



Racewalk Technique

Focus Control

It is universally accepted that the capability to consciously control focus is a key to success. A person with a severely impaired ability to focus, such as a person with ADHD, has a severely limited scope for success. A person with a hyper capacity for focus, such as a person with Asperger's Syndrome, achieves seemingly unattainable levels of success.

Most athletes function within what is considered to be normal capacity for focus. The issue for the athlete is then not so much a matter of capability as it is one of choices. Every athlete is able to recount experiences of total focus on a task or event to the point where they were not conscious of their surroundings. For most athletes these bouts of extreme focus are sporadic and unpredictable. The goal for an athlete is to make experiences of extreme focus wilful.

The ability to control focus is multi faceted and requires a multi disciplinary approach in order to achieve lasting success. Focus requires not only mental skill but emotional and physical skill as well. The ability to consciously control focus is a fitness based skill, that is, while it can be learned and improved through practice it can be unlearned or lost through the absence of practice. It is just as essential to make focus a part of the training cycle as it is physical or technical skills development.

The intensity and importance of a focus control program is determined by the reason for the training. For an athlete whose event has a duration of 10-30 seconds there is a requirement for focus with extreme intensity for a very short period of time. For an athlete whose event has a repeated random series of short sub events of 5-20 seconds in duration the ability to focus extremely intently must be combined with an ability to unfocus and recover focus very quickly. For an athlete whose event lasts over an hour the requirement is to be able to focus moderately over the entire period without losing focus during the entire event period.

A Complete Focus Control Development Program

As stated above a multi disciplinary approach to focus control will enhance the opportunity for success. The complete focus control program makes use of these elements:

- Short articles, selected reading or other study on aspects of focus control with follow up group or individual discussion,
- Involvement in a martial arts, yoga, tai chi or other similar physical discipline that has focus as a core value,
- Specific training sessions dedicated to focus control,
- Elements of focus control built into regular training sessions,



- Challenges or events within the training group where focus control is the variable that differentiates success from failure (this is particularly effective in small group challenges where the success of the group depends on the ability of the individual members to control focus).

Focus Control Program Schedule

Element	Freq	Timing	Activity Examples
Study/Discussion	1	Month	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How to do it • Challenges to doing it • Anecdotes of successful focus • Anecdotes of unsuccessful focus • Advanced focus techniques • Personal focus experience
Physical Discipline	1	Week	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Any traditional martial arts program • Tai Chi • Iyengar Yoga • Any meditation technique
Specific Training	2	Month	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Slow motion practice • Thunderball • Single point focus • Distraction practice
Focus in Training	1	Week	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Long walk on treadmill • Random surge response • No watch pacing • Declining intervals
Challenges	1	Month	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rabbit race • Mathematical 10k relay • Quantum intervals • Thought race

As the program is played out over the season the athlete(s) must be continuously monitored for comprehension and skill acquisition. The Study/Discussion sessions are designed to be cumulative as are the Physical Discipline sessions. The Specific Training and Focus in Training sessions are repeated many times throughout the training season to allow the athlete to develop and refine focus skills with a familiar task set. The Challenges act as development testing and if repeated in a season are only repeated once.