

Performance Point

Ideal Performance State

by Dr. Bruce Pinel, Mental Trainer, PacificSport

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*“Amazing...just an awesome feeling”
“I was on autopilot”*

*“Everything felt great”
“Nothing could stop me”*

Athletes describe being in an “Ideal Performance State” in many different ways. Ideal Performance State is a term that captures and defines the experience in sport when all the physical, psychological, technical, and tactical elements of your performance fit together like a perfect puzzle. There are several things you can do to increase the chances of achieving an Ideal Performance State, both in training and in competition — a few examples are provided below:

Self-reflection - Journaling / Tracking

- Look back on your previous successes and failures and identify the key factors that either added to (performance enhancing) or took away from (performance detracting) your Ideal Performance State;
- Monitor and track the key ‘puzzle pieces’ to identify trends and patterns on a daily basis and continually strive to create a training / competition experience that allows for your Ideal Performance State.

Mental preparation routines for training and competition

- Develop a mental preparation routine that complements your other preparation routines (ie. physical warm-up, pre-event strategy review, equipment preparation, etc) so that you are able to “**4C Success**” - It should give you a feeling of **Control, Consistency, Confidence, and Composure.**

Distraction management

- There are multiple ‘stimuli’ vying for your attention (other competitors, team-mates, coaches, environmental conditions, competition factors, importance of the event, sponsors, media, spectators, school, work, family, relationships, etc). You need to decide which ones are helpful (performance enhancing) and which ones are detrimental to your performance (performance detracting);
- **You are the gatekeeper** ... be in control of your thoughts and manage the distractions.

Eat, drink (proper hydration!!), sleep, and be merry

- Proper nutrition, hydration, and sleep (including purposeful rest & relaxation) are essential for allowing your ‘engine’ to perform at its maximum;
- Have fun and constantly remind yourself of all the things you enjoy about this sport and being an elite athlete.

“When I am in my Ideal Performance State everything just flows. I don’t need to calculate my next moves or anticipate my feelings and struggles to come. I am confident and relaxed while my body is comfortable doing what I have trained it for. It is still hard work while racing but the effort is not overwhelming as it is something I have experienced before and visualized. It takes a lot of practice to get this feeling. I try to see myself in racing situations while training and in my mental preparation prior to the race. This way when I arrive at that point in the race I have already rehearsed all the feelings and tasks I need to control and I can draw confidence from that.”

Brent McMahon, Olympian, Canadian National Triathlon Centre



Triathlon Brent McMahon
Photo: Rich Cruse/Xterra

Powering Sport Performance

As the Canadian Sport Centre in British Columbia, PacificSport delivers sport performance programs to help athletes and coaches win medals for Canada. Working in support of our national, provincial and regional sport partners PacificSport is creating a stronger system for the development of athletes, coaches, performance enhancement teams, and sport performance facilities. www.pacificsport.com