

The Mental Barbell

Big Book of Mantras



IAN REARDON MSC • IAN@THEMENTALBARBELL.COM
WWW.THEMENTALBARBELL.COM • @MENTALBARBELL



About Ian

As a four year varsity swimmer at Kenyon College, he earned 12 All-American awards and 4 NISCA Academic All-American awards. He earned 7, top-8 finishes at the NCAA Championships, including one Individual National Championship in the 200-yard breaststroke, and two team NCAA Championships. He was awarded the NCAA Postgraduate Scholarship upon graduating Cum Laude with Honors in Psychology.

Ian went on to earn his Masters of Science in Psychology concentrating in Athletic Counseling from Springfield College. During his training at Springfield, Ian worked with athletes in Football, Tennis, Baseball, Volleyball, Swimming, Gymnastics, and Track and Field. He also worked alongside Athletic Trainers helping injured athletes with their readiness to return to sport. Over a two year period, Ian conducted over 300 hours of individual counseling and presented his Master's Thesis titled "The Effects of Autonomy Supportive Coaching Behaviors and Season Success on Coach Perception".

Upon graduating with an MSc, Ian moved on to become an assistant coach at Brandeis University. During his time as assistant coach, the program had several NCAA B cuts, 17 new records and over 75 new Top 10 program records. Ian returned to Kenyon College in 2021 as the Men's and Women's Assistant Swim Coach. In his first season coaching back at Kenyon, the Ladies won their first NCAA Championship since 2009. Setting over a dozen team records and several national records. In his second season with Kenyon, the Men placed 2nd and Women placed 3rd at the NCAA Championships. In his two years with the Lords and Ladies, Ian coached 15 DIII National Champions, and over 70 All-Americans.

Ian now lives with his girlfriend Laura, two cats, and a Beagle named Lucy in Western Michigan. He works with athletes and performers as The Mental Barbell.

How To Use This Book

These mantras have been compiled from athletes from many disciplines. Read through for inspiration from highly successful athletes or to find resources to develop your own mantra.

Please write your own personal mantra on the blank pages for a chance to be in the next Big Book of Mantras.

I hope you find something that helps you be the best version of yourself and
GO BE GREAT!

- Your Friend in the Pursuit of Excellence,

Ian Reardon MSc.



Table of Contents

Athlete Mantras..... p. 1

NZ All-Black Mantras... p. 14

Create Your Own..... p. 20

Contribute a Mantra.... p. 22

“Relentless” - Bill Rodgers

Bill Rodgers was one of the most successful distance runners of the 1970s and '80s, having won the Boston Marathon four times. He previously used the brief but powerful mantra “relentless” to spur himself on while racing.

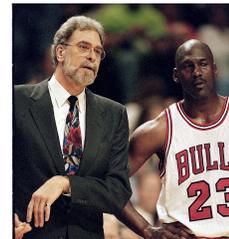


“I got this” - Laurie Hernandez

Gymnast Laurie Hernandez rose to stardom at the 2016 Olympics when she won gold with the USA team and an individual silver on the balance beam. In a message of reassurance to herself before stepping up to the beam in Rio de Janeiro, she said: “You got this.”

“Create the best possible conditions for success, then let go of the outcome” - Phil Jackson

The formidable Chicago Bulls team of the 1990s has been thrown into the spotlight once again with the docuseries *The Last Dance*, and their coach Phil Jackson was known for his interest in spiritualism.



“Why not you? Why not us?” - Russell Wilson

Seattle Seahawks quarterback Russell Wilson had aspirations of becoming a professional football player since he was a boy, and was repeatedly told by his father, “Why not you?” When he led the Seahawks to a Super Bowl win in 2014, he converted this to: “Why not us?”

“Calm, calm, calm. Relax, relax, relax” - Desiree Linden

American marathoner Des Linden has a reputation as a fierce competitor who's able to withstand serious pain. In races, she tells herself: “Calm, calm, calm. Relax, relax, relax.”



“I deserve to win” - Marlen Esparza

Esparza is one of the best female boxers to come out of the United States, having won six national titles and a bronze medal at the 2012 Olympics. Explaining the logic behind her mantra, she says: “People give up on themselves because they don't think they're worthy of something bigger or they think someone else should win. This reminds me I've earned it.”

“Because I can.” - Kristin Armstrong

The next time someone questions why you're putting in extra hours toward a goal when the odds are against you, channel cyclist Kristin Armstrong's matter-of-fact response: “Because I can.” That's what she had to say when faced questions about why she came out of retirement at age 42 to compete at an elite level once again despite several hip surgeries.



