

CASE STUDY: THE WICKET-TAKING FORMULA OF 13-YEAR-OLD CRICKETER.

BY MARK THRIMAWITHANA



I had the opportunity of coaching a 13-year old cricketer and it struck me that having the correct mindset has a strong ability to increase the performance of sportsmen. Simply developing skills and exercising to increase physical stamina will not suffice to create optimum efficiency. I have discovered that the secret to maximum potential and performance is by increasing mind agility and mind power.

I am about to share this powerful secret and tool which I have personally experienced during a training session with a 13-year old cricketer who later on became a fantastic wicket taker. So for those who are interested in sports, this article will undoubtedly give you a greater desire to understand why you need to focus on the mind just as you focus on the physical and the technical skills to take you to higher levels of sporting excellence.

In order to emphasize the power of the mind, I wish to share the following excerpt from Chris Walton MSc, in his book *Gamma Mindset*, which tells us: *[How Powerful Is Your Brain? To get an idea of how powerful your brain is, imagine every single person on earth, all 7 billion of us, with a hand-held calculator performing a calculation every five seconds for sixty hours. Okay, got your head around that image? The world's most powerful computers, called supercomputers, can perform the same amount of 7 billion calculations every five seconds for sixty hours in just one second! That's an accomplishment that blows our minds, until we realize that it would take three of these supercomputers linked together to map the connections to just one single neuron firing in the human brain.]*

He continues, *[Many years it was believed that the brain was hardwired and fixed and that its growth was fully established by the time we reach adulthood. Research from neuroscience now shows us this is not*

true. We now know that our brain can continually learn, change and create new neural circuitry throughout our life. The brain's adaptability and capacity for change are called 'neuroplasticity.]. Therefore, based on the above, there is one thing that is definite; and that is that one will need to know how to feed the information into the mind, as well as how they can so easily utilize that information whenever there is a need. What you are about to find out is the outcome of this in this young cricketer.

When this 13-year old came to see me a couple of months back, he had many negative drawbacks that were weighing him down. Some of the performance hindrances holding him back included (not being focused, not motivated, lack of confidence and fear). After 8 to 10 sessions of personal mind coaching, his demeanor was transformed and his performance reached the peak of his true potential and ended up being the best player by taking 6 wickets in a single match. In addition, he achieved the twin feat of an unbeaten knock of 47 as the opening batsman and taking 4 wickets while competing with an under 15 team match. Presently, he is working on his seventh variation of his bowling action. These are a few examples that showcase his progress after working with me.

However, I must state that I cannot claim full credit to his success. On the contrary, I congratulate this young cricketer for his decision to change his belief system and making personal choices to think positively by overcoming his negative mindset and making it accept the changes/modifications and taking action to make his life more productive and efficient.

The outcome of this success, he said, is a direct result of taking action to progress from being good to better and ultimately be the best. It goes to show that when you have a desire and are committed, the mind will always provide the additional input, creativity and solutions so that the mind's flexibility will increase the capacity to perform better through the confidence that they create within them.

In this article, I want to emphasize his wicket-taking formula. During the last match played with an under-19 team, he took two wickets, which made me think to do a deep study about the mind formula or the strategy that he used to create that kind of outcome with a very senior team.

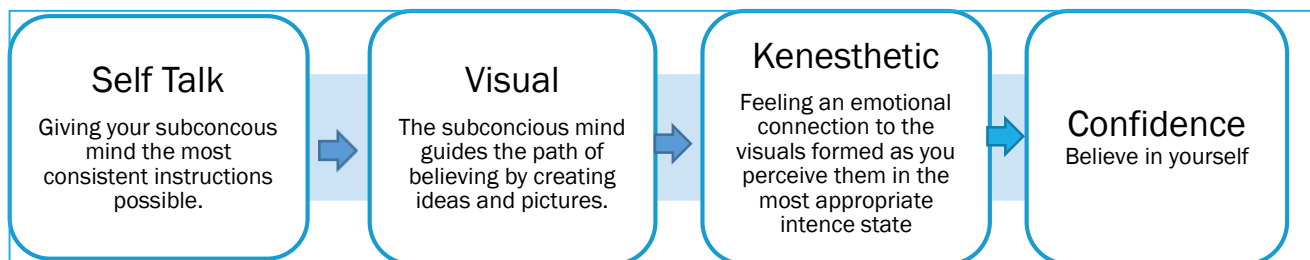
Each person has their own strategies in their minds. I believe that the majority of our lives are driven by strategies that have now become generalized and are on autopilot. Deep down in the unconscious mind, they work together at a supersonic speed, providing information to the conscious mind to take action.

