

## **The Power of Will**

**By Marc Evans**

If attitude is everything, then human will is what drives athletes to excel. To be sure, a positive attitude is necessary—athletes need to be optimistic to succeed. However, endurance athletes whether mountain climbing, finishing an IRONMAN, adventure racing, marathon running or open water distance swimming must persist for hours and days on end. For that matter, baseball players are endurance athletes in that their season is played over 160 games. Those athletes (if you like) also will themselves to succeed though with significantly unrelated physiological challenges and contest. Parenthetically, the money they make doesn't hinder motivation does it?

It's unmistakable in the eyes, body posture and resolution of the champion and the passion for success. Proliferating like water reflecting sun light on the ocean. Whether world-champion or a local age group winner, the will of these athletes to be successful is instantly recognizable. Perhaps, this is why most world-class athletes perform well, often and in every imaginable unfavorable condition. They ascend to levels of mastery many of us find amazing and yes, astounding.

I believe and coach athletes by objectively training their will to succeed and not avoiding failing. Some are born with this resolute and not everyone has the heart to do so, but with effort each of us can attain better mastery of the single most important part of being an athlete. This is the will to commit to success and achieving goals. Regardless of the ability of the athlete each need to be resolute in their objectives.

Goals need to be described, defined and with objectives which can be measured. Anything less establishes circumstances which encourage more haphazardness in training and competition. Certainly, this may be effective for some, but in the long run without specific and realistic goals an athlete have fewer satisfactory performances.

Having objectives in training and competition that are measurable help "focus the will" for every athlete. If you simply try to "do your best" athletes may find themselves struggling and perhaps, lose concentration and focus upon the real desired outcomes (goals). Always have a plan and strategy of performance for every aspect of an event and training. This way you can visualize performances beforehand and improve the probability for success. By focusing upon your goals and desired outcome, anxiety and certainly energy costs are most efficiently managed.

Will is psychological and every athlete should train objectively and race strategically in order to optimize performance. Swim, bike, run, weight train, climb mountains, and run your ultra-events with objective goals and your "will" and strength of character will execute to precision. Otherwise, you are basically trying to "do your best" and that is not, "good enough". It simply permits too much analysis from a psychological point of view. Thus, allowing an increased opportunity for not realizing your potential.

I am a Lab owner and take my dogs swimming 4 or 5 days a week. Each time they retrieve I am reminded of their determination and focus. Nothing at the moment is more important than the fetching and retrieval, "the hunt". I've told many athletes of this using it as a metaphor for reaching for the intensity of will my dogs instinctively possess. While I am certain this is not fully possible nonetheless, I believe determining to achieve something like this every time they train and compete "will" have beneficial results.

By having time, intensity, distance, perceived effort and other objectively measurable goals an athlete goes from "finishing" a workout or competition to "competing" and achieving intended goals regardless of competitive ability. Whether first place or last.

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