

## Choosing to be Positive

### Introduction

Over the years, I have seen many good umpires (myself included) put in sub-standard performances simply because we have *decided* not to be positive. We have let other emotions like fear, anxiety and negativity take over our thought processes. I have spoken before about the use of 'self-talk' and how important it is – how many of us have said to ourselves “I hope that he doesn't bowl from my end”, ‘I hope that I don't make any mistakes today” and “I don't like umpiring at this ground or umpiring that team”?

This training paper is designed to make you realise that you have control over your thoughts and it should help you **decide** to be positive and confident about your umpiring. There are often many external negatives that surround umpiring, and I hope to give you some tips and advice on how we can stay internally positive in our thoughts to “protect” us from those negatives.

### Do you think positively or negatively?

Firstly, let's establish whether you think positively or negatively. Can you answer 'yes' to all of the following statements?

- I have a 'can do' attitude
- I display good body language
- I enjoy umpiring
- I don't blame others for what happens to me
- I can stay calm when things go wrong
- I can concentrate in practice and in the game
- I don't need to try and impress others
- I am accepting of other peoples' strengths and weaknesses

If you answered “no” to any of the above, then you have some work to do in improving your pattern of thinking and self-confidence. As a cricket umpire, you are often your own worst critic and when things get tough, you might be subconsciously destroying yourself. So, let's look at some ways to build some strength in self-confidence and self-belief.

## Building Confidence and a Positive Attitude

### 1. Build on experience

As we umpire games, we build experience on what works for us and what doesn't. We get more knowledge of what to expect in all sorts of different situations. It is vital that we take the good things out of our games and write them down to demonstrate our abilities – then we have something to refer back to when times are tough.

It is also just as vital to learn from our experience and mistakes. The more mistakes we make, the more we learn! Well... we should and Bennett King's philosophy is that it is ok for one of his players to make a mistake but it is terrible if he makes the same mistake twice. It

is important to remain positive after making a mistake by seeing that there is an opportunity to learn something from it and get better after it.

## **2. Preparation (covered fully in Module 2)**

Confidence comes from success and success comes from thorough preparation. Every game you umpire is like an examination of your umpiring qualities – so, with good preparation, you can go into every match feeling as though you have done everything possible to prevent situations that might bring about pressure or stress.

The right preparation in diet, sleep and exercise can make you feel physically good. The right mental preparation in terms of Laws and playing conditions knowledge, players and ground facilities will assist in feeling mentally good. How you feel has an impact on how you think. If you feel good and positive then you are more likely to think positively – thus begins the most important vicious cycle.

## **3. Develop a positive attitude**

Good preparation and feeling positive begins the process of training the brain to be positive – the more you think positively, the more you literally put your brain onto auto pilot. Use the positive comments that you receive to continue to build your self-confidence.

It is important to think about what you are going to do next, not what happened last – file mistakes for later and objectively examine them to use as a learning tool. Every time you talk to yourself, make it positive and when negative thoughts or doubts start to enter your mind – turn them around and focus on the good things.

## **4. Keep your head where your body is**

We do not have control over the past or the future, so don't let your mind wander into those zones when you are umpiring or practicing. You only have control over the present, so that is where you need to keep your mind and focus. This is easier said than done, but can be done with constant practice. When you walk out to umpire, it is important to remember that your performance on the day is all that matters.

One good way to keep your head where your body is, is to develop lots of short term goals. Short term goals like – focus only on the next ball, to work hard on the 1<sup>st</sup> over after lunch, to get through to the next drinks break.

## **5. Visualise**

Prior to any game that you umpire, take some time to think in some quiet time to picture yourself on the field in full control of what you are doing. Visualise yourself arriving at the game, calling play, making a good decision and walking off feeling strong and positive. Picture and expect positive outcomes. Visualise and expect the unexpected.

## 6. Listen to your body

Be aware of how you feel and act on it. When you feel yourself getting stressed and frustrated, you are more likely to overreact and focus on the negative. You need to turn these feelings around quickly and go back to all the positives and good things.

If you are feeling physically sore, then stop exercising or whatever is creating the soreness – get some relief and feel good. If you feel down or depressed then do something that will cheer you up – spoil yourself as you deserve it. Remember, when you feel good you will be in a positive frame of mind.

## 7. Make positive statements continually

If you can think it, then you can achieve it. Whatever you think in your mind can be willed into your real world. Think positive outcomes and you will get positive outcomes.

- I am a good umpire
- I am a good person
- I make good, confident decisions
- I can easily focus my concentration and manage the match
- I will do well and succeed

## Conclusion

I trust that you have identified if you need to address your type of thought process. The objective is to be more positive in the way we approach our umpiring matches and practice sessions. Look at mistakes as learning opportunities and look to build confidence through experience, good preparation, visualisation and positive self-talk. Take control of your thoughts – make the conscious decision to be positive and you will achieve more.

*Simon Taufel*