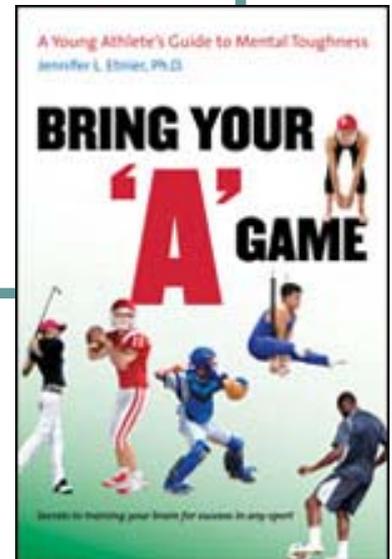


# Winning vs. Improving: Which should you focus on?

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# Why is the question of winning vs. improving important?

- Your focus with regards to this question is a key determinant of mental toughness.



# Why is mental toughness important?



- Many believe that mental toughness is a critical determinant of success at the highest level of competition.

# Examples of mentally tough athletes?



- 2010, won 21<sup>st</sup> national championship
- Won against a previously unbeaten team (Stanford was 25-0)

# Examples of mentally tough athletes?



- Expected to win 8 gold medals at 2008 summer Olympics

- **WON 8 GOLD MEDALS**



MICHAEL PHELPS' GOLD RUSH		
Day 2	400m INDIVIDUAL MEDLEY	4:03.84 WR
Day 3	4X100m FREESTYLE RELAY	3:08.24 WR
Day 4	200m FREESTYLE	1:42.96 WR
Day 5	200m BUTTERFLY	1:52.03 WR
	4X200m FREESTYLE RELAY	6:58.56 WR
Day 7	200m INDIVIDUAL MEDLEY	
Day 8	100m BUTTERFLY	
Day 9	4x100m MEDLEY RELAY	

# What do you think these athletes and teams were focused on?

- Winning / Improving / Both?
- The ability to focus on both and to know how to switch your focus between the two is an attribute of mental toughness

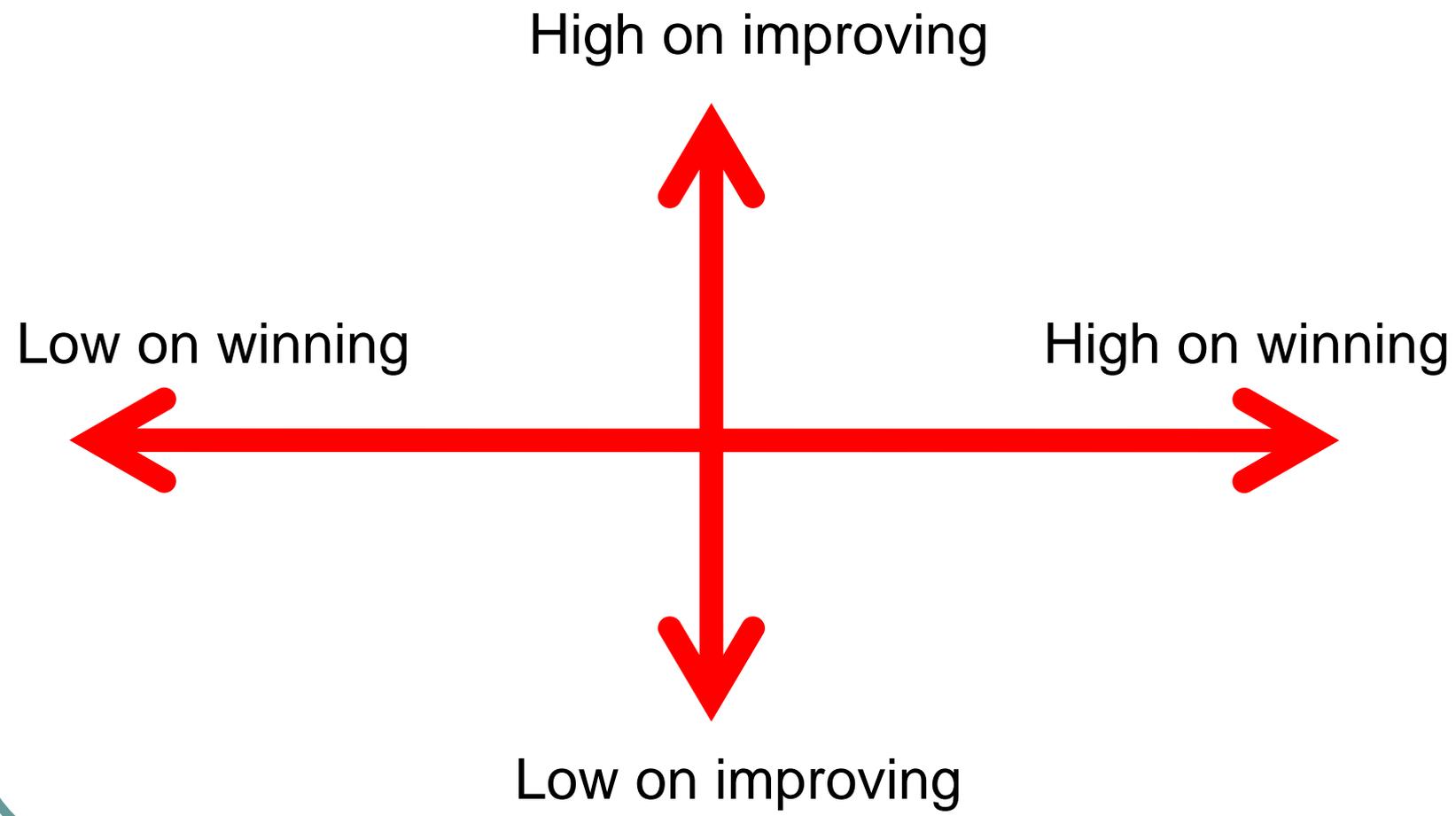
# How do you become mentally tough?

