

## ***“Bouncing Back” for Athletic Success!***

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### ***Bouncing Back***

“Bouncing Back” is your ability to quickly and confidently let a bad play or failure immediately get out of your system by turning your attention to the only thing that is important – the next play. Unfortunately, far too many athletes allow a bad play or two completely take them out of their rhythm, and the result is the athlete ends up playing terribly the rest of the game! Has this ever happened to you? Have you ever watched your game go straight downhill only because you were still swearing at yourself from the last play? If so, read on....

### ***Why Bouncing Back works***

In order to play your best you must play with confidence, composure, and have an appropriate focus level at all times. This is easy to do when you are winning – but what happens when things don’t go so well?? Typically when an athlete begins to get upset with him- or herself, the internal anger and disgust leads to increased anxiety, which in turn leads to negative self talk and thoughts coupled with a tense, overly-tight body! Obviously this is not good if you want to reach your full athletic potential!

Athletes who learn how to quickly bounce back in a game or practice do not experience these reactions – instead, they are able to keep their focus on the next play and their minds and bodies in synchrony. The great thing about bouncing back is that it is 100% under your control – only YOU can decide to get your head back in the game and become excited about the next play, or stand out there on the field and pout about how terrible you are!

There is no reason in the world to get so mad you cannot focus, or become so upset that you can barely stay in the game. The ONLY way you will ever improve in sports (and life) is by quickly letting negative energy go and refocusing your attention to future improvement.

### ***How to Bounce Back***

- The first thing to remember is that you can bounce back at any time! There is nothing magical about bouncing back, and the moment you decide to get your head back in the game you will dramatically improve your chances for on-field success!
- Hold yourself accountable to yourself, your teammates, and your coaches. Getting mad and upset about the last play – especially if it costs you on the next play – is not doing anyone any favors.
- Many athletes use simple behavioral cues while playing to symbolize “letting go” of the last play. For example, you might pinch some grass and throw it to the wind, or gently slap your legs to symbolize you are leaving that last play behind.
- If you play in a sport where you can take a few seconds between plays to quickly regain your composure, do it! Examples include a basketball player between free throws, a baseball/softball pitcher between pitches, or a wrestler who goes out of bounds on his or her way back to the mat. During this quick break, take 1-2 deep breaths and say a word like “focus” to yourself to get back in the game!

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Dr. Chris Stankovich, known as “The Sports Doc” for his segment on Ohio News Network and featured column in Columbus Parent magazine, is a national expert in the field of sport psychology and offers an entire line of peak performance educational training products for student athletes, coaches, and parents. Please visit [www.drstankovich.com](http://www.drstankovich.com) to learn more.

