

HPT Primer: Mastering the Mental Game for Elite Success

1. Introduction: The Mind-Body Connection in High-Performance

In the arena of elite competition, technical skills will only take you as far as your mind allows. Coach Shannyn Gillespie—a professional wrestling coach and High Performance Training (HPT) consultant—has built a coaching philosophy centered on inclusive excellence. He understands that while physical drills forge the body, Psychological Skills Training (PST) is what prepares the athlete to execute when the stakes are highest.

The mission of this primer is to provide you with the mental architecture required to perform under pressure, ensuring your hard-earned technical mastery isn't lost to the noise of the moment.

Performing Under Pressure: The ability to execute technical skills with precision & confidence at the exact moment they are needed, regardless of external distractions, internal stress, or the magnitude of the stage.

To reach this state of flow, you must first transition from general effort to specific targets by mastering the relationship between your goals and your focus.

2. Pillar 1: Goal Setting & Focus

Success is never an accident; it is the result of intentional targets and the discipline to stay locked on them. In the Gillespie Standard, goals are the "What" and focus is the "Now." One defines the destination, while the other keeps you on the path during the heat of battle.

The Objective	The Athlete's Benefit
Goal Setting	Turns vague ambitions into a concrete roadmap for technical & tactical dominance.

Focus	Acts as the lens that filters out the crowd and the scoreboard, keeping you present in the immediate exchange.
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3 Tips for Maintaining Focus

1. **Pick Your Tactic:** Before the whistle, identify one specific technical action you will hunt. Don't just "wrestle"— attack a specific opening.
2. **Narrow the Gates:** Intentionally shrink your world. The only things that exist are you, your opponent, & the referee. Everything beyond the mat is background noise.
3. **Hit the Reset:** Use the moments after a whistle to clear the previous sequence. Whether you just scored or got taken down, that exchange is over. Reset your focus to the next available point.

If focus is the lens that keeps your targets clear, your self-talk is the voice-over that ensures the lens stays steady through the chaos.

3. Pillar 2: The Language of Success (Self-Talk)

Self-talk is the internal narrative that dictates your confidence & emotional state. To compete at an elite level, you must speak to yourself like an elite competitor. Coach Shannyn emphasizes replacing clinical, robotic critiques with natural, visceral language that drives action.

The Self-Talk Transformer

Switch from passive or negative observations to aggressive, productive directives:

- **Robotic/Negative:** "I am struggling with my positioning."
- **Natural/Productive:** "Head up, elbows in, stay heavy on him."
- **Robotic/Negative:** "This opponent is stronger than I thought."
- **Natural/Productive:** "He's breathing hard. Push the pace. He's going to break."
- **Robotic/Negative:** "Don't get taken down."
- **Natural/Productive:** "Circle left, heavy hands, snap him down now."

Productive self-talk acts as a shield against performance anxiety, allowing you to maintain composure and believe in your preparation even when the match gets gritty.

As your internal voice becomes a tool for command, you can begin to pair those words with internal images to solidify your path to victory.

4. Pillar 3: Mental Rehearsal through Imagery

Imagery is the foundational skill that allows you to "pre-play" your performance. By mentally rehearsing specific scenarios, you prime your nervous system for the physical reality of the mat, making the tournament environment feel like a place you've already been.

Mental Rehearsal Guide

1. **Set the Stage:** Sit comfortably, close your eyes, and slow your breathing. Feel the weight of your body and the stillness of the room.
2. **Build the Arena:** Imagine the sights and sounds of the venue—the hum of the crowd, the smell of the mats, & the bright lights above.
3. **Lock in the Visual:** Visualize your opponent—a wrestler across the mat from you—standing in their stance & ready for the whistle.
4. **Execute the Script:** See yourself hitting your primary attacks with perfect timing. Feel the tension of the tie-up, set-up, & the explosive power of your finish. Visualize yourself stopping a shot and immediately transitioning to a counter-attack.
5. **Claim the Result:** End by seeing the referee raise your hand. Internalize the feeling of a mission accomplished.

Pro-Tip: Imagery bridges the gap between the practice room and the tournament. When you've seen yourself win a thousand times in your mind, the physical match becomes a formality.

While visualization prepares the mind, it must be supported by a tactical system that manages your physical & mental energy.

5. The System: Energy Management and Performance Planning

Elite performance is about sustainability and precision. A plan is the "great equalizer"—it ensures that whether you are at a local open or a national championship, you are never intimidated by the environment because your routine remains the same.

- **Unplanned Performance:** Characterized by erratic energy spikes & pre-match "jitters" that lead to early burnout. The athlete is reactive to the environment.
- **Planned Performance:** A structured approach where energy is conserved during downtime & channeled precisely during the match. The athlete controls the environment.

Quick-Start Checklist for Your Next Tournament

- [] **Primary Tactics:** Have I identified the 2-3 moves I am "calling" for today?
- [] **The Energy Map:** Do I know exactly what I'm eating, how I'm hydrating, & where I'm resting between rounds?
- [] **The Reset Trigger:** Do I have a specific word or "breath-work" routine to use if I feel the pressure rising?
- [] **Battle Ready:** Is my gear checked, my warm-up timed, & my mindset locked?

When these skills unite—goals, talk, imagery, & planning—they form a HPT competitive mindset that is prepared for any challenge.

6. Conclusion: Embracing HPT Performance

The Gillespie Standard is built on the conviction that elite technical mastery is a global pursuit. True performance intelligence thrives when barriers are removed, drawing strength from a diverse HPT excellence. You are part of a lineage of wrestlers who value discipline & the pursuit of the podium. By adopting these mental skills, you are doing more than just training for a win; you are joining a community that views HPT as a competitive advantage and mastery as a universal right.

Call to Action: Choose one skill from this primer—a specific self-talk phrase or a 5-minute imagery session—and apply it in your very next practice. Mastery begins with the decision to train your mind as SMART as you train your body.

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