



## Nothing is impossible in sport

Nothing, but absolutely nothing is impossible in sport if you are prepared to put your mind to a specific goal and seriously work towards it.

Wayne Coldman, strength and conditioning coach at the Hpc, really believes it. Actually, he makes no secret as to what motivates him and the team that works with athletes helping them to fulfil their dreams.

"There is nothing nicer than achieving something people believed cannot be done. Five years ago there were those who said South African athletes will never be able to dip under ten seconds in the 100 metres. They got proven wrong. In the last three years, it has been done more than 14 times.

"For years everybody has been singing the praises of the American, Australian and European long jumpers but this season it has been Luvo Manyonga that has been pushing the boundaries becoming the first athlete in eight years to jump 8.60m and further. He has already done so on four occasions. His exploits prove that success is not limited to certain countries, in the end, everything boils down to how much an athlete and his support team is prepared to sacrifice in order to succeed."

To describe Coldman as passionate about what he does will be an understatement.

He absolutely lives for his job. Asked what motivates him he quotes the legendary Vince Lombardi.

"I firmly believe that any man's finest hour, the greatest fulfilment of all that he holds dear, is that moment when he has worked his heart out in a good cause and lies exhausted on the field of battle - victorious. In practical terms it means working as a team for up to 11 months with Akani Simbine preparing to execute in mere 10 seconds that absolutely perfect race in the 100 metres."

Coldman compares what he and his Hpc colleagues do as being the "pit crew" whose job is to ensure marginal gains for athletes that could lead to a big breakthrough for South African sport. Simbine and Manyonga are just two of the athletes who have been benefitting from his passion. It is certainly not just a case of athletes rocking up and being helped at the Hpc.

"It is important for us to get a feel for an athlete when we start to work with them. In other words we want to know what makes them tick. As I spent so much time with specific athletes I try to adapt to their personalities. When I am with Akani I need to be like Akani in other words you need to gain his trust. I need to understand what prevents an athlete from having a perfect training week. It could be something emotional or mental, it might even be physical injury an athlete does not want to talk about. The closer I get to them the more I am able to walk in their shoes. Eventually, I know who they really are and what they are striving to achieve.

That is when you can just be yourself because of the understanding that has developed between you and the athletes.

According to Coldman it is important for him to be able to differentiate between needs of the different athletes he is working with.



“Akani’s programme is more strength-based while Luvo’s more speed-based. This is the simplest way I can describe it. The problem is that we work with human beings which means what works for one athlete won’t necessarily work for another. It should also be



remembered that if something worked once there is no guarantee it will work a second time. So every three to four months we have to re-plan.

“For Luvo the most important thing is to get him to jump. I view him as a brittle machine which needs to be fine-tuned to do one thing incredibly well. The big buzz words that everybody wants to know about nowadays is injury prevention. Any injury is an athlete’s biggest loss of time so we really need to

understand what might break and find a balance in his training programme. No athlete can ever be overloaded during training.

“I always try and establish a definite routine and discipline when working with athletes which mean that an athlete like Luvo should realise that when we agreed that our training starts at nine it is nine, not ten past nine. During a training session, it is also important to realise what my responsibilities are and what his are and that we get to do everything that we planned on doing. When he leaves the gym he should understand that there is still more work to be done so he should never use all his energy in one session.

“When working with Akani it is all about ensuring that he has the perfect training week. So I see it as my job to find out when he wants to eat, what time he wants to start his first training session, when he wants to go for a massage and whether he wants to see a physiotherapist.”

In the end to Coldman it is all about being able to say at least once a year: “I love it when a plan comes together. The ultimate high is when everything pays off leading to that one perfect moment. No money in the world can buy that moment.”



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