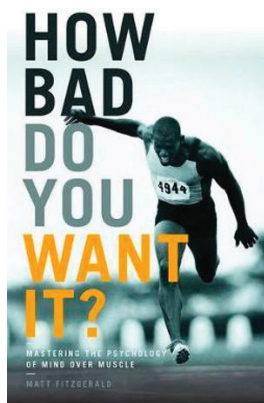




HOW BAD DO YOU WANT IT?
MASTERING THE PSYCHOLOGY OF MIND OVER MUSCLE
MATT FITZGERALD



THE BOOK

**How Bad Do You Want It?**

Mastering the psychology of mind over muscle

by Matt Fitzgerald



INTRODUCTION

Do you have what it takes? Can go the extra mile, push through the pain and surge ahead of the competition? Perhaps it comes down to how badly you want it.

With the meticulously researched *How Bad Do You Want it?*, Matt Fitzgerald explains that you do have what it takes... because what it takes isn't physical, it's in the mind.

Not everyone can be a record-breaking triathlete. However, by learning what sets these athletes apart, you can take your own performance to the next level. Using leading edge sports science research and fascinating case studies, Fitzgerald breaks down how top tier athletes hone their 'mind muscles' to become the best.

Endlessly engaging, *How Bad Do You Want It?* is a must read for anyone who wants to push themselves to the next level to reach whatever their aspirations might be. Endurance athlete or not, this book teaches that you can go further and faster, it's just a matter of mental toughness and answering the question; How bad do you want it?



5 BEST QUOTES

"One cannot improve as an endurance athlete except by changing one's relationship with perception of effort."

"More often, they insist that their advantage lies not in having more to give but rather in being able to give more of what they have."

"The journey toward becoming a mentally fit athlete is very much a journey of personal development."

"The only way to become really good at coping with the discomforts and stresses of endurance sports is to experience them."

"There is no experience quite like that of driving yourself to the point of wanting to give up and then not giving up."



7 BIG IDEAS

1. BRACE YOURSELF

Jenny Barringer was all set to win the 2009 NCAA Cross Country Championships. The collegiate runner had been unbeatable through her previous college career and this was her last college race before the big time. However, Jenny came in at 163rd. What went wrong?

In short, Jenny failed to brace for the pain she was about to encounter. Her heart wasn't really in the race, her mind was already on her soon to be successful future career and she took this last school run for granted. This failure to brace herself led to her collapsing and ultimately struggling across the finish line of a race that she should have won hands down. The lesson is that if you don't prepare and brace yourself for the difficulties that lie ahead, no matter what the challenge is, you won't have what you need to succeed.

2. FIND THE FLOW

Siri Lindley came to the sport of triathlon late but she showed up with a vengeance.

Unfortunately for the promising athlete, she struggled with choking at the most important moments. After failing to make her dream of competing in the Olympic team for the 2000 Olympics Siri had to try a new tack. Ultimately what Siri learned was to race to be better. All of the pressure of racing to win was too much. She had lost her joy of the sport and suffered from breaks in confidence.

Working under a new coach, Siri mastered the art of going with the flow. She learned to put aside everything but the moment and to work simply to be better. By being in the moment and going with the flow, Siri was able to silence her inner critic. For one race, Siri's coach had her compete with tire legs. Feeling this worn out, Siri had no expectations of doing well. She came second. Without the pressure of expectation, Siri defeated her own self doubt, went with the flow, and went on to be a champion.

3. NEUROPLASTICITY

Willie Stewart was an incredibly promising young high school athlete until an accident took his left arm from the elbow down. After a period of grieving, Willie found his way back to sport and went on to become an ironman champion who was ranked highly among the able bodied as well as the differently abled.

Interestingly, many people who suffer such crippling accidents go on to succeed in sports. It is part of the drive to prove that they can do whatever anyone else can and even better. When asked what he might have done if he had both his arms Willie said, "I wouldn't have done any of it."

What these differently abled people are able to harness in neuroplasticity. This, in a nutshell, is the brain's ability to rewire neural networks and connections to find new ways to act and move in accordance with new difficulties. Willie had to adapt to a new cycling and swimming style without the use of his left arm. Neuroplasticity enabled him to do that.



7 BIG IDEAS

What this means is that, with time and effort, physical obstacles can be overcome as you 'rewire' your brain.

4. SWEET DISGUST

Australia's Cadel Evans dreamed of winning the Tour de France. Hard work and commitment got him into the competition but six years in a row he came no closer than second.

Cadel was furious but made use of what Fitzgerald terms 'sweet disgust'. Sweet disgust is a response to failure that pushes a competitor forward. Cadel was able to see his past failures not as ultimate defeat but as motivation to keep going. It is a way of harnessing anger and frustration and using it to push you to greater heights.

