

Ask Your Sporting Champion

Interview with Natalie Cook

Gold Medalist – Sydney Olympic Games
Bronze Medalist – Atlanta Olympic Games
Finalist – Athens Olympic Games

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Transcription of Teleseminar Interview with special guest, Australian Beach Volleyball Champion, Natalie Cook. Go inside to find out what it takes to be one of the best in the world over a 15 year+ career.

N a t a l i e C o o k I n t e r v i e w

Annette Huygens-Tholen: Thank you and welcome to the call Natalie Cook. I appreciate you taking the time to share some of your experience with us tonight. As you know I sought out questions that the audience want to ask you, but firstly I want to ask you: What drives you to continue on in the sport, at an elite level for so long? You have been competing on the World Tour since 1993. What keeps you going?

N a t a l i e C o o k: It's passion for the sport, and the fact that I have been able to continue for so long, I like what I do, and every day when I get out of bed, I love the fact that I'm going to play beach volleyball, and because I've been able to keep that going for a long time, it has enabled me to build a platform of success off that, and I'm very grateful that I've continued to love the sport. Even through the adversities, and the successes, and the challenges, the passion has always stayed.

A H T: Yes, definitely that passion can make a big difference between success. Do you feel that you have a specific passion that you apply to the Olympics more so than any other event?

N C: Well, with our coach of the first three Olympics, Steve Anderson, he has always prepared us to perform at that event, and every tournament leading in to that, he always made sure he put it in the right context I guess. And if we succeeded, he congratulated us, but if we didn't, he sort of made sure that we got the learning pieces from the losses, or the events, that would prepare us for an Olympic Games. And it really is a different event, the competition is spread over 10 days, as opposed to playing over four days in a normal competition. And when you get to an event where you're representing your whole country, and not just yourself and your team mate, which is most of the other events, it does do a lot of funny things to people in their minds, and I've managed to focus my mind on keeping it simple. The simplicity of it with our game is to keep the ball off the sand, and put it in the opposition's court and make sure it doesn't come back. So, we do all of our training in preparation for the best skills to allow that to happen. But at the end of the day, it's just turn the passion on and keep the ball off the sand, and never ever give up. And that's really what I live by.

A H T: And it is really about keeping it simple, I mean, you sort of see people who try to make it so complex, and even applying that to other aspects of life. It really can be simple, and the more simple you make it, the better results you get. Is that so?

N C: Absolutely. As soon as you start adding more ingredients, and more things to the pot, it just is harder to stir, really. So, it's like a big vegetable soup, maybe just a carrot soup sometimes is good enough. You don't want to keep adding, keep adding, keep adding, it just makes it too hard to decipher at the end of the day. So our game is about dig, set and spike, and ultimately it's the dig: it's the path of the serve, and if you can master that first skill, it makes the game a whole lot easier. And so we really do break it down to simplicity. And even beyond that is breathing, if you can master your breath, and master your inner being, then you can do anything at great levels.

A H T : *Excellent. A simple question: when did you first dream of going to the Olympics, and was it the same time of when you first dreamt of winning gold?*

N C : My first recollection was when I was 8 years old, sitting in front of the television watching the 1982 Commonwealth Games, and Lisa Curry, a famous Australian swimmer at the time won the 100 meter freestyle, and she got out of the pool and on to the podium with her Australian tracksuit, and gold medal around her neck, singing Advance Australia Fair, and I said I want to do that, and I wanted to be the best in my field and win an Olympic game. So, I'd say, yes, it was the same moment in time when I wanted to be the best, and at the time I thought I'd go in swimming, because that's what I was following and that's what I was doing, and I didn't quite know that I would change courses, and it ended up being beach volleyball. But I'm much more grateful for beach volleyball because I really did get sick of the black line in swimming and I'm amazed at the life that unfolded because of and 8 year old sitting in front of the television.

A H T : *A sociologist, Dr. Morris Massey, said, "who we idolize at 10 years old is who we become." And so it's really an important stage of our lives, the role models that we have at our early times. And so, Lisa Curry, do you think that she inspired you beyond that single event? Was she a role model in other areas of her life for you?*

N C : I think she remained a role model for me for a very long time, and she was a swimming role model, and an athletic role model for most of my childhood. And then when she converted her talents to business, and she had a swim suit line called Hot Curry, and then she went into other areas of business, that was an inspiration as well, to know that as an athlete, you don't have to be one-dimensional, you can branch off into other areas of your life and be successful across all areas, and not just one, in one single direction. And that definitely has enabled me to succeed in business, and to look for other opportunities in life outside of sport.