“I’m the first Simone Biles.” - Simone Biles

It’s tempting for the media to draw comparisons between rising stars entering the canon of history and other great athletes who have come before them. But doing so fails to fully acknowledge the unique contributions of up-and-coming men and women, especially the likes of an unparalleled talent like Simone Biles. In response to such comparisons, Biles said, “I’m not the next Usain Bolt or Michael Phelps. I’m the first Simone Biles.”



“To give anything less than your best, is to sacrifice the gift.” - Allyson Felix

In an interview with Sonima.com, sprinter Allyson Felix cites the quote above by legendary runner Steve Prefontaine as her go-to mantra during training or competition. “It’s been really different this year, as I have been dealing with a pretty devastating injury. Mentally, I just try to be strong and rely on my love for the sport and know that the amount of work I’ve put into this sport throughout my life will guide me,” she says.

“These are not sacrifices, but investments.” - Gwen Jorgensen

Triathlete Gwen Jorgensen used to view things like giving up holidays with family and missing her best friend’s wedding as sacrifices. Fortunately her friends and family understand. “They know I’m investing in my future. And that’s something that [my coach] Jamie has taught me,” says Jorgensen. “They are not sacrifices, but investments. I truly believe that it will pay me back 10 fold.”



“Reach for the STARS but make sure you STRETCH first” - Danielle Prince

After taking her first gymnastics lessons when she was 11 years-old, Danielle Prince has always had one goal in mind: to make it to the Olympics. Next week her goal will become a reality when she competes in her first Olympic Games.

“On your worst day you have to be better than everyone else” - Emily Seebohm

“I like knowing that you are competing for your country and that the whole of Australia is watching and cheering you on,” says Australian Olympic swimmer Emily Seebohm. an Australian swimmer and television personality. She has appeared at four Olympic Games between 2008 and 2021; and won three Olympic gold medals, five world championship gold medals and seven Commonwealth Games gold medals



“On and up”- Chelsea Jaensch

She made her major competition debut at the age of thirty-one at the 2016 World Indoor Championships finishing eleventh. She returned to competition in 2012 after a seven-year break to focus on education and playing netball. She represented her country at the 2016 Summer Olympics in Rio de Janeiro



“Control the controllable” - Charlotte Caslick

She represents Australia in rugby sevens and in touch football. She won a gold medal at the 2016 Summer Olympics in Rio de Janeiro. She was a member of the Australian team that won the 2022 Sevens Rugby World Cup held in Cape Town, South Africa in September 2022.

“You’re not training to be the best in the world. You’re training to be the best in the world on your worst day” - Ronda Rousey

She was the first American woman to win an Olympic medal in judo by winning bronze at the 2008 Summer Olympics. Rousey is the only woman to be the champion in both the UFC and WWE as well as the only woman to headline a pay-per-view event in both companies. She was voted the best female athlete of all time in a 2015 ESPN fan poll, and Fox Sports described her as "one of the defining athletes of the 21st century."



“I am not afraid of tomorrow, for I have seen yesterday and I love today” - Bronte Barratt

In 2007, she broke the oldest record in swimming for Australian women when she broke Tracey Wickham's 29-year-old record in the 400m freestyle. Barratt competed in the 2008 Olympic Games in the women's 200-meter and 400-meter freestyle events. She was also part of the women's 4x200-meter freestyle relay team, winning gold in the final, and breaking the now-previous world record by a full six seconds.

“Insanity is doing the same thing over and over again and expecting a different result” - Ellie Cole

She represented Australia at the 2016 Rio de Janeiro Paralympics, the 2018 Commonwealth Games, and the 2020 Tokyo Paralympics. In claiming her seventeenth Paralympic medal in Tokyo, Cole became Australia's most decorated female Paralympian with six gold, five silver and six bronze medals from four Paralympic Games.



“Be yourself: everyone else is already taken” Caroline Buchanan

In 2012, she won a round of the Supercross, becoming the first Australian woman to do so. She had the two fastest runs at the 2012 time trial event at the World Championships in Birmingham, England. In May 2012, she was ranked the number one women's BMX rider in the world. She was selected to represent Australia at the 2012 Summer Olympics in the women's BMX event. She is aiming to compete in BMX in the 2020 Tokyo Olympics.

“Everything you need is already inside” - Kelsey-Lee Roberts

Barber won bronze in the final at the 2020 Summer Olympics in Tokyo, throwing 64.56m. At the 2022 World Athletics Championships, Barber won a gold medal in javelin, making her the first woman to ever retain the women's World Championships javelin title. Later that year, she also won a gold medal at the 2022 Commonwealth Games with a throw of 64.43m.



