compete has the ability to perform at the highest levels of his ability once in a while, but it is the one-play warrior who stands out among everyone else – the one who brings his best every play and every time he puts the helmet on. That is the guy who will make the biggest impact on his team, in his school, and who will ultimately have the greatest career.

WHAT MAKES THE BEST OF THE BEST

Demanding the best possible performance from your body is a characteristic of all great athletes. However, physical development to your peak potential does not come cheap.

The most competitive athletes invest significant amounts

of time and energy into the many grueling hours it takes to train their bodies for performance at the highest levels of football. The off-season workouts of Jerry Rice are something of legend and something that you will research on YouTube and use as motivation if you want to get the most out of your career.

MENTAL CONDITIONING IS ESSENTIAL

The greatest players and teams in football are aware of something that you might not realize: ***If you want to be the best of the best, doing the physical training is simply not enough.***

Legendary NFL head coach, owner, and Hall of Famer Paul Brown knew this very well. According to Brown:

"The best teams were first and foremost made up of quality people. He was convinced that with diligence, wisdom and teamwork, an assemblage of average players formulated from high-character individuals could – while working in unison as a close-knit crew – achieve much greater success than a group of all-star individuals who were incapable of functioning in harmony."

Brown and other great champions know that mental conditioning is essential in order to develop a psychological edge over their greatest competitors and give them the confidence to turn it loose and play carefree.

The greatest competitors understand that peak performance occurs only when the body and the mind are working together to maximize their performance

potential. Thus, the best of the best know that mental conditioning is as vital to their success as physical conditioning.

THE POWER OF THE MIND

The power of the mind is as miraculous as it is incomprehensible. Studies have continued for years, and we are still miles away from truly understanding the full capabilities of the human brain. Countless examples of the "mind over matter" type of experience have been documented over time.

There are incredible examples of prisoners of war being released and performing amazing physical feats that they had practiced mentally during their detentions.

One such example is of a POW who came out of exile having visualized playing golf every day. By the time he was free and stepped onto a golf course, he lowered his golf game by ten strokes. Upon his release, another POW who practiced mental conditioning became a competent guitarist by teaching himself the guitar through repetitive visualization processes, despite never playing the instrument before.

There are endless miraculous stories similar to these, and it is safe to say that even though neurological function is not as well understood as the physiological, no one is prepared to discount the human mind as the most powerful tool available in the world.

The good news is that even without understanding the scientific intricacies of the human mind, anyone can

improve his mental toughness for football with a simple mental conditioning program and by doing simple exercises on a routine basis. You learn best in conditioning yourself to be the toughest mentally just like you do physically - by ***doing a little a lot, not a lot a little.***

MENTAL CONDITIONING FOR FOOTBALL

Mental conditioning for football is the process of developing mental toughness, by which an individual exercises and develops the mental muscles to control his mental state in order to control his behavior. You must be in control of yourself before you can control your performance on the field - and gaining self-control in the violent, aggressive, combative sport of football is essential to your success.

When divided between the two words, mental relates to the mind, while conditioning means to train oneself to behave in a certain way or to accept certain circumstances that will happen in the game, such as an official missing a call, the other team ripping off a big play or you having to play through pain and discomfort.

Mental conditioning is a process similar to how you would physically condition your body in the weight room. When you lift weights infrequently, you don't get any stronger; but when you lift weights consistently, the timely repetition will make you stronger. Mental toughness is developed the same way, by doing a little a lot.

Mental conditioning gives you the techniques to develop control over the beliefs in your mind. Beliefs (both

positive and negative) shape our behavior, create our experiences, and determine our results.

THE POWER OF BELIEFS

Philosophers and spiritual leaders have been preaching the power of beliefs for centuries, while scientists have been conducting research on how the mind works for decades. Football coaches – such as the great Bud Wilkinson of Oklahoma, whose teams won three national championships in the 1950's and won 47 straight games between 1953 and 57 - were among the first in our culture to recognize the practical application of positive affirmation training and the implications of mental conditioning for their performance. Wilkinson once famously said, "You can motivate players better with a kind word than with a whip."

Football coaches like Wilkinson realized that they could dramatically improve their players' confidence, resilience in the face of adversity and their on-field performance reliability by integrating positive confidence conditioning statements and mental imagery into their daily training regimens. Jimmy Johnson, one of only three coaches to have won both the Super Bowl and the national championship, said this:

"Treat a man as he is, and he will remain as he is. Treat him as he could be, and he will become what he should be."

The goal of this book is to give you the tools to develop your mental game, shatter limiting beliefs, develop the confidence and consistency needed to play your best one play at a time, and give yourself the best chance to win

on the scoreboard and, more importantly, in life.



CAIN'S COACHING POINT:

The mental conditioning skills you will learn to perform at your best in football will also help you to perform at your best in life when your football playing days are over. Football really is a gateway to life. The skills coaches teach you on the field will help you to perform in the world.

