

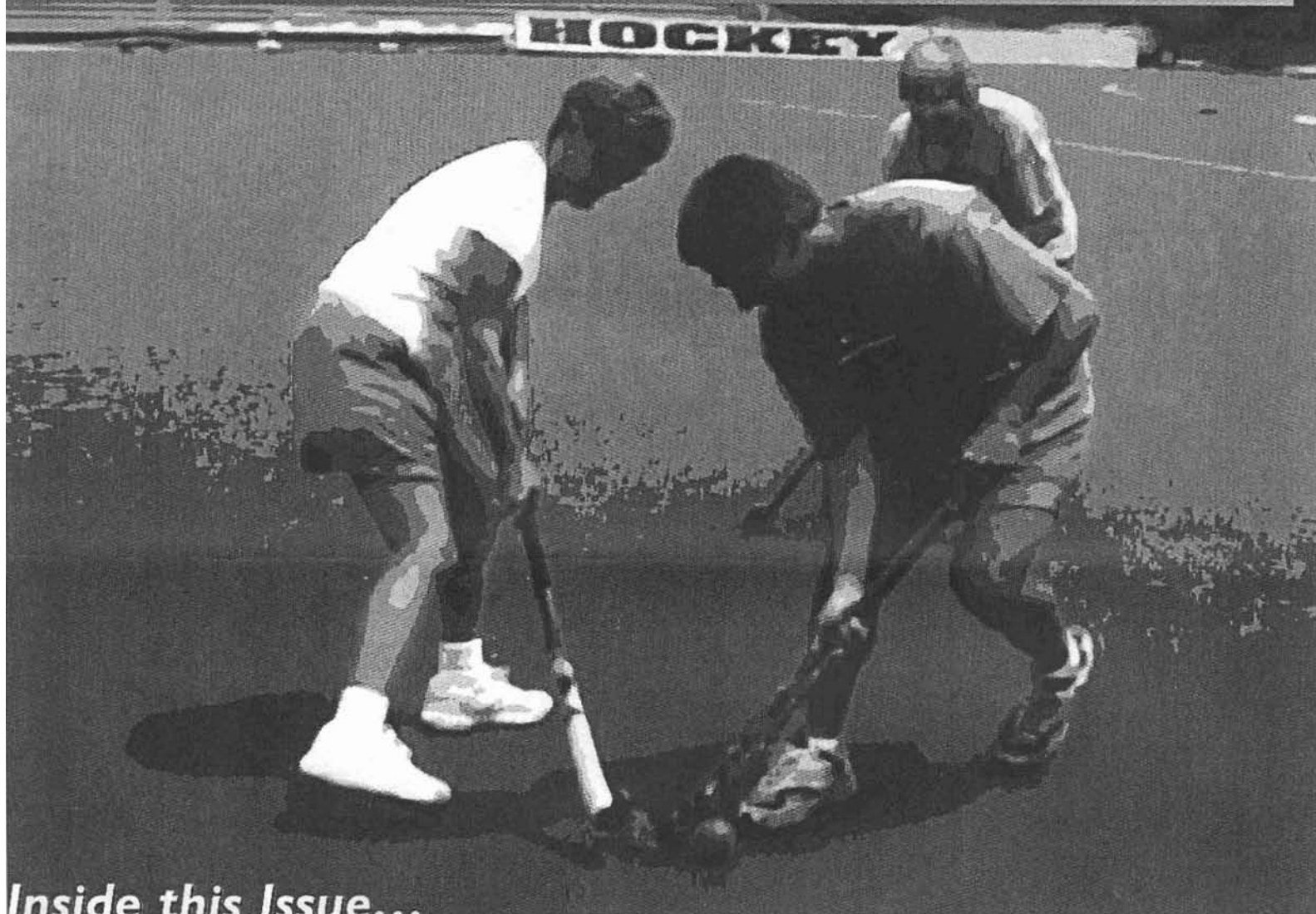


# NFHCA

NATIONAL FIELD HOCKEY COACHES ASSOCIATION

NEWSLETTER

SUMMER 2003



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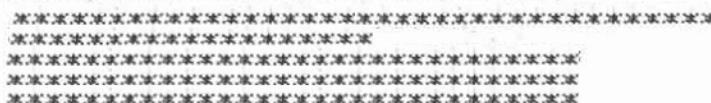
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# Gaining the Mental Edge:

