

THE IMPORTANCE OF GOAL SETTING FOR ATHLETES

January 15, 2019 Eunan Whyte

<https://metrifit.com/blog/the-importance-of-goal-setting-for-athletes/>

When it comes to the fine margins between success and failure at elite sport level, it is acknowledged that psychology has a huge part to play. The mental side of sport is now seen as being just as important as the physical side and research has illustrated that goal setting is one of the most effective tools when it comes to providing athletes with a psychological edge. The value of goal setting is encapsulated by David Harrison when he wrote:

“Goal setting is an extremely powerful technique for enhancing performance so it is one of the most important strategies you can implement for success in any environment. Goal setting helps to focus attention and it is critical to maintain and enhance motivation. Goal setting gives direction both in the short term and the long term and you can see success as you achieve your short term goals.”

What is goal setting?

Essentially goal setting is a mental training technique that can be used to increase an individual's commitment towards achieving a personal goal and this can be separated into short, medium and long term goals. These goals can be broken down into three categories:-

- Outcome goals
- Performance goals
- Process goals

Outcome goals deal with specific results in competition, while **performance goals** deal with helping an athlete make improvements over a period of time. **Process goals** are the aspects a competitor should be concentrating on when carrying out a specific skill.

The SMART approach

SMART is a well-established tool that you can use to plan and achieve your goals.



In order to get the best out of the goal setting strategy, many athletes and coaches follow the SMART approach as outlined by Kelly Bourne in [Why Goal Setting is Important](#).

This **SMART** acronym aims to break down five key aspects to achieving goals. This is to help ensure all areas are focused on the individual making them effective.

- **Specific** – A defensive player to win over 90% of their challenges throughout a 90-minute match. An attacking player to make 10-15 runs or attempts on goal throughout a 90-minute match
- **Measurable** – How many goals/assists scored throughout the season, How many saves or challenges a GK or defender has made
- **Attainable** – Ensuring the goal which is set for the athlete is attainable/achievable, starting with small tasks which are achievable to help gain confidence in the process and then start to make larger goals
- **Realistic** – This is key and very important to discuss with the athlete individually. Each athlete is different and has varied strengths and weaknesses in different areas. The

athlete will need to decide which on these goals and agree that they are realistic targets set for themselves to achieve

- **Time based** – Goals should be set for a time period of a season, but you can set smaller time frames within that specific to the athlete. Again athletes are individual, so some may prefer every month, or others could possibly do it over a three-month period

Value of setting goals

“The main aim of goal setting focuses on increasing individuals’ motivational levels to achieve success by directing attention and applying energy levels into achieving the overall goal” -

Kelly Bourne

Goal setting document

I have attached a goal setting document for you and coaches to use. The document is from a sport psychologist who has worked with professional teams in the UK and was happy to share it with us.

Goal Setting Document

Name _____

Goal start date _____

1. My goal is: (Make sure this is YOUR goal, not goals that anyone else has set for you to achieve; Is your goal measurable? Attainable? Realistic?)
2. Why do you want to pursue this goal? What motivates you?
3. What steps will you take to achieve these goals?
4. What obstacles might be in your way that would prevent you from achieving your goals?
5. How can your goals help to be at your best this season?
6. I will know I've reached my goal because:

Goal compilation date _____

“You cannot afford to live in potential for the rest of your life; At some point, you have to unleash the potential and make your move.” – Eric Thomas

