

# LITTLE CHANGES, BIG RESULTS

By Allistair McCaw of *Athletes' Conditioning*

Mention the word 'Change' to someone nearing or at the top of their profession and its interesting to see what response you might get. As a performance specialist I have worked with numerous world class athletes, top notch executives and even housewives and what I've discovered is that no matter your position in the rankings, corporate world or family tree it simply comes down to the individual themselves.

I firmly believe that if you change your environment, you will find yourself living a healthier, more active and productive lifestyle.

Take your eating habits for a start. By getting rid of the high sugared or processed foods and replacing them with healthier options makes eating **healthier more attainable**. When you have mainly healthy options for grab and go, you are going to be more likely to grab healthy. Otherwise, **especially** when away from home, you will probably grab anything that's convenient and make an excuse that there wasn't any healthy options available. Sound familiar?

Lets look at the place where you work out or train. It may be your gym, tennis or squash club. Do you feel a rush of excitement and energy when you walk through the doors or do you find yourself just going through the motions day after day? If the latter is you, then maybe its time for a change.

What about those you train with, your group or even your coach? Do you have a connection with these people or person? Are they reliable? More importantly, do you see progress? Not only in your performance but as a person too?

At ***Athletes' Conditioning*** it is one my company core values of continually striving towards personal and professional excellence. Being closely involved in the sporting world, one thing that I find a great shame is the amount of professional athletes who have been stuck in a rut for years with seeing little or no progress or results. Reasons can range from their relationship with their coach or support team to training location. I have always been a firm believer in creating a positive, energetic environment for training.

Now don't get me wrong, I am not saying that its time to leave your coach simply because you lost your last league match! Some of the best player-coach relationships have been built through the tougher times and getting through those together. What I'm simply saying is that *too many people accept mediocrity and hold themselves back from making progress because of the fear of change.*

Unfortunately most people only make a change when they are at rock bottom or almost there.

Why is it that some people only change and undertake some kind of exercise activity when they have been told they have a serious health related condition for example? Why is it that some people only change the way they train after they have had injuries? At ***Athletes' Conditioning***, one of the program features is 'pre-hab' (in place of Re-hab). Pre-hab involves addressing over-used muscle groups/joints in the body related to your chosen sport].

As a Performance trainer I have always put a bigger emphasis on analysing the sport and athlete and detecting possible breakdown areas. I believe that this has played a

critical factor in the successful combat of possible injuries to my clients over the last 15 years.

When I think of some well known people who have re-invented or changed themselves over the last few years, Andre Agassi comes to mind. Remember those crazy pink neon Nike shorts and the long scraggy hair? Andre also realised that he had to change his game and the way he trained if he wanted to stay on top.

What about Madonna? How many changes has she made over the years to stay in the music limelight. David Beckham and Oprah Winfrey are others who have re-invented themselves to stay ahead of their chosen fields.

***COMFORT ZONER - A PERSON WHO STAYS WITHIN THE BOUNDARIES OF A FAMILIAR LIFESTYLE AND EXPERIENCE, AND STRUGGLES TO BREAK OUT. SYMPTOMS INCLUDE A RELUCTANCE TO TRY NEW THINGS AND CHANGE HABITS.***

I think a lot of people have the idea that professional athletes with chiselled, near perfect bodies (or not) are different from the rest of us. Let me tell you, most of them are not. The majority of them have the same confusion and the same hurdles as you and I. However, they have made choices and have made changes to get there.

One of the first things I do with a new athlete is educate them on smarter choices in their nutrition. Some of them are educated in this department, but many of them are not as clued up on these things like you think they are. Again it is up to the individual to take these steps and change. These little changes like having their energy drinks, bars or post exercise recovery drinks organised add up to bigger paybacks later.

***IF YOU WANT THE SAME RESULT, KEEP DOING WHAT YOU HAVE ALWAYS BEEN DONE.***

When any of us want to change, we cycle through a series of steps, no matter who we are. We go from:

not really having a vested interest (pre-contemplation) to thinking about how it may be important to make a change (contemplation) to preparing to make that change by getting a plan together (preparation) to actually implementing the plan and making the changes to environment and to habits (action).

And finally you reach the point at which there is no longer a need for change.

***AGGROPHOBIA - THE FEAR OF MAKING LIFE CHANGES ON THE GROUNDS THAT OTHER PEOPLE MIGHT BE UPSET***

For me, success is seeing someone thinking about things in a different way and then educating them about what they are doing. Easier said than done especially for athletes who are at the top in their game. Believe it or not, these experienced and gifted athletes are the most afraid of change. They are afraid of losing something that might have got them to where they are today.

Someone who isn't afraid of change is squash commonwealth gold medallist Natalie Grinham. Natalie started with me in August 2006 after I had finished with Nicol David. Since starting with me, Natalie has won 3 of her last 4 Wispa tournaments entered,

losing narrowly in the World Open final, and has risen to a career high ranking of number two in the world.

Here's my point: I haven't changed Natalie. Natalie has changed Natalie. Natalie made the decision to change the way she trained. Natalie made the decision to change her diet. Natalie made the decision to change her approach. I simply advise and guide her.

Without a doubt, Natalie is the best female athlete I have ever worked with and rate her as one of the best movers in the sports world. What I admire about Natalie is that she's not afraid of failure, therefore embraces change. A true mark of a champion. Over the last few months we have been able to make small changes to optimise her true athletic potential. The most successful results I have seen from people have been from small, not big changes like some people think.

Here's the good news. Regardless of who we are, professional athlete or not, we all have the choice to change. Today. Right now.

Change starts with you. In my opinion the body you have now is a reflection of the discipline (or lack of) and changes (or lack of) you have made as an individual. Just the same as where you are today, your job, your ranking or your place in society is a result of the choices and changes you have made until today. Enough procrastination. What changes are you going to make today to optimise your personal excellence?