

EDGE OF CHAOS

MINDFUL ATHLETE TRAINING



APRIL 2022

THE ASCENT

THE MAT TEAM

We continue to strive for great content and hope you enjoy our April issue of Edge of Chaos! The *Edge of Chaos* is the transitional zone of bounded instability that engenders a constant dynamic interplay between order and disorder (Complexity Labs, 2016). Physicists have shown that adaptation to the *Edge of Chaos* occurs in almost all systems, given feedback. If there is anything you would like to see featured or changed, please let us know at info@mindfulathletetraining.com. Enjoy this month's edition!

BASECAMP 1: UPDATES FROM THE HUB

By Christian Franco

Like any other month at MAT, March was filled with many new and exciting updates around the Flex. MAT is pleased to announce a new partnership with Matt McGovern of Matt McGovern QBs (MMQB), providing elite level coaching experience for high school quarterbacks. Matt is a highly respected local football coach who works with young players in the area, primarily high school age and younger, helping them develop quarterback skills. While Matt works with them physically, our team will train them mentally, applying the mental fitness programming we use in our Lab for quarterbacks! We are looking forward to enhancing the players' skills while also educating them about the mental side of the game.



Our leadership team are preparing to embark on The Traverse (Presented by Azimuth Consulting Group) this summer, a backpacking leadership experience entailing summitting multiple mountains (over 10,000 ft above sea-level) over



four days. They will be teaming up with Lt. Colonel Chris Schmitt and other executive leaders, giving bioQs to key members and leading fireside chats each night surrounding the value of mental fitness.

Our team is officially growing! We are happy to announce we have selected four new interns to join our MAT crew this coming summer! These new members will be a great addition to our team, as they will be taking on various responsibilities around MAT. We will be training them to become certified MAT coaches starting in July. We are looking forward to each new intern's personal and professional experience they will be bringing into our crew and can't wait for you to meet them!



We are also excited to announce that our official podcast, The Head Game, is returning soon! We are gearing up for an early May launch and hope to bring various athletes on as guests to discuss their experiences with mental fitness. We will keep you posted on upcoming dates and hope you'll tune in!

As always, MAT continues to bring in new athletes and high performers at all levels, training mental fitness. We continue to “Talk Less and Do More” by participating in our own Mental Fitness challenge. At Mindful Athlete Training, we believe it is essential to practice what you preach! Catch you next month on the Hub!

TALK LESS, DO MORE: RUN

By Devin DeTurk

In the spirit of talking less and doing more, this section will consist of practical exercises you, the reader, can easily do at home to improve your mental fitness. Some of these exercises are the very ones we train in our Lab!

This month, the challenge is simple: go for a run or walk. We say all the time that the journey to change starts with a single step, and sometimes we have to force ourselves to take that step. Sometimes taking this step can be literal. Get up and move, start something. This is your sign to start taking the steps on your own journey of positive change! **#TalkLessDoMore**

THE LAB: BREAKING DOWN A DAILY CLIMB

By **Jordana Ambros**

At Mindful Athlete Training, we have four Mental pillars that we build our Daily Climbs around: Strength, Endurance, Recovery, and Flexibility. Last month's edition broke down a Strength Daily Climb. This month we will break down the individual exercises for an Endurance Daily Climb. Mental Endurance is the power to experience the process. By frequently training for extended periods, MAT can help athletes be more comfortable in the process instead of only focusing on the outcome. Endure MORE in the moment, intentionally.

Calm

- Pace breathing for 8 minutes
 - EMOM (every minute on the minute) alternate between standing and jumping jacks
- Objective: Achieve high levels of performance and recovery while being challenged

This exercise is valuable because teaching a performer to control their breathing for an extended period of time, especially with alternating periods of increasing activity and heart rate, allows them to remain calmer when experiencing intense, drawn-out situations in real life.

Focused

- 6 minutes of shifting focused state while playing song of choice
 - EMOM alternate between counting out loud and reading posters out loud
- Objective: Achieve maximum period of optimal focused state (360 score)

During this exercise the performer switches between narrow and broad focus for an extended time. The length of this exercise is intentional because it is training a performer to get focused faster and stay focused longer.

Engaged

- Use both hands @ 45 bpm for 6 minutes
 - Repeating the letter sequences (A-Z) out loud at a fast pace
- Objective: Achieve peak timing accuracy

This exercise aims to embrace the chaos. The exercise is challenging and fatiguing due to its length and difference in speed between reciting the letter sequence quickly and using both hands at a slower tempo. The exercise is important because it trains a performer to effectively manage fatigue to perform longer at a high intensity.

We want our athletes to be able to perform optimally for a longer period of time and completing Endurance Climbs will give performers that edge compared to their competition. Check out our Instagram for a visual of this Climb!
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MENTAL STRENGTH TRAINING FOR TODAY'S ATHLETES: INTERVIEW WITH DR. STEVENS

By Priscilla Wiggins

For this month's "highlight a high performer," I sat down with Dr. Hunter Stevens to hear about his journey through different roles with Mindful Athlete Training. Currently, Dr. Stevens is the COO and Head of Mental Fitness with Mindful Athlete Training and has worked with a range of athletes to help them gain that 1% difference in their game. A high-level athlete himself, Dr. Stevens excelled in basketball, volleyball, and football throughout his high school tenure. Around his junior year, he realized that his heart was with volleyball, and he pursued it at the Division I level at George Mason University. During his time at GMU, he was invited to play at the Olympic Training Center in Colorado Springs, Colorado, which he cites as an incredibly inspiring opportunity.

