

A Matter of Principle

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The following are some principles the sports scientists don't always mention (or know about)...

The principle of keeping it simple. This principle states that if it can be done, it can be done more simply. Simplicity is not the end-goal but rather a means to an end. Remember: for every detail-oriented, ANALytical athlete sitting at a computer staring at software and endless files and graphs, there is an athlete outside laying the foundation to greatness, learning in the lab. As it stands now at the zenith of our sport, few athletes use heart rate monitors or power meters! (Macca: no. Chrissie: no. Mirinda: no. Et cetera). If it works for them, it can work for you, assuming you do the work.)

The principle of keeping it fun. Competitive sport is only a job for a select few. And even those few need to understand that all sport is a game, not unlike life itself. You can be serious but don't go ruining mine or other people's fun!

The principle of variety. This is essentially a corollary of the above. Spice things up! For the athlete this is especially vital (as in life giving), since we tend to adapt and plateau to previous workloads somewhat rapidly. Vary the load and vary the mode.

The principle of ignoring your critics, even if at times your biggest critic is you. Focus on positive progression, not solely upon where you've gone wrong or where you suck. Ignore those who tell you it cannot be done or kick their ass, as the principle below states. Winners know better than losers, period.

This fits in with the above principle: **The principle of ignoring those who, in theory, know better.** (You know yourself better than anyone else, or at least you should. If you don't, well then, this is your biggest lesson in sport and in life. Get going, time is short and the lesson never ends.)

The principle of kicking ass. This principle states that you must do your best to kick your own ass when required, so that you may kick the asses of others when the appropriate time is reached: race day. **Don't leave it all on the training table;** leave it all on the line...the finish line. We train to compete, to fight, and ultimately to win (however that may be defined).

The principle of limiting your losses. This principle states that if nothing is going your way, you should know when to say when. In life and in sport, you're going to incur some losses and some setbacks. Learn to deal with them or when to cut them short. I've known many athletes to train themselves straight into the same old injuries, rather than limit their losses by cutting the workout short or altering it altogether. Don't be one of these types. (This leads us to the next principle.)

The principle of learning to read your body. Your body is not made up of numbers or thresholds or "systems," but yet numerical data may offer you a better understanding of what goes on inside you. (I'm not sure it does.) Still, the best athlete's in the world all know what's going on within themselves, even when batteries fail or the extraneous technology craps out on them. Use your head to read the rest of you. If your head needs work, uses someone else's to help guide yours, as the next principle states.

The principle of creating a network. Surround yourself with losers and you are bound to appear a winner. Surround yourself with winners and you are bound to win. Go with the victory and not the appearance façade. Create a team that believes in you as much as you do them. There may be no 'I' in 'team,' but there is a 'me.' Surround yourself with good me's.

The principle of open-mindedness. Don't disbelieve everything you see or read or hear. Try it first, then you can decide whether to dismiss it. Belief is a powerful tool, especially when you've witnessed proof of what you believe in. And even if you have not, the placebo effect can be very, very real.

Are there any principles I've missed?