A H T : *Yes, and doing very well there. So, a big question: how do you balance all these time commitments between your sport, between your business, relationships, you know, the whole gamut? How do you do that?*

N C : I do feel like a juggler at times, and as jugglers do, they sometimes drop the balls, and it really is a learning experience. There are times that I feel very balanced and enjoying life, and then all of the sudden I'll drop one of the balls and have to go and clean up that challenging event. And whether that is with volleyball, or whether that is with my business, I just make sure that I give the appropriate amount of time at any given time in the situation to each event. For example, the Olympics is coming up very, very soon, so 99% of my focus is on beach volleyball and training for that. But a few years ago when I had some time, I would spend maybe 40% of my time on my business. So I really do know when the time comes to switch the focus and go single-minded, and really get prepared for what's ahead. And I think that's the key, is knowing what to focus on, when.

A H T : *Fantastic. I coach a lot of people both in sport and off sport, and time management seems to be such an issue. Do you look at time management from a weekly plan? Do you look at time on a monthly plan, a daily plan? What works for you?*

N C : Well, I have a diary that extends probably 18 months, so I know what is ahead and what is coming, and I also then plan each day down to the hour. So I can tell you what I'm doing all the way through to the end of the year, and I have sort of a computer brain in my head, which is a calendar, and I know what is ahead and when the appropriate time is to switch my thinking. So that really does help me, and I have a list of events that I do for volleyball, and a list of things that I need to get done outside of volleyball, and I just go about my business doing them and checking them off, and if I don't get to them that day, I transfer it to the next day. And I'm really diligent in making sure that I do what I need to do when I need to get it done.

A H T : *Yes, excellent. So, really good discipline. You just made me think as you were talking then how you have this ability to think ahead, a bit of a computer brain and see things in front of you, do you apply that same skill on the volleyball court? Are you able to see, you know, three moves ahead, a little bit like a chess player?*

N C : Yes, absolutely. And funnily enough, my father did teach me to play chess very early on, and I still love the game of chess, and I don't play it nearly as much as I'd like to. And I often think that I'd be pretty good at cards and poker or blackjack because I'm a card counter, which I do on the volleyball court, is I count the plays, and I know three plays ahead what I want it to look like according to what is happening in the moment. So I set things up for what I want it to look like. And in the past too, I know what has happened, I know what has been successful, what hasn't been successful, and that allows me in pressure situations, to know what to go to, to give me the best opportunity to win the point. And that, I think, is choice under pressure creates the champion, and you have to get in that mindset and continue to make those choices. Like Michael Jordan says, he just keeps taking shots and eventually he knows that he is going to succeed. And that's what it's about, don't fear that, get right in the face of the fear and keep taking your chances.

A H T : *Is there ever a time when you feel you're better off when you actually just play in the moment, in the flow verses thinking far ahead?*

N C : Yes, and I think that happens naturally, I think all in the preparation and if the plan is going to plan — so, you set a game plan, and it's all happening as you see, then it's very easy to be in the moment, what we call the zone. And I think the more you can get in to that space, the better outcome, and better results will be. But I also believe that sometimes in order to get in to that space, you need to know where you're going, and not just fall in to it like a black hole and hope that you get lucky. But, by sort of future planning, I think it allows you to understand when those moments are coming, and be prepared for them rather than being an accidental in the zone person. And that's another difference of continued success at a high level, as you know where you are at any given time, and you know what is required to get the best out of your performance.

A H T : *Yes, it's a really important distinction to have, because some people sort of see it as black and white. You know, do you think three or four moves ahead, or do you play in the moment? And it's really important to have a combination of both and know when do you plan, and when to let go and just "be" while you're playing.*

N C : Yes, that is definitely the challenge. And sometimes as athletes, we get it wrong. And often, if you get it wrong, you lose, especially at Olympic levels, and world levels. Not so much at state and national levels, you can sometimes get away with it, and you come off the court going, oh, phew, we won that, we probably shouldn't have because we're weren't in the right place, and you get rewarded and you get punished by how your mind operates, and it teaches you, if you can take it as a teaching and learning moment, it helps you to get stronger and stronger. But if you take it personally, and get disappointed and sort of depressed from it, then often you'll find that you're not going to be successful.

