



## **Being in the Zone**

Your confidence was tremendous--you felt no one could beat you that day. You could make any play you wanted. You were so engrossed into playing one play at a time that you were oblivious to distractions. Your performance seemed so easy and effortless that the club, bat, or stick felt like an extension of yourself. Never before did you feel so in control of yourself and your performance. It was so fun to execute each play just as envisioned. Only after the game did you realize that you performed the best game of your life, and were "in the zone".

At one time you probably played in the zone even if it was only for a short period. The zone is characterized by a combination of feelings including high self-confidence, a task focus, fearless attitude, and self-composure. Your mind and body work in harmony to produce optimal performance. Hitters say the ball looked like a watermelon, pitchers say they only saw the catcher glove, basketball players talk about the basket seeming twice as large as normal, quarterbacks talk about seeing the entire field and everything being in slow motion. It's impossible to force yourself into the zone, but you can create a mindset that helps you enter the zone more frequently. Based upon hundreds of interviews with athletes on the psychology of peak performance, there are five keys to entering the zone.

**1. Are You Confident?** It's rare when you play well without self-confidence. It's a mindset. Self-confidence is defined as the strength of your belief about how well you can play. Confidence develops from physical practice, playing well in the past, trusting your technique, and knowing you are physically talented. First, know how you gain confidence, then work on those areas in your game that can directly improve your confidence.

**2. Can You Become Immersed into the Task?** The ability to fully focus on the task is a prerequisite to peak performance in any sport. Most of us can concentrate well, but do you know what to focus on and how to refocus when distracted? Total focus means absorbing yourself into the process of execution to the point that distractions are minimal. It also means playing one play at a time and not getting ahead of yourself. Decide what the relevant performance cues in your sport are and then focus all your attention on those cues.

**3. Can You Let go of Mistakes?** To play in the zone you must be able to put errors, bad calls, or blow plays behind you fast. You don't want to carry "the monkey on your back" while you play. Make sure you have a plan for releasing bad plays or blow assignments. You are human and mistakes or bad luck can hurt your attitude if you let them.

4. Does it Feel Automatic? The feeling of an automatic and effortless performance is another mindset associated with the zone. With a lot of practice, you develop a strong memory pattern of a skill, which then makes your performance feel effortless. It feels like you are on autopilot--you don't have to think, you just react to the environment. This frees you to focus on game strategy or anticipate your opponent.

5. Do You Stay in Control? When playing in the zone, athletes feel very much in control of themselves and their performance. To enter the zone, you need to be in control of your emotions. You have to tread the line between feeling excited and "up," but not cross over into anxiety and fear. Excitement helps you play better, but fear and anxiety stifle your game. Use the pressure of competition to help you focus better on the task in front of you.

Reviewing these five steps after each performance will allow you to get in the zone more often and stay there longer when you do reach the zone.

Talk with you next week,

\*\*Remember to

1. Always plan ahead for what you are going to eat
2. Obtain adequate amounts of protein
3. Work on Flexibility
4. Supplement your diet with a fish oil and multi-vitamin

Let me know if I can help. Email me at [architechsports@gmail.com](mailto:architechsports@gmail.com)

God Bless,

Alan Tyson

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