- Are you born mentally tough?



- NO: Mental toughness can be learned through the practice of mental skills and exposure to appropriately designed training.

# How do we describe people relative to winning vs. improving?



# Overview

	Low on winning	High on winning
Low on improving	Don't participate	Enjoy playing when they win. Drop out if lose
High on improving	Enjoy playing, not into competition	Most likely to reach their potential

# Who would a 10-yr old compete against?

- High on winning / low on improving
- High on winning / high on improving



Younger Kid  
Less skilled



Same age  
Slightly better



Older  
Much better

# How do they respond if they get behind?

HOME	10:48	GUEST
3	PERIOD 2	2
8 SOG	<i>Fair-Play</i> A TRINGLER COMPANY	SOG 10

- High on winning / low on improving
- High on winning / high on improving



# Men's Olympic semi-final 1996

- Brazil 1'
- Nigeria 20'
- Brazil 28'
- Brazil 38'
- Nigeria 78'
- Nigeria 90'
- Nigeria 94'



# Men's Olympic Gold Medal Game 1996

- Argentina 3'
- Nigeria 28'
- Argentina 50'
- Nigeria 74'
- Nigeria 90'



# How do they respond when they're having a bad day?

“As players, when we are having a bad day, we tend to think in melodramatic terms, that we've lost it, that everything's gone wrong, but usually **all you have to do is correct one small element of your game and everything else will fall into place.**”

-- Mia Hamm (1999)



## Which do your athletes focus on?

- Winning or improving?
- Does it matter what the situation is?
  - one-v-one activities
  - small-sided games
  - competitions
- Does it matter where you are in the season?
  - Pre-season vs. mid-season vs. tournaments?

