7 THINGS YOU SHOULD KNOW ABOUT SHRINKING JOCKS' HEADS

BY KEN RAVIZZA, PHD

AS TOLD TO DAN REILLY

1. I CAN'T CONFRONT THEM WITH THEIR FAILURES. "It's easier for athletes to fix physical issues. Usually, they won't even admit there's anything wrong with their heads. So I don't say, 'This is broken.' I take a proactive tack: 'This is what elite performers do.'"

2. I SEE CENTERED PEOPLE. "I take notes at games. From body language and routines, I can tell if a player is mentally right. I know what Evan Longoria usually does to regroup after a bad pitch. If I see him do it, I can say, 'He's okay. Next pitch.'"

3. COMFORT ZONES? OVERRATED. "Garnes Flow: or go smoothly, for guys only about 20% of the time. Anyway, peak performance isn't about being in the zone; it's about getting a job done with what you have. The phrase I use is 'Comfortable being uncomfortable.'"

4. HELP THEM HELP THEMSELVES. "Matt Garza tells me how much I helped him, but I just gave him and his pitching coach, Jim Hickey, the tools to work it out themselves. Matt did all the work. It's simple, really: If you're playing against the best, you're going to get beat. If you don't want to get beat, play 10-year-olds. And if you're done getting better, retire."

5. THE MIND MATTERS. "Most players are better at hitting a fastball than dealing with life. But they reached a high skill level at a young age, and in the pros, talent levels even out, which makes the mental game more important. Even if it's just 5%, it makes a big difference."

6. MY LIPS ARE SEALED. "One year, four softball teams I worked with were in the same tournament. It was a nightmare. But I clarify up front that what I do with one team I won't share with another. It's important not to be a fan. It's nice when clients play well, but really, I can't tell from a box score if their mental game has improved."

7. IN THE END, NOBODY'S PERFECT. "I don't claim to work wonders. I fail a lot. When I tell coaches that, they respect it. They can relate."

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