



The Mental Performance Index: Ranking the Best Teams in Super Bowl History

John F. Murray

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In "The Mental Performance Index: Ranking the Best Teams in Super Bowl History," clinical and sports psychologist Dr. John F. Murray shares his fascinating personal journey and many interesting people and situations inspiring him to love American football and later become a sports psychologist. Growing up in South Florida in the early 1970s, it was impossible for him to ignore the influence of the "perfect season" of the 1972 Miami Dolphins, or Don Shula's constant insights. Later as a sports psychologist, he explains how he wanted to help athletes by measuring how they had performed in a more comprehensive way that accurately included their "mental performance" too. Murray reasoned that since he was constantly telling his athletes to stay focused on "performance" and "process" rather than on "outcome" or "scores," he needed a way to measure how well his clients had complied, and also to verify quantitatively that what he was saying was true! From the earliest caveman days when the first spear thrower attempted to kill a Buffalo so that his village could eat and survive, that person's performance under pressure, or the quality of his mental skills, had been a matter of deep discussion and evaluation. Some, like our modern-day Joe Montana or Tom Brady, handled pressure well and thrived, while others choked, but that quality of "smart play" was never doubted to be important. Despite this universal understanding, Murray jumps out of his shoes when he realizes that nobody in history had taken the time to measure or quantify this "smartness" of play or "mental performance!" He quotes Hegel in Chapter 1, as Hegel once said "Because it's familiar, a thing remains unknown." So the author created a new statistic over eight years to correct this historical oversight and called it "The Mental Performance Index." Indeed, what had been missing since the early cavemen is now finally corrected in this book as we have a way of quantifying mental performance that enhances our understanding of team performance, and it will launch a paradigm shift in sports. With this new statistic, and a way to capture performance that includes mental aspects (seen in "smart play" or its opposite in carelessness, choking etc.), the author reviews every play in Super Bowl history. His results reveal this statistic to be the best predictor of success in the Super Bowl by far when compared with all the other more traditional team performance stats! The MPI even predicts success better than points scored or given up, further highlighting that what had been ignored in team sports can no longer be ignored, and confirming the truth that it is smart to place "performance" over "outcome" when training a team or an athlete. The mental game is no longer some murky, intangible or complicated factor after this book. When it is measured along with overall performance it is the key to success. Knowledge is power, and with a new and more accurate way to rate and understand team performance, coaches and teams have the potential for vast improvement using this system. This book shares a passionate and important discovery in sports and the thrust of this book is what led forward writer and 4-time Super Bowl champion Tom Flores to write: "Dr. Murray's Mental Performance Index can be and will be the next part of sports evolution in the 21st century." Epilogue writer Lesley Visser, the only female inducted into the pro football Hall of Fame, explores the genius of Bill Walsh and his San Francisco 49ers teams. Finally, Murray ranks all teams based on MPI statistics as well as more traditional measures, tells us which teams were the best ever, and provides key lessons of success that anyone can apply from each Super Bowl played between 1967 and 2011.

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