**COACHES' BUILT-IN EXCUSE:
NOT HAVING A MENTAL CONDITIONING SYSTEM**

It is an unfortunate reality that most football programs leave mental toughness to chance. Many coaches think that their players will either figure it out or they won't - that their players either have it together between the ears or they do not. Many coaches think players are born mentally tough or mentally weak. This old-school thinking is actually excuse making for not knowing how to train and develop mental toughness in their football players.

These coaches believe there is nothing they as coaches can do to help enhance the athlete's mental toughness other than tough physical conditioning, and yet they will agree that performing at your best when it means the most is as much about the six inches between your ears as it is the six feet below them.

This coaching mentality fails to recognize that developing a strong mental game has just as much, if not more, significant value to performance on the field than developing a strong physical game.

EXCUSE EXTERMINATOR IN YOUR HANDS

Until now, mental toughness training for football has been left to chance. In this book, you will learn the importance of focusing on the *present moment* and will gain a true understanding of what it means to have a *process over outcome* approach, a *positive attitude* and *performance preparation routines*, along with the *discipline* and *dedication* necessary to achieve your football and personal goals, regardless of adversity and the failures you will face.

MENTAL TOUGHNESS IS A SKILL SET

Mental toughness is simply a skill set that can be taught, developed, and continuously improved just like your physical game of football.

Mental conditioning is strength and conditioning for the six inches between your ears that control the six feet below them. Having a mental conditioning system is essential to playing your best when it means the most, *one play at a time*. Mental conditioning will give you a skill set to be successful in football and, more importantly, successful in life.

"Mental is to physical as 4 is to 1."

Bobby Knight
College Basketball Head Coach
902 wins, 3 national championships

THE 90%/10% SHIFT

Whether or not coaches and athletes understand the complete significance of mental conditioning, most coaches and athletes I have worked with will agree that training for football games is 90% physical and 10% mental. They acknowledge that a noticeable shift occurs when kickoff rolls around. In the heat of competition they acknowledge that performance becomes 90% mental and 10% physical. This is called the 90%/10% shift to give athletes and coaches an illustrative taste of how valuable mental conditioning is when it is time to put the helmet and shoulder pads on and line it up.

The reality is that there should be no shift. Mental conditioning should be integrated into physical conditioning and every aspect of preparation. It should be 100% mental and physical conditioning combined, because one is never complete without the other.

This book will give you a system for training your mental game and for unlocking your true gridiron potential. As you read this manual and develop your mental toughness, think about it as going to the gym to do strength and conditioning for your brain instead of your body. This book is your "Mind Gym."

CAIN'S BLUEPRINT FOR EXCELLENCE

I always get the question, "Brian, when you work with the top football programs and professional athletes, what do you teach?"

What I teach them is the same mental conditioning program that you will learn - about exactly how to play your best when it means the most, by teaching you how to:

- Live in the present moment and compete one play at a time.
- Act differently than how you feel and start having good and "bad" days and good "bad" plays.
- Focus on the process over the outcome.
- Identify what you can control and what you cannot.
- Have your own personal and program philosophy and core values for football and life.
- Challenge your limiting beliefs and your perspective.
- Stay positive in the face of adversity - and football is a game of adversity.
- Develop preparation and performance routines for consistent high-level football performance.
- Take responsibility for your performance and life.

- Relax, recover, and gain control of your thoughts, feelings, and emotions before the big play and in life.
- Recognize your signal lights and develop the awareness to win the next play and win the day.
- Release negative thoughts and refocus back to the next play when you get distracted and when adversity hits.
- Move from intelligence and thinking to trusting, action and positive results.
- Use mental imagery to help you prepare and be more confident for your next game and next play.
- Inspire, lead and motivate yourself to make the impossible possible.
- Develop the dedication and self-discipline that you need to power through the grind it takes to succeed.
- Take action steps to make excellence a lifestyle, not an event.

These are the fundamentals of mental toughness and represent the blueprint I use when working with any football coach, player or program to develop personal responsibility in daily excellence (PRIDE).

THE GOAL OF THE BOOK IN YOUR HANDS

The goal of the book in your hands is that you learn how to control your mind so you can successfully direct your body to achieve the level of football and life performance

necessary to become a champion.



CAIN'S COACHING POINT:

If you want to win a championship, you must first become a champion. Using the skills taught in this book will make you a champion on the field and in life. Always remember that if you want more wins, you must become more as an individual first so that you deserve more wins.

**ONE PLAY/DAY AT A TIME
10-WEEK PRIDE PROGRAM FOR FOOTBALL**

This book is written in a 10-week program format for building mental toughness for football, a little a lot each week.

We will focus on two critical principles of success:

1. One play/day at a time
2. PRIDE - Personal Responsibility In Daily Excellence

The PRIDE acronym serves as the backbone of this mental conditioning system for football, reminding you of the significance of making excellence a daily pursuit for which you are personally responsible and accountable.

