



With WBP™ • **“5 MENTAL GAME ERRORS THAT COULD COST YOU YOUR DREAM”**  
by Worldwide Baseball Prospects Mental Game Mentor Tom Hanson, Ph.D

**V**ery few players reach their dreams.

Whether the “next level” dream is to be a starter in high school, play in college or shine in the pros, a majority of players leave the game unfulfilled.

Retired players often think their limitation was physical: “I was too small, not fast enough” or “not coordinated enough.”

True, not many of us have the physical gifts needed to play in the Major Leagues.

But few players discover their actual physical limits because they are first stopped by their “mental game” errors.

Most are unaware of their mental game fumbles because we can't see “thinking errors” the way we see physical errors (they don't show up in a box score!).

To avoid these errors you must know what they are.

Here are five mental game errors I see crippling players' dreams every day. Each represents an important opportunity for learning and growth on and off the field.

### **Mental Game Error #1. Lack of Balance**

A common error for hitters is “lunging.” Commit your weight forward too soon and you're off balance and can't adjust to an off-speed pitch.

The equivalent for pitchers is “rushing,” where they start their weight forward too soon.

In both cases, balance is lost and performance suffers.

High school players' performance suffers on a bigger scale when they lose their balance by focusing too much of their emotional “weight” on baseball.

They don't keep their balance by developing themselves as people and students as well.

Yes, commitment is required to make your dream come true.

But like hitters and pitchers need to stay “back” to generate maximal power to the baseball, young players need to stay balanced to maximize their power in life.

Staying balanced includes addressing “Big League” questions such as: What is important to me in life?

Who do I want to be? What are the qualities I need to develop to be successful at whatever I do in life?

As we've seen with Josh Hamilton and scores of others, players cannot succeed on the field while failing off it.

### **Mental Game Error #2.**

#### **“How I Play = My Self Worth”**

One of the most common causes of poor performance, frustration and fear is the (unconscious) belief that “When I play well I'm a good person and when I play poorly I'm a loser.”

It's as if the player is performing with a gun to his head.

Few perform well under that kind of pressure. Fear leads to tension and distraction -- a player's mortal enemies.

As a result they “choke” in games and flood them-

selves with negative emotion. They then put MORE pressure on themselves...and play even worse.

Even when they do play well they don't celebrate and feel gratitude.

They punish themselves more by thinking “I should play that great every time.”

This perfectionism ensures ultimate disappointment: When even excellence doesn't make them feel like a winner, success is not in the cards.

The solution lies in the “balance” described above. Players well grounded in who they REALLY are as people don't feel their self-worth is on the line every pitch.

As a result they play freely -- and play as well as they can.

### **Mental Game Error #3. A Low “Comfort Zone”**

Thinking your self-worth is determined by your performance results in fear of failure.

But most players also suffer from a fear of success.

Fearing both failure (the low end of performance) and success (the high end of performance) results in a “comfort zone.”

A player's comfort zone is the level of performance his psyche thinks is “about right” for him.

Like a thermostat regulating the temperature of your living room, your mental comfort zone regulates your performance.

If you are playing too poorly it will kick you into gear and you'll play better.

If you are playing too well it will sabotage you.

Another term for comfort zone is self-image. No one consistently plays better than the deep down, unconscious image they have of how good they are and what they deserve.

Talking with scores of Major League players who have bounced up and down between the minors and the majors, they all say that they're stuck in the Big Leagues when deep down they truly felt they BELONGED there.

In other words, the Big Leagues was now in their comfort zone.

So the goal is to expand your self-image/comfort zone until it is “big enough” to handle the level of play you desire.

This can be done many ways, including visualization (see #5 below).

Strange as it may sound, without this work you will otherwise unconsciously sabotage yourself and fall short of your dream.

### **Mental Game Error #4. Lack of Clarity of Purpose**

The first law of success is to have a clear target. In baseball the goal is clear: score more runs than your opponent.

But unlike baseball, life doesn't set such clear goals for us.

Our minds and bodies are wonderfully equipped for reaching goals and hitting targets.

The shortcoming isn't that we can't hit our goals, it's that we

1) Don't set them, or 2) Don't set them well

While most players fantasize about big time success, few set it as a clear intention.

A fantasy dances in your head. An intention burns in your body.

Success in life (great results and great satisfaction) goes to those with strong intentions.

Your commitment and focus levels must be equal to or greater than the size of your dreams.

Feedback is the Breakfast of Champions: Ask coaches and older players who know you well if your actions suggest you have powerful intentions or wispy fantasies.

### **Mental Game Error #5. Lack of “Mental Game” Practice**

Hank Aaron averaged .305 with 100 RBI and 33 home runs for 23 years in the Major Leagues. He told me “preparation was the key” to his success.

Each day he visualized facing that night's pitcher over and over, so when he stepped to the plate he was focused and confident.

He said “my ability to focus made me successful, and that's

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something you develop. Just like learning your ABC's, you develop your ability to focus by practicing it every day." Players will tell you that the mental game determines 80% or more of their success. But few players have a structured program for developing their mental game (e.g. their confidence) that comes anywhere close to the structure of their physical conditioning program.

Start by simply visualizing success. Do daily repetitions where you see, hear and FEEL yourself being successful and you develop your "confidence muscles."

### **How To Avoid These Mental Game Errors**

Each of these errors undermine motivation and confidence. Each are dream snuffers.

The only way to find out what your physical limits are is to have a great mental game. Awareness is key.

Be vigilant: Pay attention to that little voice in your head: When you catch yourself thinking negative or limiting beliefs snap out of it. Interrupt that thought pattern by moving your body and shifting your focus to what you want.

Also, choose a role model or two and adopt their belief systems. Even with a great mental game you may or may not reach your dream. You can't totally control the level you reach in baseball.

But ultimately you do decide if you reach success as defined by basketball coach John Wooden, voted Coach of the Century for the 1900's: "Success is peace of mind which is a direct result of self-satisfaction in knowing you did your best to become the best you are capable of becoming."

### **ABOUT THE AUTHOR**

Dr. Tom Hanson helps players, coaches and parents have more fun, perform great, and develop life success skills. Past clients include the New York Yankees, Texas Rangers, and many other pro and college teams and individuals.

He co-authored the baseball classic "Heads-Up Baseball" and gives away his #1 secret to baseball success at [www.BaseballSuccessSecrets.com](http://www.BaseballSuccessSecrets.com).

