

## Control Your Mind, Control Your Bout

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All too often while fencing, a bad situation occurs and the athlete responds and reacts based on how they initially feel about the situation. This reaction is the basis for how the fencer handles it. Sometimes, an athlete's emotions can get the better of them, and can even affect other parts of their game. Sometimes fencers forget that they are independent thinking individuals that possess free will, and get caught up with what is happening to them, rather than what they can do about it.

There are a lot of things that we can't control in this world, but the number one thing that we can control is ourselves. As fencers, we know that no one hands us touches; we have to go them ourselves. The same concept applies to difficult and challenging situations. If we come across something that we can't control (such as your weapon breaking), we have to think rationally to solve the problem. Irrational reactions can cloud our vision to a better solution. How we handle situations like these can make or break us.

One of the biggest mental errors in fencing is trying to control what you can't and not controlling what you can. Lots of fencers get caught up in trying to fix things that they have absolutely no control over. What they don't realize is that they can channel their energy towards solving their problem by focusing on what they can control.

• Can you control it?

Ask yourself if you can control ANYTHING about the situation that you're in. While there are many things that we absolutely cannot control, there are many things that we CAN control, even in a seemingly uncontrollable situation. Sure, you can't control that your favorite weapon broke, but you can have plenty of working back-up weapons that you're comfortable fencing with. You can't control the referee's call, but you can change your actions on the next touch.

• Is it a permanent or temporary situation?

As the saying goes, "Nothing lasts forever." Although something bad may feel like it is etched in stone, in reality it probably isn't. Say you are severely injured and you're feeling down. You think to yourself, "I'll never be able to fence like I did before." The truth is, with hard work and determination, you may be able to fence better than you did before (once you've healed, of course).

• It's all about perspective.

Messing up at one thing does not mean that you have messed up EVERY SINGLE THING in your life (or in fencing, for that matter). Failure is a learning opportunity, so keep it in perspective. Your defense may need some work, but your attacks may be fierce.

Check out this perspective grid. Do you think you are in control or are you at the fate of the fencing universe? When bad things happen, do you dwell on them or was it only this one time? Control your mind, control your bout!

Perspective Grid

Time

Quantity

In Control

Temporary

I lost my first bout in the pool, but I have four more to go.

This situation in particular is bad

That bout was bad, but I'll start over in my next one.

Not In Control

Permanent

"I lost my first bout in the pool like I always do."

Everything is bad.

"All my bouts seem to go that way. I suck!"