

## **DO NOT STRESS OVER THE COMPETITION**

By Stanley Popovich

Many hockey players sometimes get anxious when they play against a tough opponent. They get nervous on whom they are playing and they get so worked up that they lose focus on playing their game. In the end, they make mistakes and end up beating themselves up if they do not win. As a result, here is a list of techniques that a hockey player can use to help manage the stress of playing against the competition.

The first step is to learn as much as you can on your opponent. Although this may seem obvious some hockey players may think they already know what they need to know. Remember there is always something to learn about your competition. Read the stats and reports about your opponent and watch him or her play. Try to figure out an angle on how you can beat your competition. The more you know about your competition the better your chances are you will win the game. This will also help to reduce your worries about who and what you will be facing in your next hockey match.

Do not assume anything about your competition whether they are stronger or weaker than you. Every hockey player has his good and bad games and just because you may be facing a stronger opponent does not mean that you will lose. Remember that before you start playing, you and your opponent both have an equal chance of winning. You are both starting from scratch. This should help you to give you confidence going into your next game.

Focus on how you can best strive for perfection in your own game instead of worrying about your opponent. For instance, let's say you are playing the number one team in the tournament and you are nervous. Instead of focusing on how good your competition is, focus on how you can play your best game.

Give yourself some pep talks during your hockey game to re-enforce encouragement to yourself. During your game take advantage of the breaks you get by giving yourself encouragement. For example, there is a break and you are making a lot of mistakes. During this time out, tell yourself that you need to settle down and remind yourself that you can do it and you just need to relax. This can help reduce your stress and anxiety.

View a particular game as a learning experience when things do not work out. For example, you are making many mistakes and the game is out of reach. Instead of beating yourself up, try to figure out what you are doing wrong. The best time to improve on your game is when you deal with adversity.

It is not uncommon to get nervous when you play a better opponent. Remember that some games will be easy to play and some games will be more difficult. All you can do is to focus on your game and play the best you can. This will help you in the long run and will help you to stop worrying whether you will win or lose.

### **BIOGRAPHY:**

Stan Popovich is the author of "A Layman's Guide to Managing Fear Using Psychology, Christianity and Non Resistant Methods" - an easy to read book that presents a general overview of techniques that are effective in managing persistent fears and anxieties. For additional information go to: <http://www.managingfear.com/>