The outcome goal is that you become a peak performer on the field and in life. Before you can become a peak

performer, you must first understand that excellence is a lifestyle, not an event, and is defined as being at your best when it means the most which is every day and every play in football.



CAIN'S COACHING POINT:

Excellence is being at your best when it means the most – every play and every day.

For a football player, being your best when it means the most is every single play. Every single rep in practice. Every single lift in the off-season. If you are a student, it is every single class. As former West Point head football coach Rich Ellerson said: *"Winning is a habit, and you got to do it all day. You can't just flick a switch on on Saturdays."*

Regardless of your performance arena, taking PRIDE is having an overall system for success.

CLIMBING THE MOUNTAIN OF EXCELLENCE

Climbing The Mountain of Excellence is a symbolic concept used throughout this book. The summit of the mountain represents your goal, a state or national championship, while the mountain represents the obstacle one must conquer to reach it, yourself and your season. The journey up The Mountain of Excellence marks the self-improvement endeavor an individual must take to become a peak performer.



CAIN'S COACHING POINT:

If you want more success on the field, you must become more off the field. Winning a championship is a by-product of becoming a champion.

This book employs the concept of The Mountain of Excellence to demonstrate that the achievement of performance excellence is a long, but worthwhile,

journey.

Similar to mountain climbing, football is about training to conquer one mountain at a time. Once that mountain has been climbed, it is time to return to base camp and set your sights on the next mountain's summit and get to work. Each mountain is scaled one step at a time. It does not matter if you are climbing Mt. Everest, one of the big boys, or the local hill in your town - all mountains are summited one step at a time and all football games are won one play at a time. Base camp is your video room, practice field and weight room. The next mountain to climb is your next game.

"We're living our lives together; we will never again be together as a group this way when this season is over. Never. We all know how things change. We should remember that on every single play. All we need to do is make every play in every game important. Play it as if you'll never play the game again. We do that and then, whatever happens, we can walk away when it's all over and feel good about ourselves and about each other. Every single play. That's what football is. I pledge to give you everything I have on every single play. I want all of you to pledge that to yourselves and to each other."

Ray Lewis
2 x NFL Super Bowl champion
Future NFL Hall of Fame Player

ONE STEP TO THE SUMMIT - STAY & YOU DIE

Mountain climbing also serves as a great activity to compare with football because when a team scales a mountain, they cannot simply live on the summit: They must return to base camp, regroup and climb another mountain, or their climbing career is over. Similarly in football, an individual or team cannot win a championship and be champions forever. They will forever be champions of that season, but as soon as the next season rolls around, the slate is swept clean and all the opposition is ready to become title contenders. This forces the champions to start the season anew in their quest for that season's championship, that climb's summit. Therefore, your time at the summit is only temporary.

After The University of Alabama defeated Notre Dame

42-14 for the 2013 NCAA National Championship, somebody asked Alabama coach Nick Saban if he could appreciate what his team had done: three national titles in four years, dominance over a sport we thought could no longer be dominated.

“One day, when I’m sitting on the side of the hill, looking at the stream, I’ll probably appreciate it more,” Saban said. And then he paused. “But what about next year’s team?”

Saban clearly understands that you can’t live on the summit. That you must get back on the horse and ride or you will die. After the game he also said that he was going to take 48 hours, enjoy the win and then get back to work.



CAIN’S COACHING POINT:

It is key that you give yourself a certain time frame to enjoy a win or lick your wounds from a loss. Giving both a deadline where you re-engage back into the moment and into the next game gives you the best chance to prepare and perform consistently at your best.

Ultimately, there is no end to the pursuit of excellence, no one final summit to reach. Excellence is a constant journey that demands personal responsibility in your daily commitment. As you read this book, the use of the mountain climbing analogy will assist your understanding and application of the mental game as you strive to become more.

WHAT IS YOUR SUMMIT?

In reading this book, it is clear that your immediate Mountain of Excellence is conquering this book to understand how to play at your best and achieve performance excellence. How to transform yourself into a peak performer. However, it is only by fully understanding the reasons for embarking on this journey and openly recognizing the larger mountain you desire to conquer that you will make the most of your personal growth and mental conditioning experience. Therefore, you must ***begin with the end in mind*** to give your journey a greater sense of purpose. You must know precisely where it is you want to end up and ***why*** you want to end up there, or you might find yourself climbing the wrong mountain - a mountain that your parents or someone else wanted you to climb, not the mountain you wanted to climb.

Think about your desired destination. Is it being the best football player on your team? Is it winning a state or national championship? Breaking a particular record? Getting the college scholarship or drafted into the NFL, or simply making the team? Whatever your journey, you must begin with the end in mind. You must have an outcome goal and a destination to start your journey.

CAIN'S CHALK TALK:

What is The Mountain of Excellence you desire to climb and conquer? What is it you want to accomplish?



