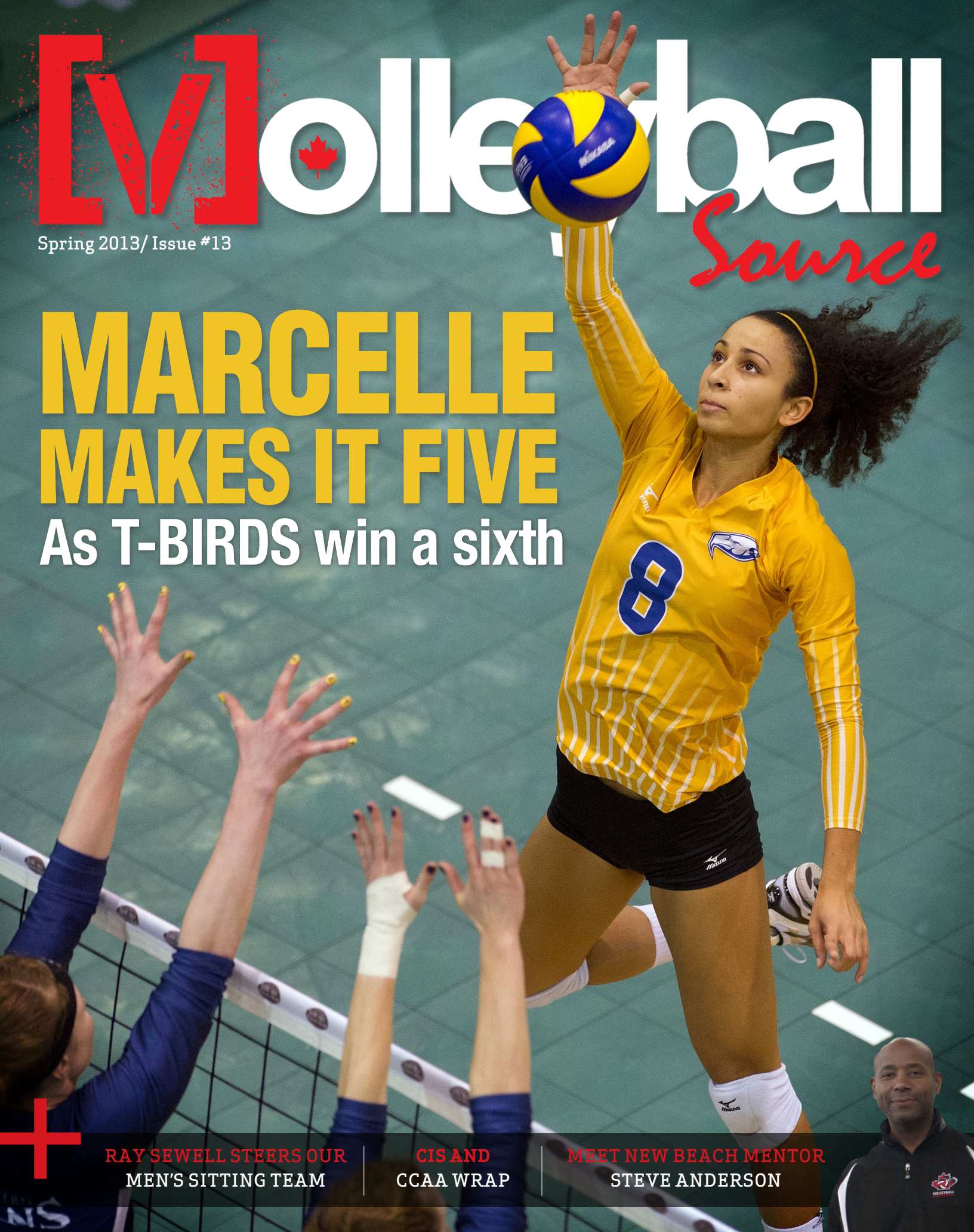


M Volleyball

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MARCELLE MAKES IT FIVE As T-BIRDS win a sixth



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A Winning Athlete's Mental Makeup

By **Dr. NATASCHA WESCH, PhD**

Does a certain mentality predispose one player to excel and another to fall short? Read on...

There are definite psychological characteristics that make up a winning mentality, regardless of sport. It may be beach or indoor volleyball or even hockey. Winners have a unique mindset. This is shown in three main areas:

1. Poise under pressure
2. Results, not mistakes and
3. Clear vision

Let's look at each of those individually...

Poise under pressure

Synonyms of poise are **balance** or **composure**. Successful athletes have the ability to focus in pressure situations, maintaining their composure regardless of outside distractions. They are able to keep their emotions in check while tuning in to their strengths. Obstacles are inevitable in sport, but successful athletes take those obstacles in stride.

The development of a strong mental game plan is the key to balance. Knowing what key points to focus on, how to regain focus if distracted and how to overcome obstacles along the way are essential ingredients of this game plan.

Results, not mistakes

A bad serve or dig is only that if you **don't** learn from it. Likewise, a mental hiccup is only a hiccup if you **don't** learn from it. Performance data are the most relevant information you can gather - in a nutshell, they teach you what works and what doesn't work for you. By examining the results (or data), successful athletes find ways to improve performance.

They consider the data and then



modify their training and preparation to encompass it, keeping what works for them and discarding what doesn't. Rather than get discouraged, they ask **more** questions. The ensuing answers provide them with a better understanding of what it will take for them to achieve their goals.

Something else to consider: your preparation and performance may sometimes be bang on, but your opponent may simply be better. If that's the case, swallow your pride, learn from the experience, and continue to train and prepare. If you do things right, you will succeed - it's only a matter of time.

Clear vision

Successful athletes are successful people first and foremost. They have what I call a **clear vision** and accept the challenge of developing to their full potential. They also know that life can be

a rollercoaster ride, that some days are going to be better than others, and that other days the results won't come.

But they will get up and try again, working even harder to better themselves. They know what they want and are willing to make the effort each and every day to get it, even if it is only in some small way.

The road may be long and hard, but that doesn't deter them.

So, when it comes down to the final point of the final set of the final match at the Olympics, what will differentiate the winner from the loser? It will likely be mental makeup and mental skills development, not physical or technical skill!

(Wesch is a Mental Performance Consultant who works with athletes and teams of all sports backgrounds and ages; for more information, or to contact her directly, visit www.elitemindperformance.com)