

Course Notes for:
Tourney Fu – Thinking Like a Winner
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Sword Knight Boot Camp 2003 - 2006

We handed out the sheets and took the self evaluation from www.jeffjanssen.com.

We got a show of hands on results and then I showed a stripped version of the following:

95 to 100	A Mental Champion. You know how to win the Mental Game.
85 to 94	On the verge of becoming a Mental Champion.
75 to 84	Improving your Mental Game will help take you to a Championship level.
65 to 74	Improving your Mental Game will significantly help your game.
64 and less	You need to work on your mental game.

Report that instructors averaged 79 with the least physically gifted even higher. I got an 88.

It is all about Self-confidence. I will keep coming back to that.

The magic acronym is SPARK.

Set Goals

Practice and Prepare

Always stay positive

Relax and enjoy yourself

Key visualization techniques

Set Goals

Goal setting also gives you a realistic basis for and level of Self-confidence. It is the achievement of goals that build confidence most readily. Thus the process should be to set a goal, achieve it and then set another higher one. Goals should be Tangible, measurable, and readily attainable. Large goals like 'Becoming a Warlord' are not readily attainable. Break them up. Goals like 'Get better' are very hard to measure. There are three types of fighting goals I see in Amtgard:

1. Tourney Goals – Beware of these becoming unattainable. Goals like placement in some events or winning some number of fights are better than winning a tournament unless you are already pretty good. Tourney goals are still important.

2. Practice goals - Practice goals are things like I will spar for four hours a week on top of fighter practice and game day. Practice goals serve in two ways since they build confidence and they build skills. Practice goals are also great because they are always attainable. Whether you practice as much as you committed to or not is always your choice. Fitness goals fit in here too..
3. Related but non-tourney goals – Other things that help you feel better about your fighting and make you better without directly improving your chance in a tourney. Dalos and Arthon have a contest to invent new spin shots. By definition the Dalos Double spin will get you killed in a tourney but if he makes it work on Arthon he feels better about his fighting skills. Fighting with disadvantages in practice (like short or heavy weapons) also falls into this category.

Practice and Prepare

I break Practice and prepare into four sub headings.

1. Physical practice – Any exercise and conditioning is good. Things like drills, dynnabe, racquetball and the like are better. Sparring is the best physical practice for Amtgard. As already mentioned it builds confidence and skill set at same time. It also builds instincts to keep you from having to think while fighting in tournament. There is not time for such a distraction. Physical Practice is also the time to analyze your skill sets and improve them. Don't spend time in tourneys thinking about where you went wrong. Do that in practice.
2. Proper planning - Planning can eliminate distractions, which may hurt you in tourney. Make sure you have your own good equipment for the tournament. Looking for stuff to borrow and using stuff you are not comfortable with is an avoidable distraction. Avoid it. Have water on hand and get anything else that you might want to make a store trip for. Trips in the middle of a tournament are also distractions that can be avoided. Other Amtgard tasks like taking or giving reeves tests or judging quals should be avoided if you want be your best in the tournament.
3. Mental Preparation - Spar before the tourney. Use best combo and do it to limber and get confident. You will not do anything significant to help an area where you need practice in a few minutes on tourney day. Take your best combo and just mow to make yourself believe.
4. Have a specific plan for bad things that may happen in the tournament. Having a plan allows you to shake it off. Bad things happen to all of us. Deal with it quickly and get on with the business of winning. Examples of bad things are sluffers, bad draws, losses that should have been avoided, bad reeves, etc. Think about how you have dealt with it successfully in the past and seek to duplicate.

Always think positive

"I have lost tourneys I was sure I was gonna win but I never won one I thought I was gonna loose."

- Michael

1. Use specific positive phrases like: "I can beat this guy", "I am on fire", "Take it one fight at a time". From professional Sports the Colorado Avalanche won the 2001 Stanley Cup. Their playoff slogan was 'Mission 16W' not 'Mission Stanley Cup'. (The class then had to come up with two personal attributes that could help them win tournaments. Positive personal attributes.)
2. Never use negative phrases like: "I am so dead.", "I hate fighting Thor. He always kicks my ass.", "I can't believe I am loosing.", "I always suck in tourneys." "The reeves are out to get me."
3. Avoid overconfidence. It hurts later confidence. Being positive always is good being wildly unrealistic is not. In addition to hurting confidence it can make you stupid. Like a Warlord choosing to 'play with an opponent' who then gets a lucky shot.
4. Psyching out the opponent – Part of your mental outlook depends on how confident your opponent appears and vice versa. Remember he is probably equally nervous. There are some old many tricks you can use. If any of these challenge your personal code of honor don't do them. Still understanding them is important because your opponent might want to use them. First start the fight with a firm handshake. It is a great show of confidence and since it shows respect for your opponent it might reduce the chance of him sluffing you in return. Dressing and acting serious will make it more likely that you will be taken as such. Avoid jester's caps. Taking the field at the highest point and with your back to the sun can give you advantages. You gain a psychological advantage by increasing your perceived height as well as putting the sun in your opponent's eyes to start off with. If you feel this is questionable honor-wise, then line up side to the sun to make sure your opponent can't do it to you. It is also important to look guys in the eye. It exudes confidence and it might scare your opponent. They might betray actions with looks. You won't betray actions with looks as long as you are looking them in the eye.

Relax and enjoy yourself

I break relax and enjoy yourself into two parts.

1. Learn to Relax – This happens beforehand. Deep breathing exercises, hot tubs, and massages physically relax the body and also bring mental peace. Sir Rook of the CK was a HS footballer in Texas where it is serious business. He did all many of these relaxation things there and they carried right over to Amtgard. Superstitions and pre-competition rituals (like the lucky t-shirt, always wearing black, or whatever) are very common in sports because they help you get back to a previous successful state. If you have a successful tourney copy small details the next time. This kind of thinking builds focus.

2. Enjoy your self – This happens during the tourney. Find something you love about tourneys and emphasize that element in your own mind and look forward to it at each tourney. In general, warlords love tourneys. Everyone warlord I talked to love fighting and most loved tourneys. Lief is one of the few who does not. He keeps himself positive in tourney by mixing in a lot of side fights, which he does love. Use other tricks to pump yourself up. Cedric feels like he needs to be his absolute best in Florentine. He usually does a little ballet spin and dance before fighting that style because it ensures he is having fun. (The Class came up with examples of things they loved in tourney. Keep those in mind)

Key Visualization Techniques

1. Visualize Success – Use specific visualizations of past successes. If you beat a Wolfram in practice with a wrap-shot over his madu take a moment before a fight with him to visualize yourself doing it again. You might want to use a different move this time but the specific visualization will build your confidence for any move. These visualizations should be short term just like your goals. Picturing yourself beating your next opponent works much better than picturing yourself as the tourney winner.
2. Visualize overcoming challenges – The specific bad things that can happen and which you mad plans to cope with can also benefit from visualization. If your recovery plan for a first round loss is to come back in the finals and beat the guy twice, then you should visualize that.