“Whether you think you can or you think you can't, you're right” - Emma Moffatt

She came second in the 10 kilometers (6.2 mi) run of the Gold Coast Marathon-event on 1 July 2012 in Gold Coast, Queensland, Australia, finishing behind Lisa Jane Weightman. At the 2014 Commonwealth Games, she was part of the Australian mixed relay team that won bronze.

“I am building a fire and every day I train, I add more fuel. At Just the right moment I light the match” - Mia Hamm

Hamm was named U.S. Soccer Female Athlete of the Year five years in a row and won three ESPY awards including Soccer Player of the Year and Female Athlete of the Year. The Women's Sports Foundation named her Sportswoman of the Year in 1997 and 1999. She was inducted into the National Soccer Hall of Fame, Alabama Sports Hall of Fame, Texas Sports Hall of Fame, North Carolina Soccer Hall of Fame, and was the first woman inducted into the World Football Hall of Fame.



“I am deserving of love and happiness” - Caroline Marton

She won the 2016 Oceania Taekwondo Olympic Qualification Tournament and therefore is qualified to compete at the 2016 Olympics. She is the sister of world taekwondo champion Carmen Marton. She and her sister are training partners.

“I can do all things” - Stephen Curry

“I can do all things” written on Curry's shoe. Similarly, Steph Curry has written “I can do all things” on his shoes ever since college. The quote is a verse from the bible (Philippians 4:13).

“Tell me what I can’t do and I will show you I can” - Carmen Marton

Marton won the women's lightweight gold medal at the 2013 World Taekwondo Championships becoming Australia's first ever world taekwondo champion¹ after breaking the tied scores and defeating Korean Kim Huy Lan with just 4 seconds left on the clock. Carmen participated in the Rio Olympics¹ her third Olympics as a competitor.



“Believe you can and you’re halfway there” - Mariafe Artacho del Solar

She represented Australia at the 2016 Summer Olympics in Rio de Janeiro and the 2020 Summer Olympics in Tokyo in 2021. Artacho del Solar plays as a right-side defender. According to the Women's FIVB World Rankings, she and partner Taliqua Clancy are ranked 5th as of 21 January 2020

“Go, Go, Go, Go” - Morgan Mitchell

Mitchell competed in the 2020 Tokyo Olympic Games. She came sixth in her Women's 800m heat with a time of 2:05.44

“I’m Invisible” - Dean Potter

Known for high-line walks (above) and free-solo climbs, Potter has learned to control his mind and push through when things get tough. His life depends on it. “I calm myself with a mantra from a favorite song and repeat, ‘I’m invisible, I’m invisible, I’m invisible,’” Potter explained of his speed-solo of Half Dome in Yosemite.



“This Is What You Came For” — Scott Jurek

An ultra-running legend, Jurek won the Western States 100 seven times straight (not to mention victories at the Hardrock 100, the Spartathlon in Greece, Badwater 135, and more). Even though running is his passion, Jurek can need a little extra something to keep putting one foot in front of the other. “*This is what you came for*” serves to remind Jurek that distance running is his choice.

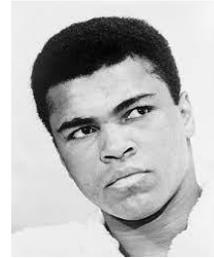
“Smile” — Chrissie Wellington

Wellington won the Kona Ironman three times and has the fastest Ironman-distance time ever by a female (8:19:13). She’s known in racing circles for her positivity and friendly personality, so it comes as no surprise that her mantra is of the glass-half-full variety, “*Smile.*” Wellington explains: “It’s all about keeping calm under pressure and knowing that triumph and disaster are one in the same thing.”



“Don’t quit. Suffer now and live the rest of your life as a champion.” - Muhammad Ali

He is regarded as one of the most significant sports figures of the 20th century and is often regarded as the greatest heavyweight boxer of all time. He fought in several historic boxing matches, including his highly publicized fights with Sonny Liston, Joe Frazier (including the Fight of the Century, the biggest boxing event up until then), the Thrilla in Manila, and his fight with George Foreman in The Rumble in the Jungle



“Dig Deep” — Chelsey Magness

During the Adventure Racing World Championship she raced across Ecuador, climbing through the Andes, battling thigh-high mud, and paddling raging rapids — for 144 hours with only 8 hours of sleep! When physically exhausted, she stoked her internal fire by repeating “Dig Deep.” She noted, “During times when all I wanted to do was slow my pace or beg to sleep an extra hour, I repeated the mantra in my head and even out loud to the rest of the team. I was amazed at the strength of these simple words.”

