

THE IMPORTANCE OF MENTAL TOUGHNESS IN THE GAME OF BADMINTON

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ABSTRACT:-

Many Badminton players are good in the physical aspect but not tough enough **mentally**. A badminton player can have all the fitness, power, agility and skills but without the presence of mental toughness, he or she can be affected mentally anytime, anywhere.

Marathon runners are good examples. Normally most of the marathon runners reach their stamina limits in the last 12 KM over 42 KM. But their strong mental ability allows them to keep running at the same pace to finish the race. Some runners even increase their speed to finish the race although they are already exhausted.

Marathon runners call this method '**hitting the wall**', meaning pushing to the limit. Even the legendary Tan Yee Khan of Malaysia uses the method of 'hitting the wall'. This method should be applied by badminton players who aspire to go one step further in the game. Whether it is during the game or training, players should keep focusing and pushing their body to the limit.

A match could take a rather long time to end. A good badminton player or in other words an 'established badminton player' will not go down without a fight and should be able to keep their pace and the accuracy of their shots until the very last point in the game no matter how long they have played. This is where **mental toughness** plays a big role.

You can be a very skillful player and fit player but if you meet an opponent who has a much higher level of stamina and fighting spirits, you will very likely lose the match if without the ability to push yourself when you are exhausted. There are plenty of instances whereby players

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are not strong enough mentally and emotionally, lost focus because of tiredness and gave up easily in the game.

Sometimes you can be leading far ahead in the game like reaching game points or match points and you are already thinking about victory. This should not be a habit of a badminton player because you might lose the game if you meet a player with great fighting spirits. You maybe be leading 14-0 or 19-10 but no matter how far you lead, you still have to stay focus until the game is over.

A good case in point would be the game that featured Hafiz Hashim and Lee Hyun Il in the quarter finals of the 2006 DOHA Asian Games. Hafiz was leading 19-10 at one stage in the first set, but could not stay focus and lost the set 22-20 in the end. He could not recover from this set back in the second set and lost the tie. Lee Hyun Il showed his **mental toughness and fighting spirits** in this instance.

A good player should always possess the '**never say die**' attitude even if their opponents are leading by a huge margin just as Lee Hyun Il has shown in the Asian Games. Another good case in point would be the game in between Lee Chong Wei and Lin Dan during the Malaysia Open 2006.

Lin Dan was already leading 20-13 in the rubber game and this was a really difficult situation for Lee Chong Wei because one mistake is enough to cost him the match. But he handled the pressure well and showed a greater desire to win, slowly clawing back in to the game. Finally, he won that game 22-20 and surprised the whole world.

Mental toughness can also give you an edge like **focusing on the match** no matter what is happening around, keeping you calm and cool in the court. Having mental toughness is having a high EQ (emotional intelligence). Many incidents, good or bad, can happen during a match outside or inside the court. For example, players can be psychologically affected by bad line calls, umpires decisions or insulted by the audience.

There were cases of top players which were emotionally affected such as the case in one of the game which featured Taufik Hidayat in an Indonesian local tournament. He was insulted by an audience that directed harsh words at him. Taufik then runs up to the audience chair and confronted him.

During Thomas cup 2002 Finals in Guangzhou and 2002 Busan Asian Games he fell prey again to his emotionally vulnerability caused by the umpire's decisions and bad line calls which led him to lose the game. In the 2006 HK open, he walked out of a semifinal game against Lin Dan because of a bad line call. No doubt he is a very good player, but if he could just control his emotions a bit better, he can be one of the all-time greats.

In many cases, players without much exposure are easily intimidated by the situation on hand and were not able to play their usual game. Mental toughness is needed to overcome all the fear with a 'nothing to lose', 'give everything you got' mentality. When fear is overcome, the confidence will be there to win the game. You need to keep **thinking positively** in the game, no matter what happens.

Badminton players should be equally strong, physically and mentally. Mental toughness will determine your success as a **badminton player** and will help you attain consistent achievements.