

GOAL SETTING

Your Road Map to Success

GOAL SETTING - Your Road Map to Success

*"Excuse me, Sir," Alice inquires. "Could you tell me which road to take?" Wisely, the caterpillar asks, "Where are you going?" Somewhat dismayed, Alice responds, "Oh, I don't know where I am going, Sir." "Well," replied the caterpillar, "if you don't know where you are going, it really doesn't matter which road you take."
(Alice in Wonderland – Lewis Carrol)*

Let's Take a Road Trip.

Goal setting CAN help in the pursuit for the final destination.

Before we go anywhere, a little planning needs to be done. Where do we want to go? Let's drive from Edinburgh to London. How are we going to get there? Let's drive! What supplies are we going to need? Sun glasses, some money, snacks for the trip, CD's... But, don't forget the map. The easiest way to plan for a trip is with a road map.

When using a road map you are in essence setting goals for the trip. The road map can:

- locate specifically where it is you're going (long term goal),
- determine how many planned stops to take along the way (short-term goal),
- tell you how many miles to the next destination (daily goal)
- tell you the alternate routes along the way, and
- help locate tourist stops en route (you should always enjoy the journey ☺).

Now, let's apply this to table tennis. Similar questions should be asked of you as a table tennis player before you take off on your athletic journey. Where will you want to be at the end of the season? What are you going to do physically and mentally in order to get there? What skills and tools do you need in order to reach your destination?

This installment of the Mental Toolbox will help you plan your athletic journey with consistent use of goals. This chapter contains a brief introduction, and some exercises to help you build the table tennis season road map.

How Exactly Does Goal Setting Help?

Good goal setting gives you an edge in three areas:

1. Goals provide **direction**.
2. Goals provide **feedback**.
3. Goals **motivate**; provide a daily purpose.

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Basic Tips for Effective Goal Setting

- ✓ *Identify both Short-term and Long-term goals.*
- ✓ *Identify task goals in addition to outcome goals.*
- ✓ *Take action.*
- ✓ *Evaluate your goals.*
- ✓ *Set both team and individual goals.*

Let's look at each of these in more detail . . .

How Far Ahead Should you as an Athlete Look?

Effective goal setting entails setting long-term and short-term goals; these goals will identify where the you are going and how you are going to get there.

When planning a vacation, you often think about dream destinations. Where would you go if you had unlimited funds and abilities... Egypt, the Caribbean, Europe? As with traveling and many other aspects of life it is fun to dream. In sport, it is also fun and important to dream.

Dream goals allow you to project years into the future without any limits. For example, for many athletes making the Olympic Team is a dream goal.

Athletes need to progress from a dream goal to a long-term goal. **Long-term goals** are typically one season to numerous seasons down the road; as in the road trip analogy, this goal is the destination. One way to determine a good long-term goal is asking yourself the question; "where do I want to be at the end of the season? or at the end of an Olympia (4 years)?" Examples of the answer to this question can be in terms of having an improved physical strength by the end of the season, a goal ranking, making a specific performance standard, or earning a spot on a junior or senior national team.

In order to make the long-term goal seem less daunting, **short-term goals** are set. **Short-term goals** are set for shorter lengths of time than long-term goals, usually between two weeks and a month. Short-term goals serve as stepping-stones for the long-term goals. Setting short-term goals allow you to monitor success towards the long-term goals. A good question to ask your self is; "Where do I want to be at the end of this month?"

Finally, short-term goals can also often feel far off; therefore something more within reach is needed to maintain focus and motivation. For these reasons it is also important to set **daily goals**. **Daily goals** are to be set every day in practice and in competition. Setting effective daily goals will help motivate and bring higher intensity to training. Daily goals can be set for both physical training and psychological skill development. A good question for you to ask yourself is; "why am I getting in the practice hall today?" (See exercises 1, 4 and 5)

Identify Outcome Goals and Task Goals

Effective goal setting necessitates that you as the player set both outcome and task goals.

Most table tennis players are good at setting outcome goals; an **outcome goal** is any type of goal directed at the end result. Table tennis outcome goals are set when you focus on attaining a specific place at a tournament, or beating a teammate in practice. Outcome goals are hard to control because they depend on both the ability and skill of the table you and your opponents.