When I backtracked his strategy for success, I found the following five-step process that allowed him to get what he wanted.

Five step process

1. Right instructions
2. Identifying weak points through deep observation
4. Creating new creative ideas
5. Utilizing the right mix of skills
5. Focus and commitment

If I put this in to picture form to show you the structure, then you should be able to understand this better. The structure means the deep level in the subconscious mind how the strategy is created. Each person is



driven by the internal strategy which later on become auto pilot. I call this his winning formula. Let's discuss very briefly the above mentioned 5 steps first.

1. **Providing right instructions to the mind was very clear:** When you build up a great understanding of the language of the mind, the mind will understand the direction that you provide, and in return, your unconscious mind will react based on the information provided. So, one will need to understand precisely how to provide instructions in such a way that the mind will understand and provide the outcome that the person is expecting. Communication can be done in many ways. Few can be accomplished using or accessing through visual, auditory, self-talk and kinesthetic or mix of any, which I believe are excellent combinations, when it comes to understanding the mind language and enhancing confidence and motivation.

When you develop your mind, it can be a great resource for providing deeper information that your naked eye cannot see. mind has the capacity to explore about 40 million bits of information per second, meaning the unconscious mind can absorb a broader set of information than the conscious mind can observe at any given time.

2. **Identifying weak points of the batsmen through deep observation:** He started analyzing at what level that weak point is exposed, and the following are the questions that he created to find the solutions. When you found the 1st weak point, he went deeper to understand the most sensitive weak point that could cause the player to go wrong. So he kept asking “what can be the weak point of that”, and “what this is an example of”, and went deeper and deeper until he found the biggest weak point that he felt was the cause of the player going wrong. See, the mind has already accumulated a large amount of data, and once you align with it, it has the capacity to provide the data you require. It filters and provides as requested effortlessly. So when you have the heart and mind congruency, your mind will give the signals for you to believe.
3. **Creating new ideas through aligning with the subconscious mind:** He currently has 6 versions of his bowling abilities, and once you know the weak point and the skill set is fully tuned and settled, the autopilot will start firing with solutions by indicating the right skills set to attack those weak areas. The beautiful thing about the mind is that it will want to make it a holistic approach, so it can not only guide with the bowling but also indicate many other changes to the game. With him, he wanted to change the field setting a few times and the bowling to the right places, making him more relaxed and gaining confidence as well. During this match he said he introduced his 7th version in his bowling. That's how you come up with new creative ideas because you have created room for the mind to provide new ideas.
4. **Confidence to utilize the right mix of skills became very clear:** This is where he found the right combination, meaning the right version, the right field setting, and the right confidence. For him, that was the best feeling to know that it was going to work because it increased his confidence to launch his spell. With his, he found the pressure was building towards the batsmen and he continued to change the field. In the 4th ball, he took the wicket and also the next wicket immediately as well. He said one of the weak points was that the batsmen he was finding it hard to read his follow through and also that he found his greatest weak point with the foot movement. The following is the feedback he shared.

He discovered that the player had a strong pull shot and was quick on his feet. And he found that the player expected the same ball and he was anticipating attacking, and then he found there was a slight error in his foot movement and that was the biggest hurdle for him to attack. With his 6 version in bowling, he created a 7-one with a straight ball where it went straight through the batsmen's legs. What we don't see is that it's a fast tracked strategy that runs in the mind and heart.

5. **Building up confidence paved way for creativity, focus and commitment** : if I quantify the results, he found the commitment through focus, he found new solutions and, through all that, it created confidence and allowed him to become very flexible and creative. This was the effectiveness of his winning formula for him.

I believe the mind has the same ability to provide as is the physical skill. People who focus more on physical skills and less on mental power can be observed clearly. I believe in Sri Lanka we have great technical trainers who are equally qualified, but what I would also like to see is more coaches with both combinations to create a balanced strength.

Let me tell you some of the key advantages of having both skill sets.

- You will be able to create better focus.
- Better purpose
- Players will start to understand their own weaknesses, which the coaches cannot see sometimes.
- Greater commitment and confidence
- They become creative, meaning they come up with new skills.
- Willing to learn, change and accept feedback.
- Avoid reasons and become accountable
- Greater leadership skills.

Your mind has more capacity than you can ever imagine. If you can increase at least 5% of the existing mental strength, you will see greater results in your abilities.

“To perceive the world differently, we must be willing to change our belief systems, let the past slip away, expand our sense of now, and dissolve the fear in our minds”. Professor William James, American psychologist and philosopher

Wishing you a great success

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