

# **THINK AND ACT LIKE A CHAMPION**

**A Manual for Sporting Excellence**

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**An e-book**

**Sports Science Associates**

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## **DEDICATED**

**To**

**Forbes Carlile, M.B.E., M.Sc.**

A truly valued friend, inspirational colleague, Hall-of-Fame coach, and philanthropist.

This book is dedicated to Forbes Carlile in his 50th year of coaching elite swimming. For half a century, Forbes has used a scientific approach to understanding, innovating, and analyzing swimming performances with one outstanding result--the development of champions. Few coaches in any sport can match a career as long or as productive as that of Forbes Carlile. For 50 years he has been involved closely in coaching top world athletes. His vast achievements were recognized when he was named the first Swimming Hall-of-Fame Coach from Australia.

Not only did Forbes coach champions and world-record holders, but he championed new techniques for coaching. His passion for new knowledge, innovative training programs, and organizational structures to benefit athletes, has persistently made, first Palm Beach, then Ryde, and more lately the Carlile Club, the most consistent group of achievers in Australian sport. Rarely, if ever, does a year pass where a Forbes Carlile club does not finish highly in state and national championships. The tenure of that consistency is unparalleled.

Forbes Carlile has always placed great faith in true science. He has remained faithful to the need to see objective verification of postulations and to view data. His powers of analytical reasoning, have meant that he chose correct paths of innovation to lead the world of swimming. Most of his teachings of yesteryear are being re-discovered. In sport science and coaching, he has always been ahead of his time.

Forbes has served as a wonderful role model for many coaches. There are a great number of coaches in Australia who at one time or another were his assistants and taught in the Carlile Organization. His influence as a teacher of swimming coaches is yet another striking contribution he has made to the sport.

Forbes Carlile is an outstanding person. He has given unselfishly to promote the "*greater*" values of swimming, has invested his resources to provide a better experience for swimmers and coaches. Those qualities have made an immeasurable impact on the sport in Australia.

The friendship that I have enjoyed with Forbes for more than 35 years has been worthy of any superlative that can be expressed. True, loyal, and caring friends have greater value than any worldly possession. With Forbes Carlile as my friend, I am truly wealthy. I look forward to the continuation of this delightful and rewarding association. It is with great pride that I dedicate this book with the title Think and act like a champion to Forbes Carlile, maker of champions and champion among men.

## PREFACE

This book is the result of unusual research. Rather than design a scientific study and control variables, it is borne out of the many fortuitous associations with world class athletes and coaches that I have enjoyed since the late 1950s. More than 35 years of coaching, analyzing, and consulting with high level sporting teams, has provided me with opportunities that few scientists are fortunate enough to enjoy. Being able to analyze and measure world-champions and world-record holders has been one of most pleasant outcomes of my professional life. To study the world's best is to rejoice with some of humankind's greatest achievers. Those associations were and still are incredibly positive experiences. To this day, I am forever grateful for the opportunities and associations that I have enjoyed with the super-achievers of the sporting world.

The research that is translated into dialogue for athletes and coaches in this text is still on-going. Its results have stabilized. As more champions are analyzed and interviewed, very few new insights into the basic important ingredients that are necessary to become a champion have emerged. Because of that stability, it is contended that the information in this text is reliable. If another 150 champions, other than those included in the sample from which the research is derived, were to be analyzed the results very likely would be the same as those discussed in the following chapters.

The basic thesis of this text is: there is a group of overt and covert behaviors that are common to sporting champions irrespective of sex, nationality, or activity. We now know how champions think and behave in the social aspects of the sport setting, at training, prior to and in competitions; what experiences are rewarding to them; and how sport is considered relative to other activities. Those features are described in this book.

Because they are universal qualities, it is contended that if these common champion-features are copied or modeled, any athlete should be able to exploit his/her own potential to its fullest. It should be noted this does not mean everyone will become a champion. It means every athlete can achieve a "*sporting high*" by producing a competitive performance that absolutely is the best that could be achieved. When that is experienced, the competition results are secondary to the sensation of overwhelming intrinsic reinforcement. It is an experience that makes sport a very satisfying pastime. Regretfully, not enough athletes are fortunate enough to achieve that level of self-fulfillment and pride in accomplishment. Perhaps the content of this text will lead more people to that level of satisfaction.

By thinking and acting the way that is described in this book, an athlete should become the best that he/she could be.

The behaviors and thoughts that are discussed are the foundational elements for achieving sporting excellence. These are not the only behaviors and thoughts that athletes need have for success. They are necessary for success. Each athlete should add individual characteristics and hopefully strengths to this basic set of characteristics. As long as individual behaviors do not inhibit the characteristics of a champion, they should be considered and analyzed for their benefits for performance. Individual features will not be discussed here.

This book summarizes what a coach should teach and expect of athletes and what athletes should expect of themselves. If its contents are implemented, it will probably require some compromises on behalf of the coach and athletes.

The book's presentation structure is deliberate. Each champion characteristic is expressed as an instruction to an athlete and enclosed in a box. Then the characteristic is explained in terms of

information gleaned from interviews with champions and, on a few occasions, research studies. The final segment is an "*athlete implication*" which contains instructions about implementing the important message contained in the characteristic. This athlete-orientation should emphasize that it is the athlete who is responsible for developing these characteristics.

Throughout the text there is repeated reference to the manual *Mental Skills Training for Sports* (Rushall, 1992). It contains athlete-oriented exercises that will develop most of the characteristics of champions. If a reader wants to change to be more like a champion, the exercises in that manual need to be followed. They could constitute "*homework*" for serious athletes and form the basis of a mental skills training program.

Most authors wish that their books have great impact on readers and make a "*difference*" in the world. I am no different. If the wisdom contained in this text's contents, and that wisdom comes from world champions, not from me, could be followed by more athletes, then a change will result. There will be more athletes performing better and deriving greater satisfaction from their sporting experiences.

I hope you enjoy reading this book, that you follow its implications, and that you improve in your sporting achievements.

You cannot go wrong if you "*think and act like a champion*".

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