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However, you as a player have more control over **task goals** because they depend on your skill and ability only. **Task goals** are what you as a player have to DO (physically and mentally) in order to accomplish the outcome goals. Examples of task goals include being aggressive on every point, use the time between points consistently and maintaining a positive spirit through an event. (See exercise 2)

“Last year, Jason placed second at Regionals in both the singles and doubles. Regionals will start in 2 days and all Jason is talking about is winning both the events. He says, “Nothing but first will be good enough.” Because such a goal is out of his control, it would be more effective to get him focused on what he needs to do to win the events. He needs to focus on movement, spin, placement and speed. If he can do this, the outcome will take care of itself.” **How do you think going into tournaments?**

Taking Action

Effective goal setting must involve not just a road map but a strategy to keep the goals “real” on a consistent basis.

Without much, if any, prodding from coaches, table tennis players are already setting goals (especially outcome goals). When asked, athletes talk about goals such as wanting to play at certain tournaments, making cuts, improving a specific aspect or their technique. **Are you like these athletes?** However, you and your coach should work together to progress from setting long-term and short-term goals to actually acting on these goals.

“For example, when Grace, a 10-year-old player, gets in the practice hall every afternoon for practice, one wonders if any of her goals are salient. Does she focus on her stroke during warm-up? Is she conscious of her body position as she serves? Or, is she “just playing”, merely in the practice hall doing the workout that her coaches instructed her to do?” **Are you like this?**

Once a goal setting “map” has been established, the next critical step is to keep yourself accountable to these goals. Doing this is largely a matter of creativity and finding a means of accountability that will work for you. Some examples of ways to keep goals at the forefront so they are acted upon include:

- Complete weekly goal setting forms
- Developing a goal chart
- Write goals on visible items such as water bottles or caps
- Verbalize goals to teammates, friends, family (See exercise 6)

Evaluate your Goals

Effective goal setting requires you to regularly evaluate progress towards your goals, note successes along the way, and modify goals if necessary.

Let’s go back to the road map analogy, where the goal is to drive from Edinburgh to London. Suppose you take off bright and early in the morning with your trusty roadmap in hand. On day one, your goal is to make it to Birmingham by sundown. However, outside of Manchester there was an accident and you end up sitting on the M1 for 2 hours. At what point, if ever, will you stop to assess your progress and re-evaluate your goals?

“Back in the practice hall, Paul, the star player on the team, developed a shoulder problem and only did footwork for the month of September. At what point should he reassess his goal of improving his technique? Paul will only

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be disappointed and frustrated if he only evaluates his training based on his original goal of improving his technique.”

Goals are meant to provide direction, give feedback on progress and motivate. To ensure they serve this purpose, goals must also be flexible. It is necessary to evaluate goals at several points during the table tennis season. Set up specific dates for yourself to monitor your success and to make changes if needed.

Team Goal Setting

Effective team goal setting includes both the coaches and the athletes. Team goal setting allows you as the table tennis player to be supported by the group and the group goals in your individual athletic pursuits.

The goal setting terms thus far have all been in reference to individual goals. Individual goals are very important, but as a table tennis team, it is also important to set team goals. Team goals define a desirable state for the group at the end of a certain length of time. Team goals can guide how individual goals are set. Both players and coaches can be included in the team goal setting process. If the coach sets the overall team goals, it is important to include the table tennis players in setting group goals for their specific training group. After the group goals are set the players can then set their individual goals as a reflection of the group and team goals. (See exercise 7)

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COACHES GUIDE: Key Points to Emphasize when Introducing Goal Setting to Your Players

- Ask your players to define GOALS. Have them discuss why they set goals. Then, discuss additional ways that goals can help performance.
- Teach your players the importance of Systematic Goal Setting (using different lengths and types of goals) and give examples of elite athletes to stress your point.
- Discuss, in detail, the tips of effective goal setting as outlined above.
- Have the players complete some of the goal setting exercises, included at the end of the chapter.
- Brainstorm ways for the team to “stay on top of” the goal setting plan.

