



by Dr. Tom Hanson, Ph.D.

[www.BaseballConfidence.com](http://www.BaseballConfidence.com)

# Five Steps to Unstoppable Confidence

## INTRODUCTION

**W**hat percentage of your performance on a given day would you say is determined by “mental game” factors such as your confidence, focus, and motivation?

Groups of players I speak with almost always say about 80%.

But when I ask what percentage of their time they spend working on their mental game, they typically say 0-20%.

It isn't that players and coaches don't know the mental game is vital – they agree it is the most important part of the game. The problem is they don't know how to develop it or don't make the time for it.

My mission is to close the gap between the importance of the mental game and the attention it receives. I'm committed to helping players play better and enjoy it more.

## FUNDAMENTALS

**M**ental toughness is the ability to consistently play at or near your best regardless of circumstances. That means no matter what situation you are in, regardless of what has happened in the past, or what might happen in the future, you are able to play nearly as well as you are capable of playing.

Anyone can play great when they feel great, but players who succeed at the higher levels are able to create good or even great performances when they don't feel 100%.

They might be tired or frustrated, or they might have doubts about their ability to succeed (doubt happens to the best of them, even at the Major League level), but somehow they are able to focus the energy they do have in a way that produces success.

In this mini-course I offer what I've learned from some of the best players in the history of the game about how to consistently play at or near your best.

Of course, knowledge alone will do you no good, nor will trying it once. You need to put your knowledge into repeated, consistent action – so I'll give you some ideas on how to do that.

Instead of leaving your confidence to random chance, choose to be confident by using five simple steps.

## STEP 1: MOVE CONFIDENTLY

When you are playing great, how do you carry yourself between pitches?

The fastest and easiest route to becoming more confident is to move your body confidently. How do you move when you feel totally unstoppable?

Try it right now. Stand up and walk around the room like you feel totally confident. Lift your head up high, let your shoulders roll back, raise your chin and chest and draw full, slow breaths deep into your abdomen.

Now get into your batting stance or stand on an imaginary pitching rubber like you're certain you know you are the best, like you are in complete control of the situation.

How does that feel? (Chances are you didn't do it. Come on and give it a try!)

When your body is moving confidently, it sends messages to your brain that you are confident. It feels good to move that way, so you start to think more confident thoughts.

It is very difficult to think confidently when your body is in a slumped position, and very easy to think confidently when your body is standing tall and broad.

Pretend you're back in a time when you dominated; when you felt really great. You don't have to make a big show of it, just move confidently.

You may also want to try doing an impression of a confident-looking major league player you like.

**Remember This: Don't just try to think your way to a new level of acting, act your way to a new level of thinking!**

## STEP 2: THINK CONFIDENTLY

When you're playing great, what do you spend your time thinking about?

I'll bet when you are playing great you spend your time thinking about playing great. Between games you can't wait to get to the park again because your head is filled with images and feelings of you playing great.

Similarly, when you are slumping, I'll bet you spend your time thinking about playing poorly.

Between games you almost dread going to the park because your body is filled with thoughts, images, and feelings of playing poorly. It is like you have an obnoxious fan for the other team inside your head, riding you relentlessly, telling you how horrible you are.

Not exactly a recipe for success.

Think in a way that gives you your best chance for success regard-

less of your circumstances.

When you are 0 for 7 or just gave up a three run homer to tie the game, you still are able to choose your thinking.

You can think: "I'm due! I'm the best man for this situation and I'm going to get the job done right now."

Choose to think confident thoughts enough and it becomes a habit. Great players habitually think in ways that help their performance.

Some great players are very hard on themselves mentally, but when it comes time to perform they get their minds out of the way enough to get the job done.

It sounds simple, but not many people choose to spend their time thinking about playing great.

And don't just think it, feel it in your body as you picture it in your mind.

This becomes a habit, the way you learn any physical skill – through focused repetitions.

"Sure, That SOUNDS Great, but..."

It's easy enough for me to say "think confident," but it isn't the easiest thing in the world.

Your brain develops the ability to think confidently following the same principles as your muscles develop the ability to move more weight: through repetition.

You must exercise your body for it to become more powerful, more flexible, and have greater endurance. Likewise, you must exercise your mind for it to consistently be more confident, be more focused, and be mentally tough under pressure.

For your physical body, you join a gym and use a great strength and conditioning coach.