## Tips on Enhancing Self-Confidence

By Keith Waldman, MSW, MA

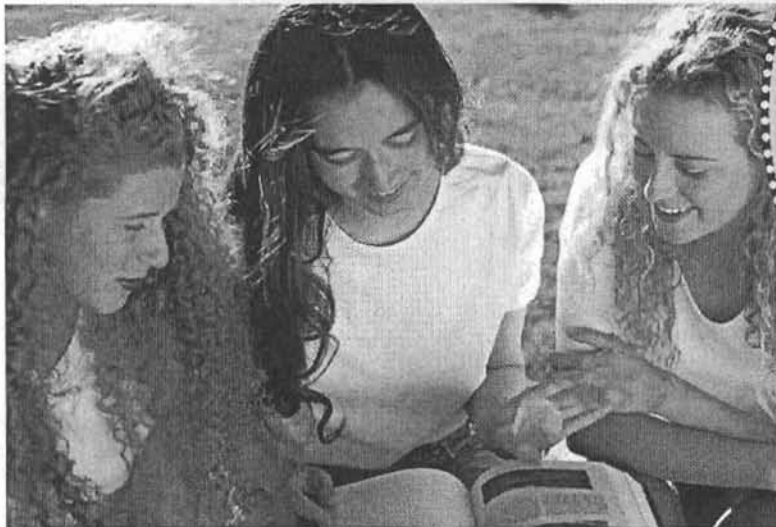
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ne of the keys to becoming a mentally tough field hockey player is to play the game with a high level of confidence. During my years of working with high school and collegiate field hockey programs I have found that the players who believe in themselves and in each other are usually the most successful. The goal of this article is to give you tips on how to enhance confidence.

Playing field hockey with confidence is a choice that you control. The key to confidence is to learn to discipline your mind to focus on the reasons why you can and should be successful. A confident player has strong positive thoughts and images running through her head. The confident player can see herself playing well and making great plays. Confident players also look calm and in control. They exude confidence by standing tall with positive facial expressions. When you play with confidence you are playing "free" - free of fear, tension, worry, doubt, and stress. The first step towards playing with confidence is to take responsibility for your mental game. Here are some steps you can take to build your self-confidence or the confidence of your players:

### 1. Focus on Strengths

Confident athletes focus on their physical and mental strengths. Take an inventory of your strengths! Do not dwell on your weaknesses but focus on how to improve your weaknesses until you can turn them into strengths. Focusing on your strengths should be part of your everyday routine.



### Coaches Drill: Circle of Confidence

**Directions:** Have your players sit in a circle. Give each of your players a sheet of paper or a large index card. Each player writes her name on the paper and under her name she writes down the word "strengths". Each player's paper is passed around the circle so each player receives strength from her teammate. When your team completes the list, have each player verbalize at least 5-6 strengths using "I am statements".

## 2. Focus on Past Successes

Reflecting on your past successes will build your confidence. During your pre-game routines, reflect on the times when you played AWESOME! Give yourself a steady diet of positive thoughts & images. Many great athletes frequently visualize themselves making great plays and playing with confidence.

## 3. Preparation...Preparation...Preparation (mental & physical)



Preparation is one of the most powerful means of gaining confidence. Preparation is the key to the door of confidence. The more prepared you are mentally & physically the more confident you will feel. Many games are won or lost because of mental and physical preparation (or a lack of preparation).

## 4. Praise

The confident player receives praise from others and from self. This is a great source that will build your confidence. Positive self-talk is a key to becoming confident as an athlete and in life outside of sport. Sometimes you have to think you are the greatest even when you don't feel the greatest. Remember feelings & thoughts are different. You do not always control feelings but with practice you can control your thoughts. Your body will respond to the positive thoughts not the negative feelings. "Whether you think you can or think you can't – you're right!" Some of the most successful athletes in history are positive self-talkers especially during times of adversity (Muhammad Ali).

## 5. Make a commitment to learning

Mental champions commit themselves to learn from mistakes and losses rather than dwelling on them. Do not let your mistakes weigh you down. Constructively learning lessons from failure helps build it into future successes. What have you learned from your mistakes and how will you overcome them next time? Try smarter not harder! Discipline your mind to Learn, Let Go, & Move On.

## 6. Focus on the Controllables

Do not waste time focusing on things outside of your control. Field hockey is a sport where you do not absolutely control wins and losses. Most of you probably can remember a game that you played or coached where you totally outplayed a team and still lost. Focusing on the uncontrollables, such as referees, weather, fans, attitudes of your opponents, or whether you are playing on turf or grass will make your confidence spiral out of control. Remember you can choose how you are going to respond to any situation. The confident player takes responsibility for her thinking and she chooses effective, helpful thoughts in all situations rather than simply letting what goes on around her determine her thoughts.

*Keith Waldman is a partner with Optimal Performance Associates, LLC. Optimal Performance Associates is a private consulting company that provides innovative workshops and seminars for universities, athletic teams, schools, and corporations. Keith received a Masters in Social Work from the University of Michigan and a Masters Degree in Sport Psychology from Temple University. Keith Waldman has facilitated numerous team building and winning the mental game workshops for a variety of organizations, including collegiate & high school field hockey programs. To receive more information about workshops and seminars for your team or camp you can reach Keith Waldman at (888) 868-3380 or by email [Kperform@aol.com](mailto:Kperform@aol.com) or you can access the OPA website at the following address: [www.opawinningteams.com](http://www.opawinningteams.com).*

Plays well  
with others.....  
just tends to control the ball.  
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