

# USE YOUR HEAD

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Coach John Wooden made some remarkably simple statements that are true and obvious yet need to be pointed out to many of us who consider ourselves coaches. Below are some of my favorites:

“Athletic ability does not equal coaching.”

“Leadership is learned – through listening, observation, study and trial and error. It is a growth process.”

“Don’t worry about being better than someone else, but never cease trying to be the best you can become.”

“Winning is not everything. Quality of effort counts and that offers the greatest and most long-lasting satisfaction.”

Athlete or coach, these principles hold true. In the previous article entitled “Lead with your Heart”, I explored and commented on Coach Wooden’s pyramid for leadership. The foundational qualities found in that article: industriousness, enthusiasm, commitment, respect and cooperation; are built upon with the next layer of qualities that demand thinking. Coach Wooden calls them self-control, alertness, initiative and intentness. As I discuss these areas, I may change terms and definitions to better communicate my intent and usage of these concepts as they apply to rifle and pistol coaches and athletes.

## ***Self-Control***

“Discipline yourself and others won’t need to.” Coach Wooden father taught him this at a young age. It applies to many areas of life other than athletics and is a valuable lesson for life. There are two areas of discipline: enforced discipline and self-discipline.

Enforced discipline is when you are under authority and that system of authority tells you what to do, how to do it and when to do it. We all function under enforced discipline throughout our lives: parents, teachers, coaches, boss or superior officer. It is a great way to learn unless we rebel against that authority. Within enforced discipline, we should learn to be self-disciplined.

Self-discipline is when you do what is expected of you, or what you have decided you want to do, from your own motivation and drive. The ability to be self-disciplined requires control of your thoughts and actions from self-determination. It demands that your emotions are in check so that you can think and make good decisions. Emotions are irrational and when functioning under emotion, self-discipline cannot function. In sports, self-discipline is doing a right thing in a right way every time. This is consistency of action so necessary in every sport.

## ***Alertness***

Many sports come down to what is happening “between your ears”. Another term for alertness would be awareness. This alertness helps you to quickly identify trends, changes, opportunities or even potential threats. It enables you to see signals that necessitate adjustment. Making the proper adjustment at the proper time is key in any sport.

## ***Initiative***

Definition: Assertive action based on proper risk assessment.

Taking action always has inherent risk. Your decision may be the cause of great success or humiliating defeat. A man who takes initiative must also have moral courage---the courage to make a decision, to act or take a stand even when others may not agree. Such actions should always be based on principle not emotion, information that is factual and with all the consequences fully in mind. We take risks and sometimes fail but learn from that failure and go on to succeed. Without risk we learn nothing and our successes will be few.

## ***Intentness or Resolve***

I like to use the word resolve because it communicates the fortitude and determination to stay the course no matter what. Resolve is the constant, relentless intent on achieving a goal. This is a mental attitude of a winner. Setbacks are a reason to work harder, find new ways to improve and refocus your efforts. This person is not a quitter when things are not going well. Resolve gives self-discipline and initiative tremendous strength as it is motivation “on steroids”.

Whether an athlete or a coach, we use these mental attitudes on a daily basis. They determine what kind of person we are or will become. There is no substitute for demonstrating these qualities as a coach so that young athletes can adopt them. With these qualities, there is no limit to what you can achieve.