Every day, for three years and ten months, I wrote at the top of my training log, 'I work harder than anyone else, that is why I will be an Olympic Medalist!' I also wrote down specific goals for every competition and every day and week of training. These goals were very specific and focused on MY performance, not my competitors. Having these goals was the only way I was able to get through all my injuries (operations and bone breaks), and stay focused enough at the Olympics to win a medal. There were so many days when I just wanted to sleep in, but having my training goals made me head into rehab or weight training instead. At the Olympics, simple goals kept me intense and focused. Goal setting seems like more work, but if I didn't do it, I wouldn't have a medal around my neck today.
Olympic medal winner in Atlanta.

Goal Setting Exercises

To help your players understand and use goals more often in practice and competition several goal setting worksheets and recording sheets have been included. Feel free to pick and choose which ones work best for you. The sheets have been included to get athletes started on effective goal setting; feel free to modify the forms by incorporating your own ideas into your goal setting program.

Exercises 1 and 2 are targeted toward older players; they are designed to bring home differences between short and long term goals and outcome and task goals.

Exercise 3 is an example of a goal setting sheet for tournaments and can be used with any age group. Pick four tournaments within each season in which you want to emphasize goal setting. Write the name of the meet in the first blank given.

Choose a goal for each tournament, remembering to keep them challenging but realistic. Keep the sheet in a safe place and remember to review it before you compete in the next upcoming tournament.

Exercise 4, 5 and 6 are targeted towards younger players. The main purpose of these exercises is to get the younger players thinking about short and long-term goals and emphasize how one type of goal influences the other.

Exercise 7 can also be used with any age group. Setting and recording daily goals is important. Daily goals can be recorded in many different ways. One way of recording daily goals is on a 3x5 card.

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Exercise 8 is designed for creating individuals goals as a reflection of team goals. Once your players have set group goals for the season, then have them set goals to further progress towards the group and team goals. Then ask you players what they can do daily as individuals to further progress towards the group and team goals.

Finally, at the end of this chapter, some training log templates have been included and will be described in more detail there.

Goal Setting Exercise 1:

How Far should I Look Ahead?

Long-term goals tell you where you want to go and short-term goals tell you how you are going to get there. Both are important for effective goal setting. Try this exercise to help you breakdown your long-term goals.

- 1. What is one of your long-term goals for this season?**
- 2. What are the abilities or skills you need to achieve this goal?**
 - a.
 - b.
 - c.
- 3. What can you do between now and the end of the season to develop those abilities and skills?**
 - a.
 - b.
 - c.
- 4. What will you do this week to develop those abilities and skills?**
 - a.
 - b.
 - c.
- 5. What can you do next practice to develop those abilities and skills?**
 - a.
 - b.
 - c.

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Goal Setting Exercise 2: Moving Beyond Outcome Goals to Task Goal Setting

Outcome goals tell you where you want to be which can help motivate. But, on a daily basis, they do not tell you what you need to DO.

1. Start with an Outcome

Choose an upcoming tournament, and pick a challenging but not impossible outcome goal (win, place, get a certain score, etc.). Write that goal down in detail here:

2. Moving From Outcome to Task Goals

How can you maximize your chances to achieve this goal? Write down three things (i.e. movement, spin, placement, speed, concentration, and good breakfast, plenty of sleep) **you can do at the tournament** in order to increase your odds of achieving the outcome goal.

1. I will: _____
2. I will: _____
3. I will: _____

[You have just gone from goal setting to task goal setting.]

3. Practicing the Task Goals in Training

What can you do in practice between now and your competition to increase your chances of achieving your three competition tasks? Write down two things to focus on in practice that will gear you towards your competition task goals.

For example, if your competition task goal is to hold a specific stroke rate, you might focus on specific movement drills in practice.