“You owe it to yourself to be the best you can possibly be – in baseball and in life.” - Pete Rose

He won three World Series, three batting titles, one Most Valuable Player Award, two Gold Gloves and the Rookie of the Year Award. He also made 17 All-Star appearances at an unequaled five positions (second baseman, left fielder, right fielder, third baseman and first baseman). Rose won both of his Gold Gloves when he was an outfielder, in 1969 and 1970.



“The pain of discipline is far less than the pain of regret.” – Sarah Bombell

Sarah also represented Australia at the 2008 Beijing Olympics where she reached 7th place, as well as participating in several World Championships. At the Commonwealth Games in 2010, she won the bronze medal in the women's duet event with Eloise Amberger. She teamed with Amberger at the 2012 Summer Olympics, and was also part of the Australian team, which finished in 8th

“Run hard, be strong, think big.” — Percy Cerutty

When he turned 51 he completed his first marathon in a time of 3 hours and 1 minute. In 1950, he retired from running after becoming the state marathon champion, setting Australian records for 30, 50 and 60 miles (48, 80 and 97 km)



“I can run faster.” — Haile Gebrselassie

Haile triumphed in the Berlin Marathon four times consecutively and also had three straight wins at the Dubai Marathon. Further to this, he earned four world titles indoors and was the 2001 World Half Marathon Champion



“To give anything less than your best is to sacrifice the gift.” — Steve Prefontaine

An American long-distance runner who from 1973 to 1975 set American records at every distance from 2,000 to 10,000 meters. He competed in the 1972 Summer Olympics, and was preparing for the 1976 Olympics with the Oregon Track Club at the time of his death in 1975

“All I have to do is manage this moment.” — Stu Mittleman

Mittleman set three consecutive American 100-Mile Road Race records in the US National Championships 1980–1982. His fastest 100-Mile Run was 12 hours 56 min. In 1986, he won the 1,000 Mile World Championship and set a new world record by running the distance (1 609.344 kilometers) in 11 days, 20 hours, 36 min. 50 sec. Mittleman set three consecutive American Records in the 6 Day Race, the final one being set in 1985 at the University of Colorado Field House. One record, which still stands: 577.75 miles in 6 days



“No Coasting, Pedal Harder” — Rebecca Rusch

Known as “The Queen of Pain,” Rusch has made a career of suffering through athletic events. During a record-setting Leadville Trail 100 Mountain Bike Race, Rusch used the mantra, “*No coasting, Pedal harder*” to stay ahead. She noted, “Every single stroke hurt like hell. It wasn’t pretty, but I wanted to beat that long-standing women’s course record. I knew it was within my reach.”

“Negative split every run.” — Sean Wade

Wade represented his native country of Australia in the men's marathon at the 1996 Summer Olympics in Atlanta, Georgia.



“Think strong, be strong, finish strong.” — Renee Metivier Baillie

an American long-distance runner who competed at multiple IAAF World Cross Country Championships and finished eighth at the 2012 Chicago Marathon.

“The will to win means nothing if you haven’t the will to prepare.” — Juma Ikangaa

Ikangaa won the 1989 New York City Marathon in a course-record time of 2:08:01. Ikangaa was also a sentimental favorite in the Boston Marathon after finishing second three years in a row at the Boston Marathon from 1988-1990.



“Fighter.” — Kara Goucher

An American long-distance runner. She was the 10,000 meters silver medalist at the 2007 World Championships in Athletics and represented the USA at the 2008 Beijing Olympics and 2012 London Olympics. She made her marathon debut in 2008 and finished third the following year at the Boston Marathon.

“The only one who can beat me is me.” — Michael Johnson

American retired sprinter who won four Olympic gold medals and eight World Championships gold medals in the span of his career. He held the world and Olympic records in the 200 m and 400 m, as well as the world record in the indoor 400 m. Johnson is generally considered one of the greatest and most consistent sprinters in the history of track and field



“Run the mile you are in.” — David Willey

Marathoner and editor of *Runner’s World*

“As we run, we become.” — Amby Burfoot

He ran the Manchester Road Race 53 times in a row besting the streak of barefoot runner, Charlie "Doc" Robbins. In the process, he won Manchester nine times. Burfoot also continues to run the Boston Marathon at five-year intervals, marking his 1968 win. He ran the 2013 Boston Marathon but was stopped three-quarters of a mile from completion after a terrorist attack near the finish line. He has run Boston each year since returning for 2014, in what Burfoot calls "the most glorious marathon ever because of the great people of Boston."



