ELEMENTS OF EXCELLENCE FOR OLYMPIC ATHLETES

COMMITMENT: Excellence in sport was the top priority in their life and everything revolved around their training and competing.

QUALITY PRACTICE: Top Olympic athletes train with the highest degree of quality and prepare themselves on a daily basis for high quality practice.

GOAL SETTING: Goals were very clearly defined and applied on a consistent basis, e.g., daily goals for training, for competition and long term goals.

IMAGERY: Mental imagery was used on a daily basis for a variety of purposes. For example, preparation for training, skill improvement, corrections, imagining success, competition preparation, etc.

PRACTICE PLAN: They mentally prepared themselves for training, had preset individualized training goals and committed themselves to follow their plans.

PRE-TOURNAMENT PLAN (PRE-COMPETITION): They had very detailed and refined pre-competition plans or procedures which they executed on a consistent basis for example, for early preparation, warm-up, game preparation, reminders etc.

TOURNAMENT FOCUS PLAN (COMPETITIVE PLAN): They had discovered what focus works best for them, had a focus plan for implementing it in competition and practice and holding that focus in training. The best focus was viewed as one which allows an absolute connection to the task.

DISTRACTION CONTROL: Most of them had developed effective ways of dealing with distractions to get back on track quickly. The most consistent performers had the best refocusing skills. In most cases reminders were needed to stay on track or to refocus effectively. This was the element of excellence where the most work was needed.

TOURNAMENT EVALUATION: They had all developed effective procedures for competition evaluation and for drawing out important lessons especially those associated to the mental approach required for doing well. Failure is positive feedback... what were the lessons learned in this performance?