CAIN'S COACHING POINT:



Remember, you are allowed to climb more than one mountain, but should focus on one summit at a time. Keeping your mind in the present moment, sticking with the process and staying positive will help you to better enjoy your journey and experience more success than if you mountain hop and pursue different summits during the day. Whatever mountain you are climbing at that time, focus on that specific summit. Be where you need to be when you need to be there, hike one step at a time, and play football one play at a time.

“The journey is better than the inn.”

Cervantes

THREE STEPS TO ACCOMPLISHING ANYTHING

Most people have heard the saying “You can do anything if you set your mind to it” but are skeptical of deeming it a universal truth. Well, I am one of those people who believe that if you truly desire something, why not set your mind to it and give everything you’ve got to achieve it? To make your dreams become a reality you must pursue your goals in an effective and realistic manner. This is why peak performers must understand and effectively utilize the three-step process to accomplishing anything, both in football and in life.

The three steps that give you the best chance to accomplish anything are these:

1. Make a commitment to your goal by writing it down and putting it where you can see it on a daily basis.
2. Make it public and share your goal with your teammates, friends, family, accountability partners and the people in your inner circle.
3. Work with a relentlessly positive energy on a daily basis to make it happen – the type of relentlessly positive energy that can only be found when you are pursuing something you are passionate about and have a reason why. So be very selective about your goals.

These three steps provide you with the strategy that gives you the best opportunity to accomplish anything

you desire.

As you proceed on your journey through this manual, utilize these steps to accomplish your process-based goals along the way. This is why you identified and established your mountain in the previous section to facilitate the first step of this process in your personal journey. It is your job to facilitate step number two, and it is the purpose of this book to provide the information and knowledge to facilitate step number three so that you may conquer the mountain and reach its summit.

ONE PLAY/DAY (TODAY) AT A TIME

Now that you have established your mountain and know the three principal steps to reaching the summit, it may still appear to be an intimidating mountain to climb. Do not be daunted by your destination. You chose it because you want it - because a fiery passion within you burns and yearns to shed its light on the snow-capped pinnacle of your mountain. You will conquer your Mountain of Excellence; it all comes down to taking the first step and then another and another until you reach the top. Have patience in the process and enjoy the journey.

INTRODUCTION REVIEW

- In football and in life, consistency wins.
- If you want to be the best of the best, doing the physical conditioning is not enough. You must do both physical and mental conditioning.
- Peak performance occurs only when the body and the mind are working together to maximize their performance potential.
- The power of the mind is as miraculous as it is incomprehensible.
- Mental conditioning is the process of developing the mental toughness skill set by which an individual exercises and develops influence over his mental state in order to control his physical behavior.
- Mental toughness is taught, developed and continuously improved upon, just like going to the weight room for your physical toughness.
- Mental conditioning should be integrated into physical conditioning and every aspect of football performance. You do not separate the mental and physical conditioning; you do them together.
- PRIDE = Personal Responsibility In Daily Excellence
- Excellence is being at your best when it means the most – every single day.

- ❑ The Mountain of Excellence represents the obstacle one must conquer to reach his outcome goal at the summit.
- ❑ The journey up The Mountain of Excellence is a self-transformative endeavor an individual must take to become a peak performer.
- ❑ One cannot live at the summit; you have to keep hiking or you will die.
- ❑ There is no end to the pursuit of excellence.
- ❑ Peak performance is a constant journey pursuing excellence and demanding personal responsibility in this daily pursuit.
- ❑ Choose your Mountain of Excellence you desire to climb and conquer.
- ❑ Remember, you are allowed to climb more than one mountain, but should focus on one summit at a time.

Playing the Game One Play at a Time

CHAPTER #1

TAKING PRIDE IN FOOTBALL AND CLIMBING TO THE SUMMIT OF THE MOUNTAIN OF EXCELLENCE

“Football has been my father in life. Not exactly each coach, but football has replaced my father. It’s taught me to be disciplined in whatever I do, be tough, be physical, be mentally tough. It taught me what a man is, because there are so many men within it. You decipher who is a good man and who puts on a front. Football is my father.”

James Posey
Former NFL player

RISE AND GRIND

Each morning when you wake up, a new climb up The Mountain of Excellence begins. Every day it is time to rise and grind (**#RISE&GRIND**). In your backpack are your experiences and what you have learned on previous journeys from past days. Make your journey by focusing on one day and one step at a time.

The importance of taking one day at a time cannot be overstated. When Urban Meyer was at the University of Florida, he broke the season down to 107 days, not 12 games or 6 months. This was a much more manageable concept for the players and coaches alike. You know your desired destination – the summit of your mountain – but you must familiarize and condition yourself with the fundamental principles necessary for survival. This must

be done on a daily basis. Start by breaking the journey down into smaller chunks – winter conditioning, spring ball, summer workouts, two-a-days, regular season, and finally – postseason. ***It is the start that stops most people, and the start of your day is the most important part of your day.***

As any mountain climber preparing to ascend Mount Everest can attest, one must gradually build the stamina and conditioning for the long trek to the summit. Putting in the time and establishing mental endurance is of high importance, so that you are prepared for the treacherous conditions you are bound to face on your long journey. ***Embrace the adversity*** and practice the mindset you need to succeed one day at a time to reach your summit.