1. In training, I will _____
2. In training, I will _____

Goal Setting Exercise 3: Setting Goals for Tournaments

Name:

Date of Tournament:

Name of Tournament:

Event:

GOAL:

Skills needed to achieve this goal:

What I am going to work on in practice to help me achieve this goal:

Name:

Date of Tournament:

Name of Tournament:

Event:

GOAL:

Skills needed to achieve this goal:

What I am going to work on in practice to help me achieve this goal:

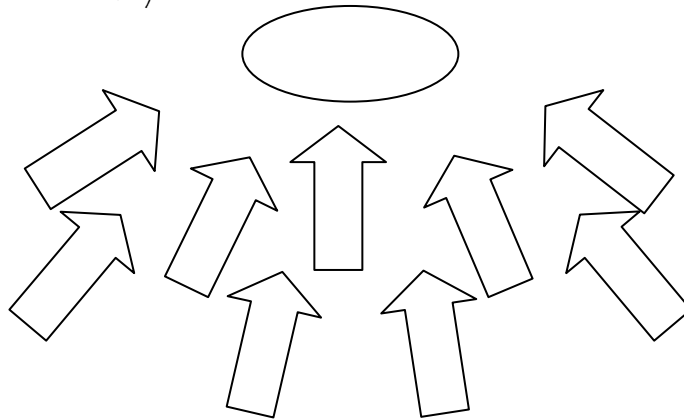
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Goal Setting Exercise 4: Stepping Stone Exercise

Write your long-term goal in an oval on top of a sheet of paper. Make arrows that all point towards the goal. Use the arrows as stepping stones and write down your short-term goals that will lead to your long-term goal.

Adapted from *Mental Skills for Young Athletes* by John M. Hogg (1997)

e.g. To be on time to practice each day



Goal Setting Exercise 5: Make Dreams Reality

In the box provided write down your dreams as a table tennis player. Then underneath write down four things you can do today in practice to bring you a little closer to your dreams.

My Dream List:

Four Things I can do Today to Help Me Reach My DREAMS:

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.

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Exercise 6: Shoot for the Stars!

Dream Goals

- 1.
- 2.

Long Term Goals

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

Short Term Goals

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

Daily Goals

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

Use the goal setting rocket to help define your dream goal(s), long term, short term and daily goals.

Goal Setting Exercise 7: Daily Goal Setting Cards/Sheet

My goal for today:

What do I need to do physically to accomplish my goal?

- 1.
- 2.

What do I need to do mentally to accomplish my goal?

- 1.
- 2.

Goal Setting Exercise 8: Team, Group and Individual Goals.

Name:

Date:

Group:

Team Goal(s) for 200____:

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

Group Goal(s) for 200____: (What can we do as a group to work towards the team goals?)

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

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Individual Goal(s) for 200____: (What can I do as an individual to work towards both the team and group goals?)

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

Keeping Track of Progress Training Logs

An important aspect of setting goals is writing them down and making them real. One way to help keep track of goals is by maintaining a training log. This written log of daily activities serves as a way to help maintain a more systematic focus on all aspects of training and competition. Training logs can include information about both physical and mental practice and goals. Benefits from keeping a training log, include developing a better sense of how you spend your practice time, knowing where improvements are coming from, increasing your motivation to keep working, and heightening your awareness at competitions.

On the next pages you will find some sample training logbook pages. Note that logging will take place both before and after each practice and before and after tournaments. Feel free to make copies of any of these sheets and try them out with your team.

Training Log Book

Before Practice

Physical Training Goals:

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

Mental Training Goals:

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

After Practice Evaluation:

Physical Training Goals – Accomplishments:

Physical Training Goals -- Things to keep working on:

Mental Training Goals -- Accomplishments:

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Mental Training Goals – Things to keep working on:

Training Logbook

Date _____

THIS WEEK'S GOALS:

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.

Strategies for attaining goals:

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.

Obstacles that might prevent me from achieving goals:

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.

Self-evaluation:

Daily Training Logbook

Date _____ AM or PM

Type of Workout: Table tennis/weights/running/core stability

Physical Training goals:

Mental Training goals:

Workout:

Comments:

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Competition Logbook

Date _____

Tournament:

Event:

Time:

How did you feel?

Coaches' Comments:

Competition Logbook

Date _____

Tournament:

Event:

Time:

How did you feel?

Coaches' Comments: