



# Goal Setting

Level I  
Coaching Education and Training Program



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Craig H. Neilsen Foundation

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## Presentation Objectives

- Understand the importance of goal setting in achieving consistent success
- Understand the three categories of goals, their interdependence and roles in achieving success
- Understand the importance of collaborative goal setting
- Develop a process and performance oriented mindset relative to goal setting
- Be able to properly set performance and process goals to achieve desired outcomes



## Why Use Goal Setting?

“If you don't know where you are going, you might wind up someplace else.”

- Yogi Berra



Now we will move from planning to goal setting and another quote from Yogi Berra. And while this statement is a Yogiism in the truest sense, it also points out the danger of not having a plan in place that includes **what** you want to achieve (where you are going) and **how** you are going to go about achieving it (what road you are going to take).



## Goal Setting

- Defines exactly what it is you want to achieve
- Used to develop the process by which you realize the achievement
- Provides the foundation for how coaches and athletes go about developing practice plans, training plans, and competition plans



What role does goal setting play in achieving consistent success? Well, without knowing exactly what it is you want to achieve, it is impossible to develop a process that will help you realize the achievement. Additionally, if you know what you want to achieve, but fail to lay out the path for how you are going to get there, you are once again destined to end up somewhere else.

# Goal Setting

- Provides a daily guide for **decision making** and a source of **motivation**
- Allows the team, the coach, and/or the individual the opportunity to set their **own measures** of success



A proper goal setting program in addition to a solid coaching philosophy can help aid in decision making and provide motivation to stick to the process.

When an athlete, a coach, a team engage in proper goal setting, they are in essence defining how they will measure success. This is significant because if this is not done, it is easy to allow others to assign measures of success to you. Typically those others are unfamiliar with you and your team and are not qualified to set measures of success for you!

# Goal Setting

- Goals should have **SMARTS**
  - **S**pecific and positive
  - **M**easureable
  - **A**chievable
  - **R**ealistic
  - **T**imely
  - **S**elf-Determined



**Specific:** Know exactly what it is that you want to accomplish and phrase the goal in positive language. You never want to set negative goals. Also stretching, systematic, synergistic, significant and shifting.

**Measurable:** If you can't measure it, you can't attain it. Also meaningful, memorable, motivating and even, magical, this is where outcome as results can be most useful.

**Achievable:** If you set goals that are too far out of your reach, you will lose motivation to continue to strive to reach the goal. Set goals that you can attain in a reasonable amount of time and then reset the goal once it is achieved. Also action plans, accountability, acumen and **agreed-upon**.

**Realistic:** Set goals that you have the ability and resources to attain. Write them down and put them in a place that you will see every day. Also relevant, reasonable, resonating, results-oriented, rewarding, responsible, reliable, rooted in facts and remarkable.

**Timely:** Set a clear target date for the achievement of the goal. Also time-based, tangible and thoughtful.

**Self-Determined:** Goal setting is a collaborative effort between coach and athlete, coach and team and between athletes. When goals are set without input from all stakeholders, many things can happen to sabotage goal achievement: resources not available, conflicting goals being set, miscommunication, misunderstanding of roles, frustration from perceived lack of support, etc.

## Categories of Goals

- **Outcome Goals**
  - Define where you are going, your final destination
  - Typically the competitive result of an event
- **Performance Goals**
  - Define the path to your final destination
  - Focus on improvement relative to past performance
- **Process Goals**
  - Work in conjunction with performance goals
  - Focus on task-relevant strategies, actions and procedures
    - S&C program, # of daily free throws, nutrition



Outcome goals define where you are going, your destination. The focus of an outcome goal is typically the competitive result of an event; winning a gold medal, crossing the finish line first, beating your opponent on the scoreboard. All too often outcome goals are the first and only type of goals to which athletes and coaches are offered exposure. While outcome goals serve a purpose in goal setting, focusing solely on outcome goals can have negative effects on performance.

Performance goals, along with process goals, define the path that will lead to the destination (desired outcomes). Performance goals focus on improvements relative to past performance. An example would be increasing your points per possession or decreasing your turnovers. In general, performance goals are not dependent upon or negatively affected by other competitors. In fact, a good performance by an opponent may actually aid the attainment of performance goals.

Process goals focus on the task-relevant strategies, actions and procedures that must be executed for an athlete to have a good performance.

## Outcome Goals

**“Your definition of success should have more depth than the equivalent of winning a national championship. It should be whatever passion moves you deep in your heart.”**

**- Coach K**



Coach K and Coach Wooden are two of the winningest coaches in NCAA history. We will see a few quotes from each that warn against measuring success by the attainment of, or lack thereof, outcome goals.