WHAT ARE YOUR PROGRAM CORE VALUES?

As you set your sights on the summit of The Mountain of Excellence, you must begin to prepare for your journey by establishing core values. A core value is a personal belief reinforced by how you spend your time and treat other people. You must identify your personal and program core values in order to realize what you stand for both now and in the future. These core values will provide an internal guide to direct you on your journey and will reflect how you approach your pursuit of excellence. These values will provide your safety net for when you fall. And make no mistake - when you hike the mountains that we will, you will fall. ***Falls are to be embraced, not avoided.***

CAIN'S CHALK TALK:

Reflect upon the following question: How do you want to be remembered when your last journey is over? What do you want people to say about you at the celebration of your life as a player/coach who was committed to the pursuit of excellence? As you think about this, write down the core values you will strive to embody over the course of this season and how you want to be remembered.





CAIN'S COACHING POINT:

Answering the question of how you want to be remembered when your life's journey is complete will help provide clarity to what is most significant to you and how you will want to begin living your life today.

As you reflect upon this big question, consider how your core values transfer to your football

performance. Think about how you would like people to acknowledge you and your contributions to your sport and your team over the duration of the current season.

DIFFERENT VALUES FOR DIFFERENT TIMES

The reason we transition focus to a set of core values for the present (off-season into the season or vice versa) and not for an entire lifetime is that a lifetime is a daunting time frame. A lifetime is too difficult to imagine and therefore presents an intimidating mountain to climb. ***It is important to focus on how you want to live over the course of the season in order to focus on how you must live in the present moment.*** Establishing this perspective will make climbing your mountain appear much more manageable.

Once you have identified what you want people to say about you and you have reflected this in your core values, start living by them "Today." These core values are fundamental principles that should be integrated into the routines of your daily life. If you are not regularly practicing these values, you will end up losing your way to the summit.



CAIN'S COACHING POINT:

The secrets of success are hidden in the routines of our daily lives. You will be as successful as your routines allow you to be on a daily basis. Start establishing routines and habits of excellence.

APPLYING CORE VALUES TO LIFE

When you look to the future, you may think it is difficult to have integrity for your entire life or to be responsible for your entire life or to have self-discipline for your entire life. This may be true, but you CAN live with integrity, responsibility and self-discipline "Today." With this perspective, you have an appropriately sized mountain to climb "Today." And then, do it all over again when tomorrow becomes "Today."

To begin applying core values to your sport and life, choose one or two and focus on them for a set period of time.

CAIN'S COACHING POINT:



I recommend working on your specific core values for 4-5 weeks. Research shows it takes 21-28 days for positive personal change to occur with a focused plan and accountability partner. Right now, look over your core values and ask yourself, "How do I apply my core values in my life at this present time?"

Imagine it is the month of December and one of your core values for December is being self-disciplined. As you commit yourself to working on your self-discipline this month, think about the following:

How would I define self-discipline?

What does self-discipline look like in the different aspects of my life?

If I am an athlete or a coach, what does self-discipline look like in competition, in training, in academics, at the nutritional table, in recovery, and in my personal life?

To provide myself a point of reference and to give me a chance at living that way, how do I identify specifically what it is to be self-disciplined in those areas?

Answering all of these questions is significant to defining exactly what it is and how it is you plan on living this core value. If you specifically outline your core values, you give yourself the best opportunity to live them.

By establishing what it looks like for you to live your core values, you set yourself up for success. ***It is easier to act your way into thinking and feeling than it is to think and feel your way into action.***

Knowing what action you must take and how you will take it to become the new-and-improved version of yourself sets the stage for a successful journey up the mountain.

When establishing your core values, I suggest you focus on between one and three for a given period of time. Initially, setting more than three would be an overwhelming endeavor. Giving yourself a more narrowed focus will increase your chances for successful mastery of a particular core value. If you can focus on self-discipline for the month of December, you are going to have the skill of self-discipline beyond December into January. You may work up to having five or six core values over time. As with most anything, start small, get some summits/wins under your belt, and then go bigger.

SUCCESS LEAVES CLUES

Here is some insight into achieving a successful career in anything you do: ***Success leaves clues.*** If you want to be a millionaire, go hang out with people who are millionaires. If you hang out with people who are making \$50,000 a year and you tell them you want to make a million dollars a year, what are they going to do? They are going to laugh at you, because they do not see it as a reality. If you go hang around people who make a million dollars a year, you will get some ideas on how to make your first million.

