

A PRACTICAL GUIDE FOR THE ELITE ATHLETE

HOW TO MAKE THE

**PODIUM**

*Greg Louganis*

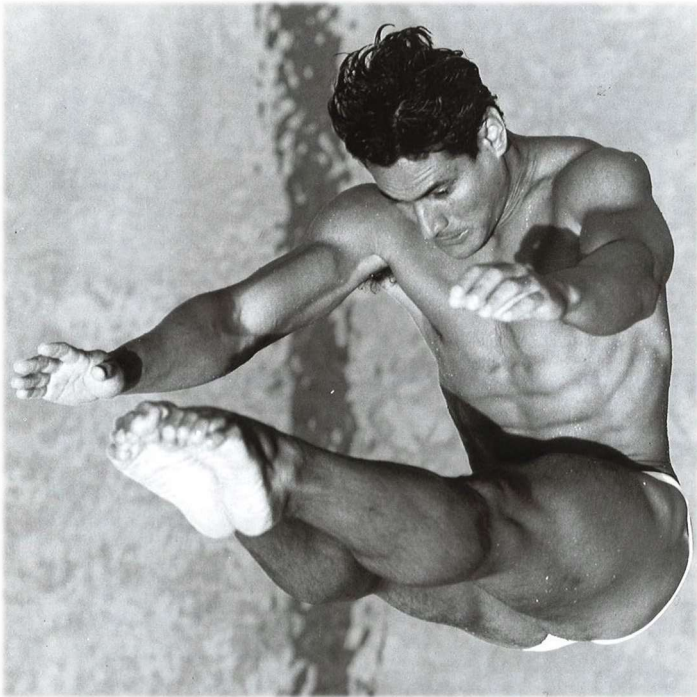
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# HOW TO MAKE THE PODIUM

*A Practical Guide for the Elite Athlete*

## THE MINDSET TO MEDALS

*“Podium placements happen months and years before the Opening Ceremonies of an Olympic Games.”*



**GREG LOUGANIS, 1984 OLYMPIC GAMES IN LOS ANGELES, CA**

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# SECTION 1

## **So, you want to make the podium of the Olympic Games.**

Podium placements happen months and years before the Opening Ceremonies of an Olympic Games.

Yes, it happens in training and how you train.

When I first met the Olympic hopefuls of the US Dive Team in 2010, two years before the London Olympics I asked them, “What is your ultimate diving goal?”

They all responded enthusiastically, “Make the Olympic Team!”

I then asked them, “And then what?”

They looked dumbfounded and at each other like it was a trick question, “make the Olympic Team.”

I asked, “Don’t you want to make the podium, to bring something home? Don’t you want to win?”

There in laid the problem in Diving of only one medal in 2000, fortunately Gold, Laura Wilkinson, and zero medals in 2004 and again zero in 2008 and we had four more opportunities for medals with synchronized diving!

No one was training to win! Only “make the Olympic Team.”

You have to devote a minimum of 20% of your training to “training as if!” Training as if you are AT the Olympic Games.

Setting up the scenarios, visualizing the Natatorium, feeling the energy of the crowd, seeing the people in the stands, placing the camera people and judges, smell of the air, feel the sensations in your body, the energy of event, ECT.

Just like when you see kids playing basketball and emulating their favorite players, setting up the game winning point throw and the pressure of the clock running out.

They will offer commentary on the set up to the shot with enthusiasm, playing up the drama of win or lose, and this all or nothing pressure point!

This is what you have to do in practice.

I say 20% because more often than not you will not be successful and that can diminish drive and enthusiasm.

Play this game, but play hard, and play to win!

My Coach, Ron O'Brien had a game we would play, the 700 Game on platform.

700 was a huge benchmark of our sport at the time.

To Break 700 on Platform I had to average 8.5 or better on all ten dives to break that mark.

One practice we had gale force winds blowing into the platform and the rain that was coming in was coming down sideways, this was Miami, Florida.

He threw out a challenge to me, to play the 700 Game.

This meant to me, in the horrible weather, I could do just one of each of my dives and be done with training that day.

Quiet and determined I took on the challenge, I said, "OK."

I warmed up and stretched just as I would have if it were a major competition, I knew I had to be focused, and I didn't want to have to do repeats of my dives in this weather.

I started out "8" for my first dive, then a "9" for my second dive, I am in range, I thought, "9.5", "9", "7.5", "9" ...

The last dive I was in striking distance, and it was my most difficult dive, reverse three and half tuck and I needed "8's".

I did the dive and looked at Ron, I knew it was good, but I didn't know if it was good enough.

Ron smiled, and said "8.5", YES!!! I did it! In gale force winds and rain, I was successful!

Adverse conditions I didn't always thrive in, but when Mother Nature throws an opportunity like this, it really becomes a blessing.

What better curve ball that can be thrown at you for an opportunity to build mental toughness, strength, courage, confidence, and adaptability.

In order to make the podium, you have to be willing to do what others will not do, go the extra mile, stay a bit longer, try something new.

Ron informed me the next day that I was the only one who got in the pool that day.

The others felt the conditions were too risky and they felt unsafe.

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## SECTION 2



One of the major points I make for anyone on the path to the Olympic Games, is I warn them about the “Post Olympic Blues.”

After a big grand event like the Olympics, it is such a high- high and coming down you can sink into the lowest of lows.

The highest rate of suicides amongst Olympians is Olympic Silver Medalists.