

Girl Power

THESE WORLD-RENOWNED PROFESSIONAL ATHLETES KNOW A THING OR TWO ABOUT OVERCOMING CHALLENGES AND CHASING DREAMS. SO, WHO BETTER TO LEARN THE SECRETS OF SELF-MOTIVATION FROM THAN THESE WOMEN WHO MOTIVATE AND INSPIRE US?

By Nina Hemphill Reeder



GABRIELLE DOUGLAS

The 17-year-old gymnast commanded our attention with her 2012 London Olympics performances, which led to gold medals in both the individual and team gymnastic competitions. Since then, the Olympic champion has been on a world tour of media appearances and awards ceremonies and has even joined our First Lady's Let's Move campaign to help inspire kids to get active and healthy. Though taking a break from international competitions this season, she's still in the gym, gearing up for the 2016 Olympics.

What motivates you to work out and stay disciplined when you're not in season?

I have to think about it long term. It's going to be exhausting and painful now, but once I get back to the gym, it wouldn't be so much of a shock because I've been doing workouts and keeping my body in shape.

What kept you inspired throughout the process of chasing the Olympic gold?

Definitely motivational quotes and scriptures kept me going and my support systems: siblings, family, coaches—they were all in it with me. My fans as well just supported me. Whenever I had a tough time, they would get me up off the floor and get me back on the right track. I just think the whole dream in general, inspiring girls and the Olympics, definitely kept me motivated to keep pushing myself.

Now as you go back into training, how do you focus with these high expectations on your shoulders?

I can't approach my training as Olympic Champion Gabby Douglas. I'm approaching it the same way I did in 2012 before anyone really knew who I was. I have to look at myself as a gymnast who wants to fight for her spot on the 2016 Olympic Team. Nothing will be given to me, and I know that I have to work just as hard as I did in 2012 to make my dreams come true again. I try not to look at pressure as a negative thing. I use it to fuel my determination when I am in the gym training.



JOHN CHENG

SANYA IN DRESS: WETU; SANYA RUNNING: ERROL ANDERSON; MAYA: COURTESY OF SUBJECT



MAYA MOORE

This October, Moore, 24, hopes to compete in the WNBA playoffs for a chance to take home a second championship title with the Minnesota Lynx. Already, the WNBA phenomenon is in a very small and elite club of male and female athletes who've won NCAA titles, a WNBA or NBA championship and an Olympic gold medal. And continuing to keep good company, Moore is the first female to sign to the prestigious Jordan brand—the Michael Jordan/Nike apparel line, which flourishes under superstar athlete endorsements such as Moore, Jordan himself and other NBA, MLB and NFL all-stars.

If you're having a bad game or your team is behind, what do you do to restore your confidence?

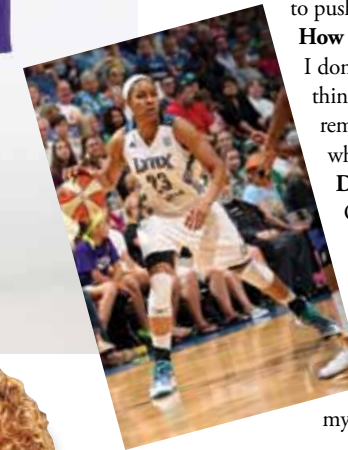
I like to set myself little goals in the moment. Sometimes, you get a big problem and you want to get it all back at once. If we are down 10 points, I want to get it all back immediately. But no, you need to focus on, "let's go on a 4-0 run, let's get two scores and two stops, two offensive great possessions and two defensive great possessions," and you kind of build from there. It's also having a short-term memory as far as the bad things that happen and using all the momentum you can when the good things happen to push you forward.

How do you get over a tough loss?

I don't like to hold things inside. I like to think about them and process through when things happen—good or bad. I like to write down my goals and keep them around to remember what I want to do. I break down little things in my day, in my preparation, where I can get better. I make sure next time it's better.

Do you feel pressured by comparisons to other athletes? How do you handle it?

Of course, when you are playing a team and you're in a game and you are matched up against a certain player, you want to beat that player. Then you definitely want to out play your opponent throughout the course of the season. I think I approach it with a healthy competition of I'm trying to outwork you, but I don't think I wrap my identity around comparing myself to others. I'm not saying I don't get upset when someone scores on me or is doing better than me—I want to do my best. But if I feel like I am doing my best and I'm competing and defending my best and they just beat me, then hats off to them.



SANYA RICHARDS-ROSS

The four-time Olympic gold medalist, world-class sprinter, American record holder and NFL wife (to two-time Super Bowl champ Aaron Ross) now has reality TV star to add to her list of titles. The WE tv series *Glam & Gold* recently chronicled the 28-year-old's journey, trying to balance family life, rebounding from a career-halting surgery and managing a business.

Do you ever get nervous before a big race? How do you manage it?

In 2008, I was the heavy favorite to win gold in the 400 [meter race]. And I just put so much pressure on myself. I wanted the moment so much that I think it was a balance between nerves and a whole lot of things that happened the night before my race, so I was devastated when I finished third in Beijing. I had won every race that year—and only lost the one I wanted the most. I definitely had my share of struggles with my nerves, emotions and desires. But it has taught me a lot, and now I know better how to handle it...As much as you want it, if you change too much—if I change my mentality, if I change

the way I'm thinking—then I make it way bigger than it really is. So in London, even though it was the Olympic final, I just tried to stay in that zone—"I can do this. I'm the best in the world." And so I tried to use those same mantras and that same mindset in the Olympic finals and not somehow become this new person, and that is what really helped me to have my best performance.

Was there ever a time you felt like quitting? How did you get through?

I think I've gone through that a couple times in my career. I remember in 2010, especially when I was suffering with my Behcet's disease, where I had really bad mouth ulcers and skin lesions and then earlier in the season in 2010 when I pulled my quad muscle. And it just felt like everything was going wrong, and I just wasn't sure. For me, though, I've never felt like quitting completely but maybe quitting on the season. But I stuck it out. It wasn't my best year by far, but I thought it was a good season for me to prove to myself that I am strong, I am tough and I can bounce back. I think it did help me have my 2012 season. [Richards-Ross won two gold medals in the 2012 London Olympics.]