For your mind, join my Confidence GYM at

[www.BaseballConfidence.com](http://www.BaseballConfidence.com). It will give you the structure, the expertise, and the motivation you need to develop a powerful baseball mind.

Remember, if you want real success in baseball, you must train your brain.

### **STEP #3: FOCUS CONFIDENTLY**

So far we've discussed the power of how you carry your body and what you think about.

Today I want to hammer home that much of your success in baseball is determined by your understanding this one key fact: Your performance follows your focus.

Imagine you're riding a bike and you stare off to the left for a few seconds.

Where is your bike now going?

To the left! You might think you're staying straight, you might intend to stay straight, but your body and your performance will follow your focus.

Your success is determined by your ability to have a focused connection with your target regardless of circumstances:

For pitchers, it is the mitt; for hitters and fielders, it is the ball.

So, What Should You Focus On?

I asked a pitcher, who as a rookie succeeded over many other excellent pitchers in winning a starting position on a major league team, how he had done it.

"I shrunk the game," he said, meaning instead of getting caught up in the many distractions that come with Major League baseball, including the media and playing with and against players he had grown up admiring, he chose to focus on a few simple things.

There are three basic elements to shrinking the game. If you are struggling in your performance you are probably not doing at least one of them.

To keep things simple, today I'll just share one of them.

### **Focus on Things You Can Control**

What can you control?

Your playing time? The outcome of the game? Getting a base hit? Getting a batter out? Getting a college scholarship? Getting to the Major Leagues?

No, you can't actually control any of these things.

You may care deeply about them, and you can influence them, but you can't control them.

Don't waste your energy or base your confidence solely on any of them. Focus on your thinking, your attitude, your effort, the quality of your practice, and the quality of your preparation. Focus on the process of playing the game instead of being wrapped up in your results.

Former NCAA Division I Coach of the Year, Dave Snow says, "Results thinking is just a big trap. You've got to work on your physical and mental skills and then go out, trust what you've worked on and accept the results."

### **How To Develop Your Focus**

Remember that I started off saying: Your performance follows your focus.

It's great to know what to focus on, but being able to focus consistently is a skill you develop with practice.

I've learned many ways to develop your ability to focus, and I'll teach you them in my Confidence Conditioning For Baseball Program.

It's a step-by-step system for training your brain to be confident, focused, composed under pressure, and consistent.

I teach you the few basic ideas you need to understand to think like a great player, then lead you through more than 20 mental training exercises that toughen your mind the way physical conditioning exercises toughen your body.

Best of all, you get it free when you join my Baseball Confidence Gym.

Tons of players have benefited enormously after paying \$53 for just the Confidence Conditioning for Baseball Program. You get it plus a one month membership in the Gym (including email coaching from me that keeps you focused) for just \$29.95.

Join an elite group of DOERs -- and avoid being overmatched by other Gym members -- now at [www.BaseballConfidence.com](http://www.BaseballConfidence.com). Remember, if you want real success in baseball, you must train your brain.

### **STEP #4: PREPARE CONFIDENTLY**

Several years ago I interviewed Hank Aaron, the all-time leader in runs batted in, total bases, and home runs.

I asked him about the mental aspects of hitting, and his first words were, "Well, it all depends on how a guy prepares himself to do battle."

Aaron went on to attribute his incredible consistency and ability to perform under pressure to his ability to focus.

His tremendous focus, he said, resulted from his daily mental preparation.

Similarly, I recently interviewed pitching great Ferguson Jenkins. Once I asked about the mental aspects of pitching, the entire rest of the interview was about mental preparation.

Jenkins spoke about going through the opposing team's line-up in his head not only before the game, but also between each inning. He'd prepare while his team was hitting by thinking through the first four hitters of the next inning.

(By the way, pretty much all of my good information on how to be great mentally comes from great players. My approach throughout my career has been to interview people who are among the best at what they do and make that information available to others.)

Five Steps to

# Unstoppable Confidence

## **A Powerful Source of Confidence**

Preparation is one of the most powerful sources of confidence.

Aren't you more confident going into an exam at school if you've studied thoroughly than if you haven't?

A baseball game is no different. The better you've done your homework studying your opponent and preparing your mind and body to play, the more confident you're likely to be.

To help with this process, I've devised a mental preparation strategy called "P.R.E.P." that gives you a systematic way to approach this key source of confidence.