The same rationale is true for football. You always hear coaches telling players, “If you want to get better, play with people who are better than you.” This is because when you play with better players, you begin to pick up the clues to their success. Imitation and adaptation to higher levels of competition will ultimately lead to performance improvement and success of your own.

“Associate yourself with men of good quality if you esteem your own reputation, for ‘tis better to be alone than in bad company.”

George Washington

SURROUND YOURSELF WITH BETTER STUDENTS

To further illustrate the importance of hanging out with the right crowd, I will share a personal story from high school. When I was a high school student, I was not great academically. I reached a point where I knew I needed to improve my grades to play college sports. I made a self-improving adjustment in my life and began surrounding myself with those who were academically more successful. I started to study with my football teammates, mainly Tony “Thane” Coudert, one of the greatest teammates of all time, who helped me to become a better student. Rather than go play video games, I would go to his house or the library, and I became a much better student.



CAIN'S COACHING POINT:

If you want more in a certain area of your life, you must become more. You become more by associating with those who are more than you in that area. You will become the average of the five people you associate with most. Pick wisely.

I didn't feel like going to the library, but I went anyway. These students had a pre-established discipline that I knew I needed to develop.

I began noticing their study habits, and I started to learn that there are techniques you can use that are very simple to help with memorization and knowledge acquisition. When I began to imitate them, I started to get better results.

Success is largely about discovering a winning formula and implementing the system that facilitates excellence. Mastering the mental game is no different. If you surround yourself with those devoted to performance excellence, your chances of achieving it will drastically improve. When you invest your time properly into a winning system in the pursuit of excellence, success will take care of itself.

"If you're bored with life - you don't get up every morning with a burning desire to do things - you don't have enough goals."

Lou Holtz
National Championship-Winning
College Football Head Coach

DAILY GOAL SETTING & TIME PRIORITIZATION

Beyond the establishment of core values, daily goal setting and time prioritization are important for establishing the routine discipline necessary for peak performance. ***I used to call it time management, but have since learned that you will manage your time based on how you prioritize your time; therefore, time prioritization is one step before time management.***



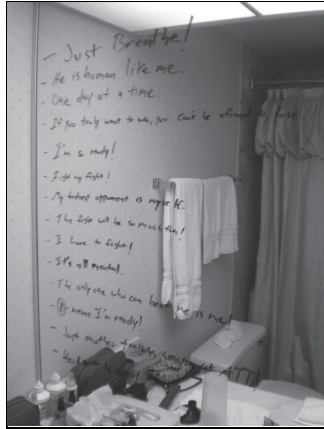
CAIN'S COACHING POINT:

There is only ONE factor among all the football players in the world who are competing for what you want. You all have only 86,400 seconds in a day. Most will spend time; you will INVEST time. If you are not efficient with your time, the competitors who are will pass you by. Learn to take control and advantage of your time, or your time will take control and advantage of you.

As an aspiring peak performer, you must find different ways to make the best investment of your time to accomplish the daily goals you set. Throughout this book, I will share with you techniques you can use to better invest your time. For example, a great technique for time prioritization is to take a dry erase marker and write on your bathroom mirror what you want to accomplish the next day.

I started doing this when I was in college and have found

it to be a VERY effective technique. ***When you look in your mirror, you are not seeing who you are. You are seeing who you are working to become.***



You are in your bathroom frequently throughout the day and the writing on your mirror will remind you constantly of what you want to accomplish. It also provides an effective method of preparing for the next day. When you go to bed, you will be relaxed knowing you already have a jump-start on the next day. By simply preparing the night before, your daily goals will always be waiting for you on your mirror when you wake up.



CAIN'S COACHING POINT:

Champions prepare their day the night before. Be sure that you pack your bag; then lay out your clothes, breakfast and everything you need to start the next day with TOTAL DOMINATION before you go to bed.

THREE STEPS TO PERFORMANCE IMPROVEMENT

Whether it is practicing core values or prioritizing your time, peak performance is all about continuous personal development and necessary change. A key theme throughout this book is that if you want more, you must become more.

Championship-winning coaches and athletes know that they must first become champions of personal responsibility in daily excellence before winning championships. They also know this takes an understanding of how to make necessary adjustments to change their performance to attain successful results.

One of the most successful mental conditioning coaches was the late Harvey Dorfman, author of *The Mental Game of Baseball* and mental conditioning coach to some of the greatest athletes in the world. Having spent some time with Harvey, he taught me that there are three essential steps you must follow if you want to make a performance improvement:

1. Develop an **awareness** of what needs to change.
2. Develop a **strategy** for change.
3. **Implement the strategy** with an accountability partner and assess yourself regularly so that the necessary performance change can occur.

Most athletes fall short of significant performance improvement because they either lack the awareness of what they need to change, do not formulate an effective

strategy for the change, fail to facilitate the strategy to bring about the necessary change, or have a “YES” partner rather than an accountability partner who tells them the truth. Without this three-step system of performance change, an athlete can never achieve the necessary performance improvement to achieve excellence.