# How can you help your athletes focus on winning?

- Focus on winning – in practice
  - Teach that it's okay to compete with one another (this may be a big deal!)
  - Make this normative for your team – explain why it's important
- Focus on winning – in competition
  - This is a part of it (especially a)
  - Set team goals at the start of t include winning, but shouldn't exclusively

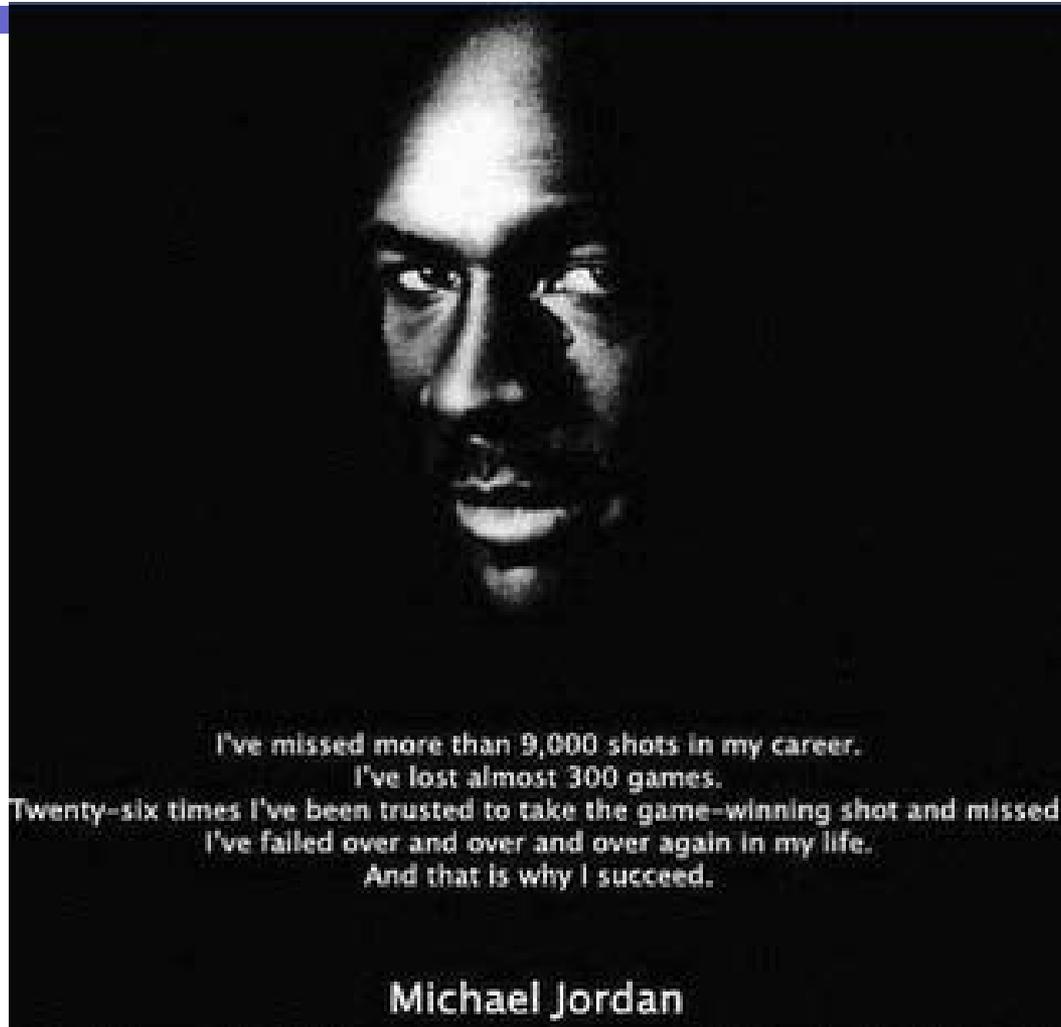


# How can you help your athletes focus on improving?

- Focus on improving – in practice
  - Reward/reinforce effort
  - Help them to see that you are most interested in improvement
- Focus on improving – in competition
  - Goals should reflect this
  - Conversation should re



- Having the ability to focus on both winning and improving makes you a **COMPETITOR** and gives you the chance to reach your potential



I've missed more than 9,000 shots in my career.

I've lost almost 300 games.

Twenty-six times I've been trusted to take the game-winning shot and missed.

I've failed over and over and over again in my life.

And that is why I succeed.

Michael Jordan

# Thank you!

Questions?  
Comments?

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