I take you through the whole process in my mental toughness-training course, but in this chapter I'll only cover the last letter, "P."

## **"Pre-play Your Performance"**

Use your imagination to see, feel, and hear the way you want the game to go.

Aaron told me he prepared by visualizing himself facing the pitcher he would see that night. He saw each of the pitchers' pitches coming in, and he put himself in different game situations.

You can do the same thing and probably do to some extent already.

Put yourself in different situations, imagine you throwing great pitches or hitting the ball on the nose time after time. You can do it throughout the day of your practice or game, or set aside 5-10 minutes to really focus in on it.

Be sure to feel it and even hear the action, don't just see it. Don't worry if your images aren't perfectly clear, just get into it. You must be focused to pre-play, and doing it will get you mentally and emotionally prepared to play.

## **"Pre-playing" is a Skill You Develop**

How do you learn to throw a slider?

1. Get coaching on how to do it.
2. Practice.
3. Repeat steps 1 and 2 for the rest of your career.

How do you learn to bunt?

1. Get coaching on how to do it.
2. Practice.
3. Repeat steps 1 and 2 for the rest of your career.

How do you learn to visualize powerfully?

1. Get coaching on how to do it.
2. Practice.
3. Repeat steps 1 and 2 for the rest of your career.

I provide the coaching and the ways for you to practice pre-playing your performances in my Confidence Conditioning for Baseball Program.

You can do it on your own and it will help you a lot. But... if you have goals in baseball. If you have dreams in baseball. If you want to find out how good you can be. If you have girls you want to impress. If you want to avoid a lot of suffering that comes with poor and inconsistent performances, get coaching.

It will lead you to the land of promise.

Remember, if you want real success in baseball, you must train your brain.

## **Step #5: Remember Why You Play**

This may be the most important of all 5 steps. Please read it carefully.

Perhaps your goal is to get a college scholarship or play in the Major Leagues. Maybe your goal is to be inducted into the Hall of Fame. I'm all for setting goals.

But don't lose site of why you play baseball in the first place.

Did you start playing as a kid so you could get a college scholarship or play pro ball?

No, you played because you loved it. So don't fall into the trap of thinking every game you play now is about your getting to some level of play you want to get to in the future.

Play with the love of the game, the passion, the joy, and the fun that you had as a child – even if your coach or some other circumstance is making that difficult.

Play the game right now. Don't be focused on the future.

Play the pitch you're on right now. And find a way to keep it fun.

Typically, over the course of their careers, professional players shift from seeing the game as fun to seeing it as work. This shift in perspective squeezes the freedom from their performance and the motivation from their hearts.

With the amazing rise of travel teams for youth players, these players too can easily slip from "fun" to "work."

So, simply ask yourself each day -- am I having fun or am I working? Of course you must "work hard" to get good at baseball. The game is not much fun for very long if you are terrible at it.

But that "work" can be done in a mindset of "fun." Roger Clemens is very intense when he pitches, but he's doing it from a love of the game, from a love of the battle. Not from work. Or out of fear.

## **How to Keep Baseball Fun**

Now we're getting into why I do what I do for players, coaches, and parents.

I love baseball and want others to love it too. I want you to have the best possible experience in baseball, whether you play, parent, or coach.

What I've found is that everyone gets into the game for the right reasons (fun and love of the game), but too often -- WAY too often -- the game becomes not fun. The failures, the boredom, the frustration, the humiliation experienced drains the fun out of the game.

When you have a powerful mind you can overcome the "curveballs" baseball throws at you.

Don't let a bad game or slump take away your fun.

Don't let a bad coach take away your fun.

Don't let a misguided parent take away your fun.

The way to take control of your baseball career (and your whole life, but I'll save that for another time) is to develop your mind. Your mind holds your key to fun.

It holds your key to success.

It holds your key to avoiding and getting out of slumps.

It holds the key to overcoming a bad coach.

It holds the key to overcoming a misguided parent.

When your mind is powerful -- when it is well-trained -- the world opens up to you. You can write your own ticket.

You get to find out how good you can play.

You get to find out how good life can be.

You can get the girl. You reach your goals.

Ultimately, you have more fun.

Developing a powerful mind will benefit you for a lifetime. I'm all for lessons on technique, but keeping your hands inside the ball isn't going to help you get your first job, have a better relationship with your wife, or make you your first million.

A powerful mind will.