INSTANT AWARENESS

Here’s a prime example of the three steps of performance change:

I was working with a player who was 20 pounds overweight. I had the player wear a 20-pound backpack to help develop his awareness of what it felt like to be 20 pounds overweight, and also what it would feel like to lose the extra 20 pounds he was carrying.

He wore the backpack around campus all day and at the end of the day came back to see me. He took off the pack and said he was exhausted. I made him put the pack back on and we went to practice. About halfway through I had him take it off, and after practice I asked how it felt moving around without the pack on compared to how it felt with the pack off. He said it was like night and day.

I placed my hands on his shoulders, looked him in the eyes, and said: “When you shed that 20 pounds you told me you wanted to lose, you are going to feel this good every day. Think about how much better you are going to be.” The light bulb went on. He got it. It was a great way to get him to have INSTANT AWARENESS.

This athlete went through an experience that immediately conveyed an awareness he would not have had otherwise. This experience demonstrated that, "When I lose the weight, I am going to feel like I do, right now, without that pack on." There is the awareness. Then we came up with a strategy for him to lose the weight. He contacted a sports nutritionist, approached his strength and conditioning coach about his goals, and together they developed a strategy for him to lose that excess weight.

Notice that the athlete did two things: made his goal public and established strategies with multiple accountability partners to assure implementation. Only you can make the necessary improvements; nobody else can make your performance change. It is absolutely essential that you hold yourself accountable to your goals, and the best method is making your goals public. As one of his accountability partners, I talked to him once a week about his goal. After a number of months, he dropped the 20 pounds, became a much better player, was stronger physically and mentally, and realized that with the right strategy and system he could accomplish anything. **SO CAN YOU!**

As exhibited through this example, the change begins with an awareness of what needs to change. Once this is accomplished, a strategy must be developed for the change to occur. Finally, the accomplishment of positive change for performance improvement begins to manifest through the implementation of the developed strategy and consistent assessment with your accountability partners. The three-step process to accomplishing anything, combined with the three steps of performance

improvement, provides you with the fundamental mental conditioning tools to effectively and successfully utilize the material within this program.

SELF-ASSESSMENT: STOP – START – CONTINUE

In order to further initiate your personal development and facilitate the accomplishment of your goals, you must assess yourself to build self-awareness. As an aspiring peak performer, you must assess your most recent performances to establish self-awareness of what you must improve in your pursuit of excellence. Take a look at your last three days. What are some actions or behaviors that you are doing that you need to STOP in order to achieve the goals that you have set?

CAIN'S CHALK TALK:
What I must STOP doing in order to achieve my goals:



1) _____

2) _____

Now, I want you to write down what it is you must START doing to help you achieve your goals.

CAIN'S CHALK TALK:
What I must START doing in order to achieve my goals:



1) _____

2) _____

Now, I want you to write down what it is you must CONTINUE doing to help you achieve your goals.

**CAIN'S CHALK TALK:
What I must CONTINUE doing
in order to achieve my goals:**



1) _____

2) _____

The Stop, Start, and Continue activity is a very simple process that ought to be frequently practiced to provide self-assessment and to keep you moving up your mountain. It is a simple activity to keep yourself honest about your work effort, but it is often not performed enough.

SIMPLE vs. EASY

It is here that I will take a moment to address an important distinction in both mental conditioning and performance in general. For any performer, it is important to be aware of a very significant distinction between the words "simple" and "easy." Simple and easy are not synonymous. Just because something is simple in concept does not mean it is going to be easy to do. If all simple things were easy, everyone would perform their best each time out and no upsets would ever occur. There would be no reason to play the game on the field - you could play it on paper.

There are a lot of average people walking around who

have excellence buried inside of them but are not trained or not willing to harness their hidden, untapped potential. As you read this book, you must consistently work to adopt and implement the simple practices and techniques that make a significant difference in performance.

THE NEXT 30 FEET

Imagine you were to hike from base camp to the top of The Mountain of Excellence - the tallest mountain in the world. If you were to leave base camp at midnight, could you hike to the top of The Mountain of Excellence on the trail that takes you to the summit? The answer is a definitive "Yes." It will be dark out, but you have the ability to hike the entire way up the mountain in complete darkness because of your headlamp. Your headlamp allows you to travel anywhere in the dark, because it illuminates the next 30 feet of the path. Therefore, by simply focusing on the next 30 feet, it is possible to hike through the darkness to the summit.

When you are hiking the next 30 feet, animals may attack you. You may take a wrong turn, you may challenge Sasquatch with some beef jerky, and/or you may roll an ankle. These events symbolize the adversity you are sure to face on your journey, and they are all outside of your control. All you can do is ***embrace the adversity*** and do what is necessary to reach your destination.