Following his undergraduate career, Dr. Stevens began a joint PsyD and MBA program at Widener University, which is when he was introduced to Mindful Athlete Training. He came across MAT during his second year at Widener and completed his clinical practicum hours here, helping out with events such as the SABR Analytics Conference and our showcase on the MLB Network. Following his graduate program, Dr. Stevens joined the Mindful Athlete team in a more complete role and was instrumental in bringing our Lab to life and leveraging our training systems for peak performance outcomes.



Through his time as a Mental Fitness coach, Dr. Stevens has been blown away by our athletes' insight and potential. Most of them come in looking for an extra edge to separate themselves in their craft, and it's been meaningful for him to help bring that out. Dr. Stevens continues to play volleyball at a high level, and he's found it meaningful to practice what he preaches to his athletes in his own play and life. For him, Mindful Athlete Training modalities have helped him be open to taking in internal and external factors as information to aid in performance. Throughout his career, Dr. Stevens has often reflected back on the

words of a former coach that stressed the importance of keeping a good attitude and working to bounce back. Mindful Athlete Training helped solidify the necessary pieces of that equation for him, such as deep awareness of self and knowing when to step back and lead by example.

When asked what Mental Fitness means to him today, Dr. Stevens highlighted the importance of having "the ability to call upon resources when needed" and to tap into each resource completely. Tapping into mental fitness maximizes our entire mind-body potential and allows us to be more resilient as high-performers. Dr. Stevens stressed the importance of mental fitness training on an equal level to physical fitness because the brain is the cockpit of the body, and we are kidding ourselves if we think the body can succeed at the highest level without also incorporating the mental element. As of now, the biggest hurdle Dr. Stevens sees to getting athletes on board with mental fitness training is a lack of understanding, accessibility, and education about its relevance. The mental elements of our lives are invisible, and a big learning curve for our growth and development is figuring out how to make our training process and outcomes more tangible for the everyday performer.

Overall, Dr. Stevens expressed excitement about the direction of Mindful Athlete Training and the strength of our team. He is excited to continue helping others find new ways to engage with difficult feelings rather than attempt to escape them by leaning into stress and chaos. Come train with Dr. Stevens today!

NON-TRADITIONAL TRAINING FOR NON-TRADITIONAL ATHLETES: WORKING WITH POLICE OFFICERS

By Taylor Golkin

In this column, we have talked before about first responders

and the chaos they may face. Police officers, like many first responders, attempt to manage burnout and/or compassion fatigue. Burnout consists of acquired general exhaustion and lack of interest in one's work. Compassion fatigue, also known as vicarious trauma, refers to the negative emotions felt through helping others in one's line of work. As a result, many first responders may feel they are "not able to turn work off," have high amounts of unprocessed trauma and exposure and have increased levels of compassion satisfaction.



I sat down with a local police officer, who remained anonymous, to ask their views on some of these topics.

Can you "turn off work?"

He responded: "Am I ever not working? Even at home, I am thinking about upcoming training, or reports that need to be written, up or the safety of my cops and people I've come in contact with throughout the week; none of that stuff ever really goes away. Sleep is a big one too. I hear you talk about recovery, and that's pretty tough; my work schedule is constantly changing, and I frequently have to work overtime. I enjoy helping people, but that doesn't take away from the fact that my stress is pretty high all the time."

What mental skills are most critical to your job?

He said: "I feel like managing my emotions is something that is always in play at work. If I'm not always on 100%, then people may get hurt, mistakes could happen, and it puts a lot of pressure on the job some days...going off that, my critical thinking skills have to be 100%, 100% of the time. The job requires so much mental agility, and so many people rely on that skill to be the best that it can be."



Our Lab can be instrumental when thinking about how Mindful Athlete Training can address some of these problems. Calm training allows a person to understand and adapt to the dynamic experience during a stressful or traumatic event. Helping police officers find and respond to their "calm," whatever that may look like, in high-stress situations can

help them work more efficiently under pressure and keep their critical thinking sharp. Focus training trains people to shift between a narrow and broad range of focus more efficiently. First responders, especially police officers, are often exposed to multiple stimuli at any given time. Dynamic training in the Lab prompts attentional shifting when necessary, helps to improve attentional flexibility, enhances decision-making skills, and expands mental endurance. Supporting the pressure of making split-second decisions under duress and chaos. Engaged training specifically looks at neuromuscular reaction timing. A

critical mental skill of police officers is optimal timing. Engaged is designed to help individuals understand how the mind and body work together for optimal performance, including optimal timing, impulse control, and decision making. These things can all come together to help police officers perform more optimally while also giving them space and tools to process, which will provide them with the extra 1% in doing their job.

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Thank you for reading! Next month we will continue to detail applications of our work, discuss more real-world examples, and much more. Enjoy the ever-warming weather and happy April!