“Because I can.” — Janet Oberholtzer,

Amateur marathoner who overcame gruesome injury to run again

“I have met my hero, and he is me.” — Dr. George Sheehan

He began running in his backyard (26 loops to a mile) and then started running along the river road during his lunch break wearing long-johns and a ski mask. Five years later, he ran a 4:47 mile, which was the world's first sub-five-minute time by a 50-year-old¹



“Falling in life is inevitable—staying down is optional.” -Carrie Johnson

She was again the first US canoeist to qualify for the 2012 Summer Olympics, winning the K-1 500 m at the 2011 Pan American Games (she also won the K-1 200 m). She went on to win the same event at the US Olympic trials in April 2012. At the 2012 Summer Olympics, she reached the semi-final of the K-1 200 m, and the first round of the K-1 500 m.



“Breathe, believe, and battle.” -Kerri Walsh

“My former coach, Troy Tanner, told us that before each match. Breathe—be in the moment. Believe—have faith that you can rise above it. Battle—you gotta be prepared to go for as long as it takes.” American professional beach volleyball player, three-time Olympic gold medalist, and a one-time Olympic bronze medalist. She is the beach volleyball leader in career victories as of 2016 having won 135 international and domestic tournaments

“If you think you can't, you won't, and if you think you can, you will.” - Kellie Wells

When I'm tired at practice, I tell myself that I'm not tired, and I can push through. If you tell yourself you're tired or if you tell yourself you're sick, your body is going to follow the mind.”

an American track and field athlete who specializes in the 100 meters hurdles. She won an Olympic bronze medal at the London 2012, setting a personal best in the process



“Keep calm and carry on.” - Betsey Armstrong

A challenging time is just that—a period in time. Taking a few deep breaths and knowing that it won't last forever really allows me to focus on the present moment and task at hand.”

2008 water polo Olympic silver medalist and goalkeeper for 2012 U.S. Women's Olympic Water Polo Team

“Play for those who can't play.” - Misty May-Treanor

“My dad would tell me to Play for those who couldn't play. So my motivation is for people who struggle in life daily.” Two-time beach volleyball Olympic gold medalist



“If he can do it, I can too.” - Georgia Gould,

"My brother was an elite special forces guy, so I think, 'If he can do it, I can too.'" professional mountain biker Team Luna CHIX and first-time Olympian

“It's not the destination, it's the journey.” - Missy Franklin

In her Olympic debut at the 2012 Summer Olympics at age 17, Franklin won a total of five medals, four of which were gold. She swept the women's backstroke events, winning gold in both the 100-meter and 200-meter backstroke. Franklin's successes have earned her *Swimming World's* World Swimmer of the Year and the American Swimmer of the Year award in 2012 as well as the FINA Swimmer of the Year Award in 2011 and 2012



“What doesn't kill you makes you stronger.” - McKayla Maroney,

two-time gold medalist at 2011 World Gymnastics Championship (team and vault)

'Define yourself.' - Deena Kastor

"I think it's important to keep mantras fresh (sometimes the same verse can get stale). That being said, I love this powerful statement: 'Define yourself' I rehearsed it a million times during the 2005 Chicago Marathon 2004 Olympic marathon bronze medalist

“Man Up.” - Paige Railey

"I always tell myself to four-time sailing world champion and first-time Olympian 'man up.' Growing up beside my brother [2008 Olympic silver medalist Zach Railey], I was never allowed to whine. He wouldn't let me then, so I don't let myself now." She has been a member of the U.S. Sailing Team since 2005 and is also a member of the Harken and McLube Speed team. She was awarded in 2006 the ISAF World Sailor of the Year Award and the U.S. Sailing's Rolex Yachtswoman of the Year



"Steady, ready, poised, winning." - Arielle Martin

2011 BMX Supercross World Cup Champion and first-time Olympian

"This too shall pass" and, “All you can do is your best.” - Sue Francia



"This has been a tough year of injuries for me. I've been saying these a lot!" 2008 rowing gold medalist in the women's eight

"Keep on fighting." - Christina Loukas

"I always tell myself, 'Keep on fighting.' I wasn't always a good diver—I had to work my way up to where I am now. If I had given up, I wouldn't be in the position I am today. I would have so many regrets." Nine-time national diving champion and first-time Olympian

"My competition isn't resting!" - Kim Rhode

She is a six-time Olympic medal winner, including three gold medals, and six-time national champion in double trap. She is the most successful female shooter at the Olympics as the only triple Olympic Champion and the only woman to have won two Olympic gold medals for Double Trap.



