



UNDERPERFORMANCE IN CRICKET – HOW TO DEAL WITH NOT PERFORMING WELL...

"We are what we repeatedly do. Excellence then, is not an act, but a habit." (Aristotle)

When performance and training goes well, then that's all well and good. We hope as players and professional's that this can be learnt and ingrained in the memory, especially the 'How' and 'What' you did well and to be able to repeat it over and over again. However, when your performance is under par and you have performed 'badly' for example, perhaps you got out by playing a rash shot or did not bowl up to your usual high consistent standard, then how do you deal with this? Especially when underperformance lasts for a number of weeks or even months.

As a player it is worth asking yourself a few questions and to become more aware of the PROCESS of underperforming. This is so that you can use strategies or tools to hopefully stop or reduce the incidence of underperforming occurring so readily and easily;

- Do you cope well or not cope well?
- Do you allow your emotions to get the better of you, and get angry or upset?
- Do you attribute blame outside of yourself, blaming the conditions, the ground, or your equipment?
- How do you feel when you perform well and when you do not perform well?
- What are you doing differently?

Understanding how you behave and what you do when you don't perform well, will enable you to objectively and constructively review your performance. This will enable you to understand the underlying reasons of what actually happened. For example, to be able to understand what caused you to behave in a certain way and choose a particular shot at that moment, that was the wrong choice of shot. Or you may have bowled in a particular way that felt different and was different (effected your line and length) and not so free from your last game/day. Equally, by understanding your response to what you did and how you behaved, and understanding the process of what happened, can accelerate your learning and experiential (the actual experience of what happened) process and development as a cricketer. Often comments are heard after a day's play, exclaiming, "I really don't know what happened out there today.... I could n't do anything right.... It was rubbish!"

Ask yourself the following question:

'What actually happened out there today?'

What was going on for me and in me when I did not perform well or perform to my performance expectation (this will be based on (this will be based on your past performance experiences and most recent). This can be a good starting block for understanding yourself and for your personal underperformance experience (what this means to you).

A dejected Graeme Smith (South Africa) walks off at Trent Bridge



By breaking the performance down into more digestible and understandable chunks, of the pie of 'you' the cricketer. You will begin to understand the reason for your behaviours and learn how to change these behaviours into more positive and appropriate ones to enable you to perform better more consistently, and 'underperform' less often.

By being more aware of your experience of WHEN and HOW you underperform you can change the pattern of underperformance and hopefully reduce the time frame of poor performances. In the game of cricket you will have peaks and troughs due to the length of the season and the nature of the game, however the length of your 'troughs' or bad periods can be reduced through using specific mental skills and coping tool kit developed within professional cricket. However, it is important to point out that these suggested tools are a cricket 'generic' nature and although are useful, it is more effective having an individual underperformance coping toolkit developed.

Steps for reducing underperformance in cricket- the cricket coping toolkit

Step 1 - List a recent underperformance

Write down what actually happened (break it down) and rate yourself /10 of how much the particular underperformance means to you etc (0= not at all; 10=extremely)

Step 2 - Understanding how you behave in certain situations

Situation (e.g., bad over)
Response (Emotion)
Behaviour (what did you do)

Step 3- Action points:

Change (s) to be made to change response which will influence and change behaviour into a more appropriate and positive response.

Step 4 - Steps for creating change. Understanding WHAT is causing or behind the underperformance behaviour.

Block: (What is getting in the way of you not performing at your best)
Cause:
Change:
Action:

Step 5- Implementing change / Creating WIN/WIN Situations

Batting (WANT & NEED TO DO THESE)
Win/Win:
Feeling:
Bowling (WANT & NEED TO DO THESE).
Win/Win:
Feeling:
Win/Lose:

(Amanda Owens MSc BASES Accredited Sport Psychologist & BOA member
Amanda is Director of Total Performance and works as a Sport Psychologist for County First Team and Academy Cricketers as well as Olympic and International athletes).

An elated Graeme Smith reaches 200 at Lord's

