



**HIGHER GROUND**  
with Bobby Simpson

# Ashley's Dream... Your Dream

**D**uring one of our recent Higher Ground softball camps, I was eating lunch with Ashley Chastain, a senior pitcher at the University of South Carolina. Ashley had attended some of our camps when she was about ten or twelve years old and now often assists us as an instructor. The camp was near her hometown and the guy taking her order knew her from earlier days. He asked how she liked playing big time college softball. With a smile bright enough to light some entire small towns, she excitedly replied, "I'm living my dream."

A number of years ago, someone asked me what I believed about the significance of dreams. At the time, they were inquiring about the dreams that people have while they are sleeping and if I thought that there was any real meaning to these brain waves, or whatever dream gurus call them. I am certainly no authority on the significance of dreams, even though my daughter did once call me a know-it-all, so my answer was that I really did not know.

About that same time, I was reading a book that mentioned the dreams of athletes. It was referring to what the athlete would like to accomplish, not what goes on in her head while she is snoozing. Now, those dreams are a little more familiar to me in the work that I do with coaches and players. I often suggest to players that they need to dream big dreams, and then use hard work and smart work to make the dreams come true.

In *Golf Is A Game Of Confidence*, Dr. Bob Rotella says, "Most dreams are attainable if the dreamer is ready to devote consistent, intelligent effort to them." That sixteen word sentence is a mouthful of wisdom. A lot of players, and coaches, may dream big dreams, but they do not give the dreams much of a chance because they fail to mix the mental image of that dream with consistent, intelligent effort. Their recipe is much too heavy on image and much too lacking on work. They use psychological visualization, but neglect to use enough elbow grease.

Let me pause here to say that I spend a large majority of my time with players working to improve their mental game so they can maximize their physical skills. That said, players can often get so wrapped up in goal setting, visualization, positive self-talk and other perfectly good mental techniques that they neglect to put in the necessary amount of purposeful physical effort. The psychologists give us good techniques, but we can put too much confidence in the mental and simply not work hard enough or smart enough to make the dream come true. In that case, the dream lies dormant on the shelf of our brain and never gets to the joints of our hands and feet. We then tend to get infected with permanent potential.

The dream does give us a fine starting point, a potential for success. Permanent potential, however, has been the downfall of many athletes. Unlike Ashley Chastain, some players never put wings to

their dreams. They pump them up with hot air, a lot of talk, but they do not attach the hands and feet that make the dreams come alive. That takes smart, hard, consistent effort, and far too many are ready and able, but unwilling to make the necessary sacrifices.

Rotella added, "The difference between a dream and a fantasy is commitment." So true! The reason the dream remains a fantasy is that the player is unwilling to devote consistent, intelligent effort. The reason the player does not devote consistent, intelligent effort is usually due to a lack of commitment. Big dreams, big words, and little work leads to a fantasy, rather than a dream come true.

I remember once asking Ken Ravizza, the sports psychologist for the California Angels, Los Angeles Dodgers, and several USA Olympic teams, what he thought was the biggest factor in achieving success in the major leagues. His answer was commitment. The same answer was echoed on the Houston

Astros site, in an article by Gene Coleman, their fine strength coach.

Do I believe in dreams coming true? If we are talking about the kind where a player consciously thinks about what she would like to see happen, the answer is a big YES, followed by a big IF. If the player is committed enough to the dream that she will put in enough hard, smart work, then a reasonable dream is usually attainable. Thankfully, Ashley has been willing to work hard and smart, have the strong commitment necessary to overcome physical obstacles, maintain emotional control, and develop the inner strength, wisdom and maturity it takes to actually live her dream. That's why I respect her so much.

Know that dreams are a terrific starting point for YOUR quest to Get Better Every Day. Be sure to include plenty of hard work and intelligence and you have a prize-winning recipe. As Gloria Estefan sang at the 1996 Olympics, in her hit *Reach*, "Some dreams live on in time forever, those dreams you want with all your heart. And I'll do whatever it takes, follow through with the promise I made, put it all on the line, what I hope for at last will be mine."

My friend Ashley is still living her dream. I wish you the best as you seek to live yours.

The International Softball Federation, International Sports Group, the United States Air Force, and many international federations have used Higher Ground services. Higher Ground has conducted activities in approximately forty states, plus Argentina, Austria, Azores, Canada, China, Cuba, Czech Republic, England, Germany, Greece, Ireland, Italy, Netherlands, Norway, Panama, Puerto Rico, Scotland, Slovakia, U.S. Virgin Islands, and Zambia.

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