

# How do you respond to challenges?

When was the last time you encountered a challenge in your sport? Challenges can include anything such as:

- Making a mistake
- Playing a new position
- Being in a “clutch” situation
- Playing in a championship game
- Learning a new skill
- Fighting for a position on a team

Now reflect on how you initially responded to the challenge.

- What was your natural reaction? To avoid or to move toward the challenge?
- Did you appreciate that the challenge was present or did you wish it did not exist?
- Did you find yourself blaming others for the existence of the challenge or did you look for things to do that were under your control?

Some athletes believe that if they were doing everything correctly, challenges would not exist. They dread challenges and wish they were not part of the sport. Challenges are, however, an inherent part of the sport. No matter how well you are playing, some sort of challenge will arise. Instead of trying to keep these challenges at bay, it is more productive to think about how to change your relationship with these ever-present challenges.

Athletes often have a break-through in the mental game when they learn to view challenges through a different lens. Instead of seeing challenges as something that is negative, they begin to see challenges as an opportunity to learn and grow. Instead of fearing them, or wishing they weren't present, they begin to savor and look forward to challenges. For example, a more positive view of challenges includes ideas such as:

- Challenges keep sport interesting.
- Challenges allow me to grow as an athlete and person. I can take risks and push myself.
- Challenges give me the opportunity to use my mental skills and often develop new strategies.

Athletes who look forward to challenges know that no matter what the outcome, it does not change who they are as a person. Knowing that they were able to rise to the occasion and give their best, mentally and physically is the most that they can do in any given situation. The learning and growth that occurs from putting themselves out there and trying is something that is intrinsically satisfying.

## *Try This:*

Make a list of all the challenges or hard things you face in your sport. Then, think about an aspect of this challenge that you can appreciate and look forward to. Consider what opportunities are present and what you can gain from the experience.