Before we get further into discussing outcome goals, I want you to start thinking about how you define success and if you typically measure it based on achieving outcomes. If you do, I want to challenge you to keep an open mind about that and see if we can't change your paradigm about outcome goals by the end of this session.

# Outcome Goals

- **Characteristics of Outcome Goals**
  - Serve a purpose when used in conjunction with performance and process goals
  - Often the first and only goals novice coaches and athletes utilize
  - Used as the only type of goal, can have a negative effect on performance



They can serve a very useful purpose in goal setting, but it may not be in the manner that you think. We will talk about that a little later.

Research has shown that when outcome goals are the sole type of goal used, they can actually have a negative impact on performance. We will discuss that in a little more detail in a moment.

Let's take a closer look at outcome goals.

## Outcome Goals

- **Drawbacks of Outcome Goals**

- Not in complete control of athlete, team or coach
- Achievement dependent upon performance of opponents
- Not as flexible as process and performance goals
- Can lead to performance deficits in pressure situations



Remember, when we talk about outcome goals, we are typically talking about the result of a competitive event. In order to compete, you must have an opponent and that opponent is tasked with stopping you from achieving your peak performance. On any given day, you and your team could play the absolute best you are capable of playing and your opponent could play just that much better and win the game. If that happens, if you play to your ultimate potential and still lose on the scoreboard, is that truly a failure?

When we talk about outcome goals not being flexible, we are talking about the all or nothing aspect of winning and losing. When you are setting goals that are dependent upon the outcome of a competition, or a string of competitions, it is hard to reset those goals if they are not achieved. If a team has set an outcome goal of going undefeated and they lose their first game of the season, it may be discouraging enough that the team would judge the season as a failure before they even play a second game. Hopefully good coaching and a good goal setting program will keep a team from this experience but it is an example of what can happen when too much emphasis is placed on the outcome of a game.

Now, when we talk about performance deficits in pressure situations we are talking about the proverbial “choke”. This can happen by way of an athlete focusing on the negative aspects of not winning. For instance, an athlete that defines success as winning is on the free throw line with no time left on the clock. His team is down by one and he is shooting a one and one. In this case, by defining success only in terms of winning or losing, it is very easy for the athlete to allow negative thoughts to enter his mind prior to shooting the free throws. “If I miss this my teammates will blame me for losing the game. I will look like an idiot if I miss this. What will my friends think of me if I miss this?”

We will talk more about outcome goals a little later.



## Outcome Goals

- **Example Outcome Goal**

- Qualify for the national tournament by winning the Whitewater Regional.
- What could be some other sport related outcome goals?



Here is an example of an outcome goal. Most teams want to attend nationals and if you are a Junior Division team, one way to go about ensuring that you have a spot in the dance is to win a Regional Qualifier. As we proceed, we will discuss what performance and process goals you may want to consider to realize the outcome of winning a regional qualifying tournament.

## Outcome Goals

**“Success comes from knowing that you did your best to become the best that you are capable of becoming.”**

**- John Wooden**



We started the section on outcome goals with a quote from Coach K and I am ending it with one from Coach Wooden. Coach Wooden has often been quoted as saying that you would never be able to find a player that he coached that heard him talk about winning. He always stressed continual improvement, effort, and the desire to reach your potential, as an individual and as a team.

If you become the best that you are capable of becoming, realistic success will follow. When an entire team strives to reach their ultimate potential, the sum of the parts can be far greater than the whole and amazing things can be achieved.

With that said, I would like to challenge you to stop thinking about outcomes as goals but rather as the result of achieving performance and process goals. This will place the emphasis on performance and process goals.

Now the question is, “How can goal setting be used to become the best you can be?”

## Performance Goals

**“When our goal is to try to do our best, when our focus is on preparation and sacrifice and effort - instead of numbers on the scoreboard - we will never lose.”**

**- Coach K**



Back to Coach K. Now do not confuse the philosophy shared by Coach K and Coach Wooden with a lack of desire to win or a warm and fuzzy everything is OK as long as you try hard approach. They have 14 NCAA Championships between them, they produced results (outcomes). But they did so by focusing on performance and process goals that would put their team in the best position to achieve favorable results regardless of the competition.

A perfect example of this is the 2009-2010 Duke team. At the beginning of the season a national championship was not something most people thought were in the cards for Duke, however, they went about their business of daily improvement through process and performance goals with the end result a fourth NCAA title for Coach K!

## Performance Goals

- **Characteristics of Performance Goals**
  - Achievement controllable by coach and athlete
  - Opponent's performance can aid in the achievement of performance goals
  - More easily and precisely adjusted
  - Can be achieved during practice **and** competition



As we previously discussed, performance goals, along with process goals, define the path that will lead to your desired destination (outcomes). Additionally, performance goals focus on improvements relative to past performance. Because performance goals are measured against one's own past performance, they are more controllable by coach and athlete. This is not always the case however. A team may set a performance goal of limiting turnovers to under ten per game. Obviously, the opponent will have some impact on the achievement of this goal. **How might this goal be adjusted to make it more specific and controllable? Have a goals of less than 5 unforced turnovers!**

Unlike outcome goals, an opponent's performance can actually aid in the achievement of performance goals. In wheelchair basketball I think that we have all been both the victim and beneficiary of playing to our opponents talent level.

When we talk about adjusting goals an example would be a team free throw percentage. Once a reliable baseline is determined a performance goal can be set to improve that percentage by a certain date. If that goal is achieved early, it can be adjusted to achieve an even higher percentage. If it is not achieved by the date, process goals can be adjusted and a new date can be set. This is very different from that **all or nothing** aspect of outcomes as goals.

Finally, performance goals can be achieved during practice and competition.

## Performance Goals

- Example Team Performance Goals
  - Designed to achieve the outcome of winning a Regional Qualifying Tournament
  - Performance goals for each game
    - Make  $\geq 75\%$  free throws
    - Shoot  $\geq 50\%$  from floor
    - $\leq 6$  unforced turnovers
    - Hold opponent to  $\leq 40\%$  shooting
    - $\geq 10$  second chance points
    - $\geq +10$  rebounding
    - $\geq +10$  points bench scoring



Here are some example performance goals that if achieved would increase the likelihood of achieving the desired outcome – winning the tournament. As you can see, they are fairly specific and measureable. Now, how can process goals help us in achieving these performance goals?

What do you do if by the third game you are averaging 78% from the free-throw line as a team?

## Process Goals

**“It's the little details that are vital.  
Little things make big things  
happen.”**

**- John Wooden**



Once again a little wisdom from Coach Wooden. I often tell my teams if you take care of the little things, the big things will take care of themselves. In other words, focus on process and performance and winning will take care of itself.

# Process Goals

- **Characteristics of Process Goals**

- Stepping stones to achieving performance goals
- Where you plan the work and work the plan
- Help maintain an awareness of the technical and tactical aspects of the game
- Can aid in getting into the “Zone”
- Can increase self-efficacy and confidence while at the same time reducing cognitive anxiety



Process goals define the work that must be done in order to achieve your performance goals and will include both physical and mental aspects.

Setting your process goals may require the most planning and the most effort. Careful planning, tracking progress and adjustments are all part of successful process goal achievement.

If used properly, process goals can help an athlete and a team keep their head in the game by focusing on the technical and tactical aspects of the game. Examples would include passing to the outside hand and keep body between ball and defender to avoid turnovers, maintain spacing for picks to create movement, and always having a person at the point as a safety against transition.

When you have sufficient mastery of the technical and tactical aspects of the game, adherence to them becomes second nature and can aid in the process of getting into the zone.

When this is done, performance goals are achieved and exceeded and an athlete and team can experience an increase in self-efficacy and confidence while at the same time reducing cognitive anxiety. Cognitive anxiety is reduced as result of the athlete and team being in a read-and-react mode rather than consciously trying to process all the information available to them.

Note: Self-efficacy is defined as the belief that one is capable of performing in a certain manner to attain certain goals. Essentially the athlete is developing an internal locus of control.



## Process Goals

- Performance Goal: Make  $\geq 75\%$  free throws
- Process Goals to Achieve Performance Goal
  - Shoot 100 consecutive FTs/Day
    - Develops consistent form
  - Shoot 100 game like FTs/Day
    - Shoot in fatigued state
  - Chart results



## Putting it All Together

- **Goal Setting for Success**
  - Utilize Desired Outcomes, Performance and Process Goals as part of a complete goal setting program



As stated, a proper goal setting program involves desired outcomes, performance and process goals.

## Putting it All Together

- Know when to focus on each category of goals
  - Outcome Goals
    - Can be used as a short-term motivator away from competition
    - Should not be a focus during competition
    - Can be a measure of the success of performance and process goals



Outcome goals can be used as a short-term motivator **away** from competition. Visualizing winning a competition or reflecting on the emotions of losing a competition can provide motivation to maintain an off-season training program or to put forth that extra effort during practice.

Outcome goals, however, are only useful when created in combination with the stepping stone goals that are associated with performance and process goals. Remember, outcome goals are the destination, performance and process goals are the path to the destination.

## Putting it All Together

- Know when to focus on each category of goals
  - Performance Goals
    - Can be adjusted up or down based on performance
      - Change process goals accordingly
    - Used to achieve your ultimate potential
    - When properly set and achieved will lead to the achievement of outcome goals



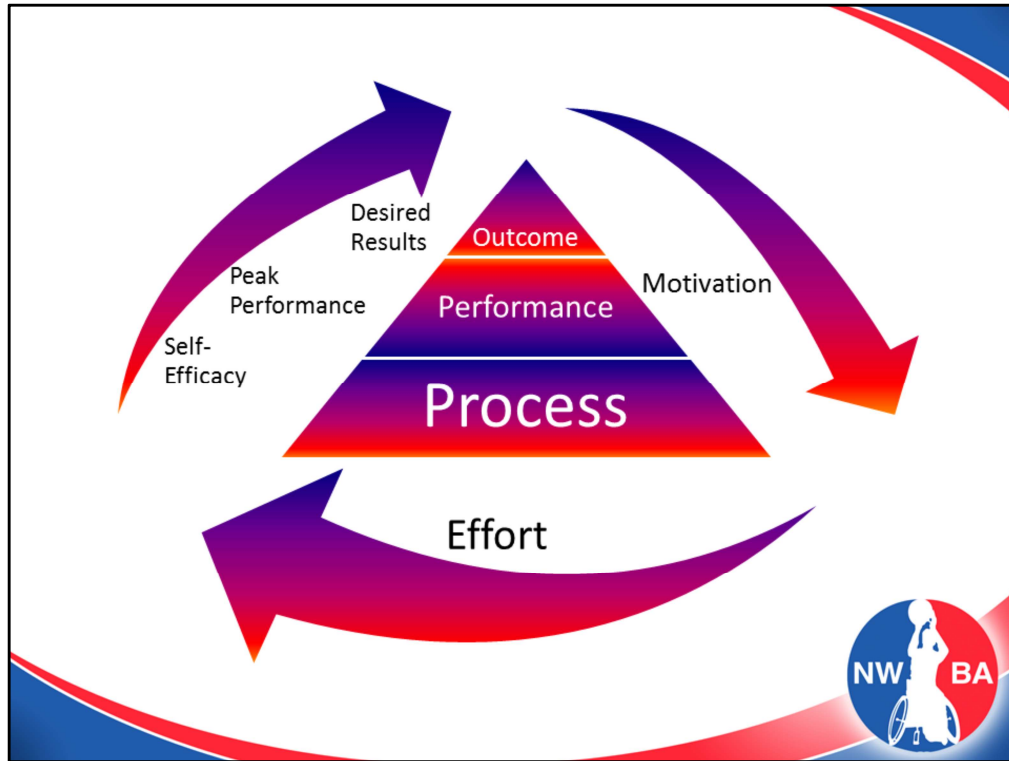
Performance goals can be used during practice and competition. Focus on performance goals can help athletes focus on task relevant cues and strategies that will lead to outcome success.

## Putting it All Together

- Know when to focus on each category of goals
  - Process Goals
    - Can be used to learn new skills, maintain focus and develop awareness
    - Set the daily plan to ultimately achieve performance and outcome goals
    - Provide daily motivation to stay on task



Process goals, like performance goals can be utilized during performance and competition. As they are the stepping stones to performance goals, more emphasis may be placed on process goals during training and practice.



Here you can see the interdependence of each category of goals. Process goals are the foundation of your goal setting program. They lead to your ability to attain your performance goals. When you achieve your process and performance goals, you are in position to achieve your desired results: your outcomes.

As part of this process, your desired outcomes help to create motivation that will increase your effort in the pursuit of your process goals. This in turn will develop a greater degree of self-efficacy that will lead to peak performance that will lead to the attainment of desired results thus continuing the cycle.

## Putting it All Together

- Put Outcome Goals in their proper place
  - Result of achieving well defined and planned process and performance goals
- Center your coaching philosophy and goal setting program on continual improvement through achievement of performance and process goals



## Putting it All Together

- Take pride in measures of success that are defined by continual improvement, performance enhancement, and reaching your ultimate potential
- Results in an atmosphere that is not only fun and positive, but one where success will be realized in the form of achieving outcome goals





# Summary

Goals should have SMARTS

Understand the three types of goals: Outcome, Performance and Process Goals

Understand when to focus on each category of goals

Understand goals provide a guide for decision making and motivation

