



# SPORTS

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## Taking criticism the right way



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Training Matters



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Summer, if you can believe it, is already almost half over! Most of us seem to function around a school calendar, and that means that we've soaked up half of the rays we will be before heading back to education and reality. Maybe you've traveled, maybe you've worked, and maybe you have played your weekends away.

Well, as the end of the summer nears, so do tryouts. Most sports and activities tend to pick back up after the summer break, and most training seasons will commence with tryouts. Which begs the question; are you ready for them?

As you know, tryouts can go one of two ways. They either result in making the team, being given a redshirt position, or you are told to come back and try again next season. Regardless of the outcome, feedback, critique and constructive criticism are going to be the common denominators for all sports, teams and positions. Professional or rookie, new sport or seasoned vet, everyone can benefit from a little pointer or two.

However, if you're not prepared to absorb the comments that will be made, you will either shut down at the thought of criticism, or you'll completely reject it under the assumption that you don't need anyone to tell you what to do or how you can improve. So in addition to preparing physically for the tryouts, getting your head in the right space to efficiently process criticism is also key for starting off your season with success.

Start off by taking in the feedback, whether it be positive, negative or just a neutral statement. Coaches and trainers usually provide feedback to be effective and helpful; they aren't just out to get you and put you down. Listen to what is being said and ask questions for clarification if you need to. By taking it all in, you can better process what it is they were trying to communicate.

If you shut down part-way through, you'll only be getting half the message. For example, if someone said "You're not the fastest out here" and you stopped listening before you heard "but you're twice as fast as you were last year," then you would not be understanding the full message. Stop, look and listen, simple as that.

Take the 24 hours after the feedback is given at a tryout to process it. Do not respond out of emotion right away. We may feel cheated, put down, let down or defeated, but give yourself the time. Often when we can back away, let our initial emotions cool down, then approach the feedback with a fresh look, we are able to more accurately determine what was being said, and how having that information is helpful to us.

As you process the feedback, look at the whole picture. What was the context, who was it from, and what was the message being delivered. When you've answered all of those questions, ask yourself how you can apply that feedback to make you a stronger athlete. Feedback is meant to help you in some way, shape or form. By allowing yourself to use it in the best way possible, you're making the best choice you can for your future self.

Finally, try not to take it all personally. It is sometimes hard, especially if it comes from someone you look up to and respect. However, if they didn't care, they wouldn't be putting the time and effort in to offering you the feedback. They hope they can help you to get better, and are providing you with pointers. That is all! They want to build a strong next generation in their sport, also, and are trying to do so by helping you grow. Take it as nourishment for your athletic career. Say thank you, process the information, and then apply it as best as you can. It is this formula that will set you up for success this season, and any tryout situation from here on.