The irony is that the anger of sweet disgust, when harnessed properly, brings calm and resignation. It created a resilience in Cadel that he had lacked in previous years. In 2011, using sweet disgust and lessons learned from his previous losses, the Aussie cyclist finally won the Tour de France. The lesson is to let failure drive you and not discourage you. Failure is just one more step towards ultimate success.

5. INTUITION

Paula Newby-Fraser was the greatest female triathlete of her generation. There came a time when winning a race made little impression on people because that's simply what they expected of Paula. For Paula though, this was not enough. She needed people to be impressed again so she decided she would be not just the best woman but would give the men a run for their money too. Paula switched her training routine to a much harsher and more aggressive regime. When the next competition came around, however, and Paula pushed herself harder than ever before, she broke and barely made it across the finish line, having to be rushed for immediate medical treatment.

Paula didn't follow her intuition. Just as your mind can push you further and harder, it can also let you know when you are doing too much. Paula ignored her intuition that her old training style was what was best for her and her feelings as to how she should pace her events, and she paid the price. Once Paula listened to her intuition, she regained form once more.

Make sure to listen to that little voice in your head and work in a way that feels right for you.



7 BIG IDEAS

6. AUDIENCE AND SUCCESS

The famous Yellow Jersey of the Tour de France is worn by the leader of the previous day's stage. In 2004, Frenchman Thomas Voeckler found himself unexpectedly wearing yellow after stage 5 of the Tour. Thomas was a good rider but didn't hold good odds of winning the prestigious race. It seemed unlikely that he would wear the yellow jersey for much longer at all. In fact he went on to wear the jersey for ten days and then, in 2011, he pulled it off again.

So how did a middle of the pack cyclist wear the yellow jersey for a total of twenty days, putting him amongst the longest holders of the jersey ever? There are two answers to this question.

First is the success effect. Having succeeded so mightily, Thomas found the motivation to push himself like never before to hold onto the glory.

Second is the audience effect. As a Frenchman, Thomas was on home turf for the Tour de France. Seeing him in the yellow jersey stirred the hopes of the nation and he became a local hero. Whenever he rode past a crowd they would cheer heartily and urge him on.

Just like a home ground advantage, the encouragement of a supportive audience has been proven to boost an athlete's performance. This encouragement combined with the desire to hold onto the yellow jersey as long as he could drove Thomas to heights no one would have predicted.

7. PASSION

Ned Overend was one of the oldest athletes to win the XTERRA World Championship. Not until he reached 45, well past the usual prime age for endurance athletes, did he finally submit to a younger competitor. Of course he continued to be the best in his age group but that had not stopped him from beating much younger competitors for years. The key to Ned's success? Passion.

Ned just loves to compete. He loves to exercise and to push his body and to win whenever he can. Ned extends this exuberance to the rest of his life also. His passion and zest for life knows no bounds. Scientists have found that passionate and positive people tend to live longer and succeed more often than their more morose counterparts.

This is why finding your passion is so important. Ned's passion kept him winning long after others had thrown in the towel and your passion can do that too.

**3 ACTION STEPS****1. UNDERSTAND THE MIND**

Before you can master ‘mind over muscle’, you need to understand why your brain is so powerful. Once you grasp that your brain is what holds you back or drives you forward more than your body, you can start your journey.

2. SHIFT YOUR PERCEPTION OF EFFORT

The key to all of Fitzgerald’s advice is to alter your perception of effort. Altering that perception is what helps athletes to go that extra yard. Find what helps you to alter your perception of effort whether it’s finding the flow, sweet disgust, passion, or any of the other ideas Fitzgerald presents.

3. KNOW THAT IT’S WORTH IT

Fitzgerald says that, “Striving towards one’s personal maximum of mental fitness is always “worth it.” In short, you must know that hard work and struggle to improve yourself is worth the effort. It is always worthwhile to push yourself to improve.

**1 KEY TAKEAWAY**

The key takeaway of *How Bad Do You Want It?* is that the key to success in endurance sport is the mind, not the body. While obviously the body is a vital part of any form of sport, it is the mind that can push you to go further, faster, and better.

By breaking mental barriers and exploring your relationship with the perception of effort, you can find what it takes to keep going when you feel like breaking. Whether it is through coping skills like finding your flow, harnessing neuroplasticity, building resilience, or any of the other strategies described in the book, it is your mind that is your greatest tool.

Physical talent is far from all it takes to become a champion. What all past and future champions have in common is mental strength and coping skills that drive them to victory.



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How Bad Do You Want It?

by Matt Fitzgerald

Fitzgerald breaks down more than a dozen pivotal races to prove the limit you hit is set by your brain, not your legs. Mind over muscle, backed by the science.

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