"What doesn't kill you makes you stronger." - Jessica Long

Nine-time Paralympic swimming medalist

"Philippians 4:13: 'I can do all things through Christ'" - Chris Clover

St. Joe's guard "I put that on my sneakers," Clover said, pointing to his shoes. Taking a deep breath helps Clover when he's about to shoot, it's all riding on him and fans are yelling. "I don't really say too much," Clover said. "In my head, I'm just like, 'This ball has to go in.' I just do a method of breathing to calm my nerves down."



"Can you go *any* harder?" - Kristin Armstrong

"I ask myself, 'Can you go any harder? Are you hurting enough? Are you going hard enough?' I keep asking myself: 'Can you go *any* harder?'" 2008 road cycling Olympic gold medalist in women's time trial

"If you think you're done, you always have at least 40 percent more." - Lauren Crandall

Crandall was the captain of the 2012 and 2016 U.S. Olympic field hockey team. Crandall played 279 games with the Us National team.



"Everything is going to work out—there's no other option." - Kari Miller

2008 Paralympic sitting volleyball silver medalist. She was part of the USA team which won the gold at 2015 Parapan American Games in Toronto, Canada.

"If you're not having fun, then what the hell are you doing?" - Allison Jones,

It reminds me to find the reason why I'm doing it and why I'm out there, which makes things more manageable when I'm stressed and fatigued."Six-time Paralympian (has competed in both the summer and winter games)

"I am stronger than ever." - Jessica Hardy

American competitive swimmer who specializes in breaststroke and freestyle events. Hardy earned a bronze medal in the 4×100-meter freestyle and a gold medal in the 4×100-meter medley relays at the 2012 Summer Olympics.



"One word: 'Fight.'" -Erin Cafaro

Anyone can do it when it feels good. When you're hurting, that's when it makes a difference, so you have to keep fighting." Cafaro was a 2008 rowing Olympic gold medalist in women's eight.

"Remember, it's still a game" - Greg Smith

Guard for St. Joe's Basketball. Smith said when he's on the free-throw line and the pressure is mounting, he tells himself, "Remember, it's still a game." "At the end of it, it's still a sport, like we are supposed to have fun playing and everything like that," Smith said



"Next shot's going in" - Taylor Funk

Funk said he got another mantra from his father. "Every time you shoot the ball, just think, 'It's going in, no matter what,'" Funk said his father told him.

"Take it one pitch at a time. Take it one day at a time" - Amanda Scarborough

Playing college softball at Texas A&M, Scarborough was a two-time NFCA All-American, the 2005 Big 12 Conference Player of the Year, and 2007 Big 12 Pitcher of the Year.



"God doesn't give me anything I can't handle" - Lorenzo Edwards

"I went through a couple injuries, and it was tough, but that saying, and that mantra right there, kept me pushing through and kept me going," Edwards said.

“I make my weaknesses my strengths and my strengths stronger” - Lisa Fernandez

Former two-time gold medal-winning Olympian softball player at shortstop. Richardson is currently the head coach at Liberty. Richardson played college softball at UCLA and won the inaugural NCAA Division I softball tournament in 1982. She is a USA Softball Hall of Fame honoree



“I’ll keep doing my training and I’m sure the goals will come” - Wayne Rooney

Widely considered one of the best players of his generation, Rooney is the record goalscorer for Manchester United, and was the record goalscorer for the England national team from 2015 to 2023. He has also made more appearances for England than any other outfield player.



“No matter how far you get ahead of me, I’m gonna catch you.” & “Kill them with success and bury them with a smile” – Usain Bolt

a Jamaican retired sprinter, widely considered to be the greatest sprinter of all time. He is the world record holder in the 100 meters, 200 meters, and 4 × 100 meters relay.

The New Zealand All Blacks

15 Team Mantras



Mantra #1. Sweep the Sheds

“Never be too big to do the small things that need to be done.”

It would be easy for the All Blacks to develop out-sized egos. After all, they now dominate their code, and have millions of adoring fans.

But, how can anyone take their success too seriously when expected to literally and figuratively **'sweep the sheds'** – the smelly dressing rooms.

It's how the All Blacks express and **practice humility**, which they marry up with pride.

Pride in performance; total humility before the magnitude of the task.

