

A SKATER'S MENTAL GAME

Interview: Per Welinder/Free Skating World Champion

MOTIVATION

ATHLETE WHISPERER: Your background—how old were you when you got involved in the sport seriously? What was your goal? Where did it lead you?

PER: *I had no real goals at the beginning, just a burning desire to learn how to skate and do new tricks. At first, it lead me from the suburbs of Stockholm, Sweden, to the center of the city where there were skate shops and occasional demos by U.S. pros like Tony Alva and Stacy Peralta. Then it lead to trips to Paris and other European destinations for competitions. Winning lead me to a more goal-like mind-set. I wanted to go to southern California, the Mecca of skateboarding. I wanted to compete against the best. I loved the skating opportunities, the weather, and the girls.*

Today, I live with my wife and two sons in southern California, and run my skateboard company.

DISTRACTIONS

AW: What or Who were your stumbling blocks along the way? Were you encouraged and supported or discouraged?

PER: *Rain and cold Swedish winters reduced the opportunities to skate outside. I was fortunate and was allowed to skate and do stationary tricks on a carpet in the living room. Also, when the weather was bad we would go to into Stockholm and find the least busy subway stations deep underground and skate for hours between the trains stopping. Those*

were very memorable days. My mother was supportive but my dad had reservations for many years about me spending so much time on the skateboard.

VISUALIZATION

AW: Did you have a pre-event psych-up routine?

PER: About 2-3 weeks before an event I would really start working on skating timed contest runs to the music I selected for that competition. On the actual day of the event I would warm-up in the arena. I would then go to a quiet area and rehearse the entire routine in my head numerous times.

SKATING AS IF. . .

AW: Who were your skating heroes?

PER: Skating with guys like Steve Rocco, Rodney Mullen, Hazze Lindgren, Bob Schmelzter, Don Brown, and Pierre Andre Seniserguez inspired me.

MENTAL GAME

AW: Did you use mental game techniques?

PER: I would prepare using visualization. I would also use it to imagine new tricks. I would imagine the trick in slow motion, real time, and speeded up. All can be helpful to grasp how you would go about pulling off the trick.

AW: How did you deal with disappointments?

PER: Mull it over for a day or two. I would use it to push harder, skate more often, skate faster, and try more tricks.

LESSONS LEARNED

AW: What are you doing now? Does your sport experience help you in business? In life?

PER: *In business, I really enjoy pushing for new products and new designs. That has carried over from the competitive skating days. And dealing with disappointments is similar too. I don't dwell on business disappointments; rather I try to learn from them. I hope that transfers into satisfied customers.*

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