DESTINATION DISEASE

When metaphorically hiking up the mountain, the biggest obstacle we face is our obsession with the end result, the destination. This destination disease is representative of whatever end result you desire – the championship, the starting line-up, a particular stat line, the perfect season or the Hall of Fame. Remember that ***the destination is the disease and the journey is the reward.***

Excessive focus and time devoted to looking at the destination beyond the next 30 feet is a common illness. People set their goals too far out in front of them without understanding, creating and implementing a process to get there. By focusing on the outcome, people become stationary dreamers as opposed to advancing toward their goal, 30 feet at a time.

This is, quite simply, inaction versus action: the dichotomy between thinkers and doers. This is the condition of people counting down the days until that dream comes true as opposed to making the days count in a proactive and productive pursuit of that goal or dream. A dream without action will remain a dream, while a dream that motivates action has the opportunity to become a reality.

The game of football is ruled by the relationship between what down it is and the distance an offense needs to cover for a first down. Playing football one play at time requires you to focus only on that distance. On 1st and 10 it's the next 30 feet; on 3rd and 1 it's the next 3 feet. That distance is all that matters!

As you proceed through each chapter of this book, remember to focus on the next 30 feet as opposed to the summit of your mountain. This will prevent you from being overwhelmed at times and will make the ascent appear more manageable. ***Keep the process over the outcome and the journey over the destination.***

REFUSE THE URGE TO BE AVERAGE

As you start to apply the strategies in *The Mental Game of Football* to your life, you will receive some criticism, and some people may make fun of you for your commitment to self-improvement and performance excellence. Do not listen to the voices of negativity, for they are the voices of the masses – they are the voices of the average.

Average people and average teams are the best of the worst and the worst of the best. Do not settle for average; strive for excellence and set your sights on the summit. Reach the pinnacle of success by climbing The Mountain of Excellence with a focused determination on your goals and with a dedication to personal responsibility in your daily excellence. ***Hike that next 30 feet and you will learn that there are no traffic jams on the extra mile.***

START YOUR JOURNEY WITH ONE STEP

The rest of this book is devoted to the 10-week journey of excellence within the PRIDE program. The material within these chapters will give you the mental conditioning skills to establish your blueprint for excellence. View each chapter as if it is the next 30 feet

and conquer the mountain that is this manual. It is a journey that will begin during two-a-days and hopefully culminate with a state championship. Regardless of when you start the journey, however, this program will provide you with the knowledge and skills to make the progress necessary to reach the summit of your mountain.

IF IT IS TO BE, IT IS UP TO ME

Remember, YOUR OWNERSHIP of this program is what will make the difference. You can't just read the book. You must OWN THE BOOK. You must put this book into action.

The most powerful two-letter-word sentence in the English language summarizes what this journey is all about: *If it is to be, it is up to me.* Your success in football and in life is determined by a lot of factors, and no factor is more important than the person reading this right now... YOU!

It has been said that ***it is the start that stops most people.*** Do not wait. Get started. RIGHT NOW!

Remember, if you take the four middle letters out of "DoN'T WAit!" you get "**DO IT!**"

So don't wait, **DO IT!** Get started on your journey up The Mountain of Excellence, TODAY!

CHAPTER #1 REVIEW

- ❑ PRIDE = Personal Responsibility In Daily Excellence
- ❑ Excellence is being at your best when it means the most – every single day.
- ❑ The Mountain of Excellence represents the obstacle one must conquer to reach his outcome goal at the summit.
- ❑ The journey up The Mountain of Excellence is a self-transformative endeavor an individual must take to become a peak performer.
- ❑ One cannot live at the summit - you have to keep hiking or you will die.
- ❑ There is no end to the pursuit of excellence.
- ❑ Peak performance is a constant journey pursuing excellence, and demanding personal responsibility is this daily pursuit.
- ❑ Choose your Mountain of Excellence you desire to climb and conquer.
- ❑ Remember, you are allowed to climb more than one mountain, but should focus on one summit at a time.
- ❑ The Three Steps to Accomplishing Anything:
 - 1) Make a commitment to a goal.
 - 2) Make it public with an accountability partner.
 - 3) Work with a relentlessly positive energy today.

- Today is where we are, every day.
- A core value is a personal belief and virtue reinforced through a commitment to yourself and your team.
- Live your core values.
- It is easier to act your way into thinking and feeling than it is to think and feel your way into action.
- Success leaves clues.
- Surround yourself with those who are better than you.
- Take advantage of your time or time is going to take advantage of you.
- The Three Steps of Performance Change:
 - 1) Awareness
 - 2) Strategy
 - 3) Implementation of the strategy
- Frequent self-assessment is essential to establish performance awareness.
- Simple and easy are not synonymous.
- Focus on the next 30 feet of the task at hand.
- A dream without action will remain a dream, while a dream that motivates action has the opportunity to become a reality.

- ❑ Do not settle for average - it is the best of the worst and worst of the best.
- ❑ It is the start that stops most people, so get started TODAY!