Mantra #2. Go for the Gap

“When you're on top of your game, change your game.”

This is a lesson in always **self-improving**. Never become complacent.

Just as in "sweep the sheds", the All Blacks are taught to be aware that today's rooster can become yesterday's feather duster if the **rot of complacency** sets in.

A winning organization is an environment of personal and **professional development**, and sustainable competitive advantage is achieved by the development of a continuously self-adjusting culture.

Mantra #3. Play with Purpose

“Ask ‘Why?’”

The only way a team effectively pulls together in one direction is by knowing what the **higher purpose** is.

The sense of direction is needed to create belief and personal meaning in each player.



A **clear vision**, well-communicated, is what keeps the All Blacks surging forward, and successful teams energized.

Mantra #4. Pass the Ball

“Leaders create leaders.”

Liz Wiseman fleshes out this "pass the ball" in her concept *Multiplier leadership*, where leaders encourage those around them to realize their **true potential**.

“Leaders rooted in the logic of multiplication believe:

- 1. Most people in organizations are under utilized;*
- 2. All capability can be leveraged with the right kind of leadership;*
- 3. Therefore, intelligence and capability can be multiplied without requiring a bigger investment.”*



Leaders are not just the captains of the team (or industry); every person on a team should take responsibility and ownership for **team improvement**.

Mantra #5. Create a Learning Environment

“Leaders are teachers.”

Patrick Lencioni, author of *The Ideal Team Player* says a pillar of high performing cultures is that team members in any organization should be **humble, hungry and smart**.

“Leaders who can identify, hire, and cultivate employees who are humble, hungry, and smart will have a serious advantage over those who cannot.”

Coaches especially want hungry players.

Players who want to learn and develop their game, who constantly strive to improve.

However it does not mean it is solely the coach’s responsibility to teach. The All Blacks actively encourage players to **share learnings and mentor** each other, as well as taking responsibility for ensuring they themselves remain competitive.

Mantra #6. No Dickheads

“Follow the whanau (spearhead).”

This is shorthand for the term “hive mind.” Following the spearhead means flying in formation and **‘being of team’**.

Perhaps the most important lesson, in a sport that so often lionizes individuals, the All Blacks learn that no one is bigger than the team, and **individual brilliance** doesn’t automatically lead to outstanding results.



One selfish mindset will infect a **collective culture**.

Mantra #7. Embrace Expectations

“Aim for the highest cloud.”

Dream big is the message behind this lesson. Successful leaders set their **expectations high**, and try to exceed them. Of course, the higher the goal, the greater the risk of failure.

Fear of failure can be both motivating and debilitating.

The All Blacks are taught to **embrace fear of failure**, and cleverly use a healthy loss aversion to motivate even greater performance.



Mantra #8. Train to Win

“Practice under pressure.”

Like the U.S. Navy SEALs, the All Blacks place great emphasis on **exceptional training** – and it’s specifically training to win.

This is the secret to the All Blacks’ famous ability to perform under pressure – they have literally conditioned their brains and bodies to do so. They train under pressured conditions, and they train to develop their skills.



As James Kerr says in *Legacy*, most people have the **will to win**; few have the will to **prepare to win**.

Mantra #9. Keep a Blue Head

“Control your attention.”

Decision-making under **pressure** can separate the best teams from the poor ones. We have all seen hot heads blow their fuse in any number of sports.

A blue head is the opposite of a hot head. It’s a cool, controlled, pattern-seeing state, when you **retain your awareness** and your decision-making power. Bad decisions are not made through a lack of skill or innate judgment: they are made because of an inability to **handle pressure** at the pivotal moment.

Mantra #10. Know Thyself

“Keep it real.”

Self-awareness is the catch-cry of many of the world’s most admired thought leaders – from Brené Brown (*Dare to Lead*) to Patrick Lencioni (*The Ideal Team Player*). It is also one of the most critical components to a healthy team culture.

High-performing teams promote a culture of **honesty, authenticity and safe conflict**, and leaders lead the way on this.



Mantra #11. Invent Your Own Language

“Sing your world into existence.”

A vocabulary and shared set of beliefs glue a team together. A strong sense of **community and belonging** cements All Black players to their team.

Core values underpin the **stories** that give rise to this vocabulary and community spirit.



Shared understanding of what the All Blacks stand for, and why they stand for it, is how the bonds are strengthened that make them so invincible.

Mantra #12. Sacrifice

“Find something you would die for and give your life to it.”

