

Sports Authorities

Success is often part skill and part attitude adjustment. We asked three leading performance coaches to reveal their winning formulas. BY CHRIS TUCKER



Alex Rodriguez is a man with a plan, thanks in part to Jim Fannin (right), his personal performance coach.

When he hits the field for the New York Yankees, Alex Rodriguez has plenty of weapons: strength, speed, lightning-fast reflexes, and an intense desire to win.

That's what you would expect to find in A-Rod, whose 48 home runs and .321 batting average last year made him the American League's Most Valuable Player for the second time.

But in addition to those well-known and clearly observable traits, A-Rod has a secret weapon: Before every game of his big-league career — more than 1,500 games — the Yankees star has received a message, phone call, or personal visit from Jim Fannin, performance coach to top athletes and corporate executives. A-Rod calls him “an all-night supermarket of encouragement.”

Wouldn't it be great to have someone like Fannin in your corner? Imagine, before you head into that big presentation, sales call, board meeting, or corporate golf tournament, your own personal performance coach shows up with confidence-boosting, stress-reducing advice.

We can't give you A-Rod's bat speed — or, alas, his league-leading \$25 million-plus salary. But to sharpen your mental edge and kick your competitive mindset to the next level, we present this sampler of advice from Fannin and other leading performance coaches.



STAYING IN THE ZONE

YOUR COACH: Jim Fannin, aka the Zone Coach (www.zonecoach.com), and author of *S.C.O.R.E For Life: The Secret Formula for Thinking Like a Champion* (Harper Collins). Base: Chicago.

GURU TO: A-Rod, PGA golfer Luke Donald, NBA star Grant Hill. Fannin has also worked with employees of Honda, IBM, and Merrill Lynch. >

You, too, can live the life of a champion — if you're willing to pay the price. "If you want abnormal goals, you must think in abnormal ways," says performance coach Jim Fannin.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY: Fannin teaches how to achieve and maintain a winning balance through his S.C.O.R.E. Performance System. That's Self-Discipline, Concentration, Optimism, Relaxation, and Enjoyment. Too little or too much of any element can throw you off your game.

THE PROMISE: We've all experienced "The Zone," those magic moments where we can do no wrong. Fannin says The Zone isn't a gift from the gods or a serendipitous alignment of brain cells; it's a state we can will to happen and summon when we want.

BUT HOW?: Stop thinking so much. Fannin's research revealed that the average person thinks between 2,000 and 3,000 thoughts a day, of which about 60 percent are nothing but "mental chaos." By contrast, true champions have only 1,100 to 1,300 thoughts a day,

most of them focused on carrying out plans and achieving goals. "Fewer thoughts produce more results," Fannin says.

QUOTE FROM THE COACH: "I've never had a day I haven't had before." That's because Fannin visualizes each part of his day in advance, down to the content of phone calls and what he'll eat for lunch. "Champions win first, then enter the arena," he says.

PAYOFF PITCH: You, too, can live the life of a champion — if you're willing to pay the price. "If you want abnormal goals, you must think in abnormal ways," says Fannin.

ARE YOU GAME?: Fannin charges from \$30,000 to \$150,000

annually for individuals and corporations. He offers keynote speeches for \$15,000.

MASTERING PRESSURE

YOUR COACH: Marc Sagal, sport psychology consultant, former pro soccer player, and managing partner of Winning Mind, LLC (www.thewinningmind.com). Base: San Diego.

GURU TO: New York Rangers, Pittsburgh Pirates, Army Special Forces officers, and Liverpool FC.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY: Sagal and his Winning Mind partners see strong parallels between the worlds of sports, business, and the military. Each arena makes different demands, but mental toughness — the ability to do your best

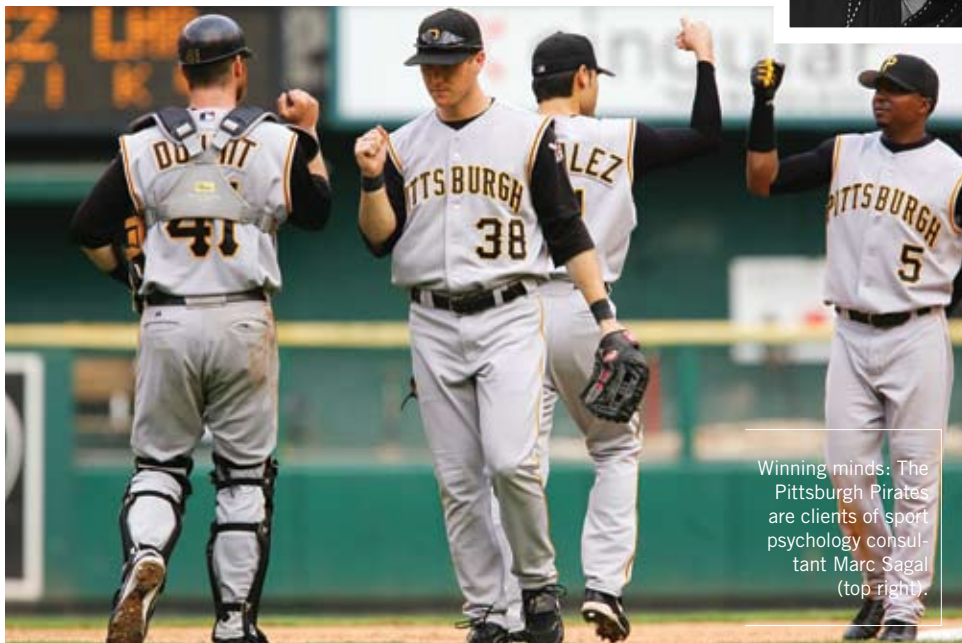
under pressure — is the universal key to success.