Asking themselves if they could do a bit more is the **champion-making** behavior expected of the All Blacks. They give everything they have, and then are asked to give a little bit more.

Champions do Extra. Bleed on the field and know that your teammates will do the same for you. Be the first to arrive at the gym, be the last to leave.

Good is not considered good enough, and **high standards** are expected from all players.

Mantra #13. Ritualise to Actualise

“Create a culture.”

In business parlance, it's the **founder story** that brings depth and emotion to a company.

The All Blacks involve team members in rituals that point to their **shared history**, reminding and reigniting their collective identity and purpose.

Their **team culture** is unique, and is based on their heritage as a nation and rugby team. This is part of creating the legacy that others will inherit.



Mantra #14. Be a Good Ancestor

“Plant trees you’ll never see.”

This is the moment where All Blacks are asked to **“leave the jersey in a better place.”** In a nutshell, it’s about individual players adding to the legacy of this great team.

True leaders, by being **stewards of the future**, can simply outlast the competition.

Character is highlighted here. And character takes a higher place in the All Blacks than reputation, because *“your character is what you really are, while your reputation is merely what others think you are.”*



Mantra #15. Write Your Legacy

“This is your time.”

Imagine this... you’ve finally cracked a spot in the All Blacks. You are handed a **small black book**. It shows the jersey from the 1905 Originals, the first tour, and another from the 1924 Invincibles. There are other jerseys, and many pages of information about being an All Black.

But pages of the book are blank, for you, the new player, to fill in. You know what the All Blacks stand for, you know what makes a great All Blacks team member.

Now, you are charting your **own journey** to decide what your legacy to the All Blacks is going to be.

Better people make better All Blacks, writes Kerr.

Or Make Your Own!

Method 1

1. **Write down what you desire most, in this moment, right now.** For me, I needed to tap into an inner strength I know exists to shut down the external noise. Whether your desired state is aimed at manifesting security, pervasive self-confidence, or overcoming adversity, choose a concept that communicates exactly what you want.
2. **Turn it into a declarative statement.** Once you've landed on your concept, imagine you already have what you are looking for to attract it as part of your reality, and craft a declarative affirmation.
3. **Use first person.** If nothing else, a mantra is extremely personal. It speaks to no one else but you. Using words like "I am", "I have", "I will", allows you to connect with your end game by hearing an expression that conveys you are already there.
4. **Avoid negative words (not, never, etc.).** There's a reason "I am not a patient", needed to evolve. An optimistic expression of your desired goal- what you are versus what you are not- helps to employ positive thinking.
5. **Write, cite, repeat.** The only real requirement of a mantra is that it is authentic to *you* versus meeting the approval or reviews of your peers. Test your words by writing, citing, and repeating it, especially in key moments when your desired state is challenged.

Method 2

Write your mantra.

Here's how you do it:

1. Brainstorm. What do you have to do to be truly you? Who do you want to be even in the moments you aren't? How do you want to be remembered? What are the words you want people to use to describe you? Brainstorm these words and phrases. Write them down. Make certain you've captured the most important things.

2. Edit. Cross out any word that is too specific or feels like it belongs on your bucket list. For example, if you've written as part of your brainstormed list 'complete 3 marathons every year', 'run', 'compete', 'be a good leader', 'problem solver', 'mentor' on your list, you can cross out 'complete 3 marathons' and probably 'problem solver'. Plan to put the marathons on your goal list for the year every January and consider that 'problem solver' might be an aspect of leading.

3. Group. Put the remaining list into logical groupings. Using the above example, run and compete would go together. Mentor and good leader probably go together. Edit and group the words until you have somewhere between 4 and 10 groupings of words or phrases (but 10 is a lot!).

4. Determine the forever words. You're looking for one or two words to represent each group. The final words should also be active words. For mentor and good leader, the word might be "lead". For run and compete, the word could be "compete" if competing is what drives you or it could be "sweat" if like me, it's about exertion and performance or it could be "run" if you can't imagine a time when you won't.

5. These aren't hard and fast rules. After all, it's your mantra. If you want to use a word that doesn't fit the guidelines, use it! You may decide to use "friend" because being a good friend is the very most important thing to you. It isn't an active word, but there may not be another word that's exactly right. The word "friend" does convey who you want to be and will provide that reminder or focus when you say your mantra to yourself. And even though I do think the words should be tattoo-worthy, there's no law that says a mantra can't change. I've considered many times adding "be present" to my mantra. I haven't because it's more a challenge from myself to myself where my other words have to do with how I interact with the world. At least that's how I see it. You may see it differently.