THE PROMISE: You can become a more confident, more effective performer by learning to manage pressure productively.

BUT HOW?: Winning Mind clients start with the Attentional and Personal Style (TAIS) Inventory, a questionnaire that gauges mental strengths and weaknesses. The goal: to find out whether your "attentional makeup" fits the performance arena you inhabit. If it doesn't, you've got a square peg-round hole



Winning minds: The Pittsburgh Pirates are clients of sport psychology consultant Marc Sagal (top right).



problem. Either you or the arena must change, or you'll be one unhappy chap.

QUOTE FROM THE COACH: "Michael Jordan had a lot of failures. He made a lot of mistakes. But

he had the ability to recover. Champions are about overcoming adversity, not just having some kind of magic."

PAYOFF PITCH: Just like athletes, we can train ourselves to handle stress, whether it comes from public speaking or motivating difficult employees. "We need a certain amount of pressure to push us outside the comfort zone," Sagal says. "Getting comfortable with some discomfort is one of the keys to gaining confidence."

ARE YOU GAME?: For individuals, Winning Mind's executive coaching service typically runs \$900 per month. Prices are slightly lower for amateur athletes. Group programs start at about \$9,500 for the first eight people and \$700 for each additional person.

GETTING THE ENERGY EDGE

YOUR COACH: Jim Loehr, psychologist and co-founder, chairman, and CEO of the Human Performance Institute. Co-author of *The Making of a Corporate Athlete* and *The Power of Full Engagement* (www.energyforperformance.com). Base: Orlando, Florida.

GURU TO: Golfers Michelle Wie and Mark O'Meara, tennis stars Jim Courier and Monica Seles, Olympic speed skater Dan Jansen.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY: The time-management cult has it all wrong. "Managing energy, not time, is the key to full engagement and maximum productivity," says Loehr.

THE PROMISE: "Full engagement" is not just a worthy personal goal, but a boon for society as well. "One

of the biggest problems in corporate America today is the disengagement of workers," he says. "People are stretched thin and the pressure to do more with less is intense. When we're exhausted, we often progressively disengage from our jobs, our families, everything."

BUT HOW?: It sounds like corporate heresy, but — attention, managers — we've got to rest more often, balancing energy expenditure with energy recovery. "Unfortunately, in business people are often measured by how relentlessly they push themselves," Loehr notes. "Taking time to rest and recover is viewed as a sign of weakness."

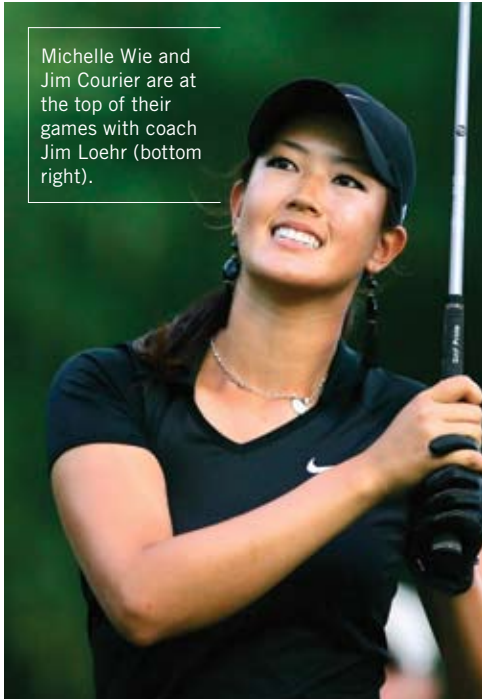
In addition, we should develop rituals — actions, words, or thoughts that help us stay fully engaged even under intense pressure. You've noticed the batter who always taps the plate, adjusts his batting glove, and tugs at his cap? As he goes through those motions, he's probably repeating something like "Focus. Balance weight. Hit solid." Before an important meeting or a challenging day perfecting your game, your own private ritual could help.

QUOTE FROM THE COACH: "Executives and managers face demands each day that often vastly exceed those of any athlete we have ever trained. Athletes typically train 90 percent of the time in order to perform 10 percent of the time. In the corporate world, most people spend almost no time training and yet they are expected to perform on demand 100 percent of the time."

PAYOFF PITCH: No matter your age or physical condition, you can improve your optimal performance, increasing both the quantity and quality of your physical, mental, emotional, and spiritual energy. "Full engagement means to be fully alive, to fire on all cylinders, to recruit every cell in your body in the service of your intended mission," Loehr says.

ARE YOU GAME?: The Executive Training Experience, a two-and-a-half-day program, costs \$3,750 per person.

Michelle Wie and Jim Courier are at the top of their games with coach Jim Loehr (bottom right).



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