A H T : *That brings me to an interesting question someone posed to me. I teach that there is no such thing as failure, it's only feedback. So, it's either results you like, or you don't like, and you do something about it. And so I want to ask: what moments of your career do you see as a failure, if any?*

N C : Well, it's appropriate timing, because I have just come back from an event on the Crocs Tour today from Perth, and I lost a match yesterday that I would have thought that I would have won, and I wasn't in the right mindset, and didn't have the right preparation, and therefore didn't execute at the level that our team should have executed. So, you know, there was a time yesterday and part of today where I do feel like I have failed. The same thing has happened when I have lost to teams that I expect to beat, and you sort of have to take a stop check, and have a look at why, and what went wrong, and look to understand the feedback like you said, what is it that we can do differently to avoid that situation again? And it has happened a few times in my career where I have expected to win, and had gone out and not played well enough to win and you kind of get the slap in the face. And it's a big wake up call to remind you that sport isn't always going to go the way that you think it's going to go, and sometimes the ball doesn't follow the path that you would like it to. And you've got to pick yourself up, and I think that's what champions do best is they pick themselves up from their losses and they get back on the bike and they go harder and harder the next time. And my failures have helped me get stronger, and the next time I'm in a position of that same feeling or presence, I can push through it to a new level.

A H T : *Yes, it's very important. So, how long do you generally stay in that disappointment before you're able to transition to the feedback, "what now?" Has there been times when you have found it hard to get out of it? Or as a champion, you quickly have that transition down pat?*

N C : Now, after 15 years I like to think I'm pretty quick at getting out of both states. But, when I first started, I was the snotty nosed little kid, and I would sit in my depression and that state for probably a month before I'd really come out of it, and I'd get

grumpy and mad at anyone who was around me if I wasn't winning. So, over the course of 15 years in my evolution as a person and as an athlete, I've managed to identify that it is permanent and this moment will pass, and really that has enabled me to get on with the next activity, the next training session, the next competition, because there is nothing I can do about what has happened. When I look in the past, or I look in the future, it only can bring anxiety and fear, and those sorts of emotions, whereas if I'm looking at every single moment of how I can improve myself as an athlete and a person, then I tend to get myself out of those states very quickly. And it's used to, across my life, present as well; I'd get a parking ticket, or I'd do something that wasn't appropriate, and I'd be upset for a long time. And then I just gave it a new meaning and got on with it. And now those lapses are very, very short.

AHT: Very important. Just a few of the things you were sort of saying then, you know, "this too shall pass," is such a powerful phrase and can keep moving you forward to the next thing. Do you use that as well even with good results to keep you on the right path?

NC: Yes, I'm actually learning a little bit about this now, that the threshold of pleasure is only a mirror of the threshold of pain, and therefore good and bad is the same sort of thing. I can't expect to indulge in feeling upset about a loss as much as I can't expect to stay in celebration for too long. So, you do have to take checks, like when you have a loss that is not what is going to plan, you have to get your feedback you have to get your learning piece, you have to move on. When you have a win, you have to celebrate, you have to identify what is working and what is good, and you have to move on. So, the short answer is absolutely. You're only as good as your last match, and you can't keep celebrating something that happened years and years ago, although I do like to continue to celebrate winning in Sydney because it was a very special time, and Kerri and I often talk about it still at least once a year, and we get to enjoy that moment that we had together. But, I'm different person, I'm a different athlete, and I have to approach the next match very differently. So you can't keep celebrating any longer than you can't stay depressed, and really it's a balancing act.

AHT: Yes, well, it's knowing that that was in the past, and it was an experience for what it was worth, and it was an amazing experience. But I'm sure you have new goals, and new mountains to climb.

NC: Yes, absolutely, with Tam sin Barnett, my partner of just over 12 months, she's never been to the Olympics for beach volleyball, she was there for indoor volleyball as part of a big team, where she probably felt she didn't have a chance at a medal. Now, she absolutely feels that she is in with a chance for an Olympic medal. So, I want to be part of that new experience with her, and then my new coach, who is a Brazilian coach, Alem ao, I'm very excited to learn new things. And I think that's important too as an athlete, to keep learning, to keep that willingness to learn, and that youth, childlike passion for learning. I've been playing 15 years, and there's so many things that I still want to learn about and get better at, and that is a very important aspect in progressing as an athlete.

A H T : I really appreciate you sharing that with us, Natalie, because I'm a great believer in learning, and you can never feel that you know it all basically. Can you share with us how you embrace learning, and what different avenues you look to learn new things?

N C : Well, the most appropriate one with me has been with my new coach, who is a Brazilian ex-world champion, and he has different techniques than I was taught, and I really had to for the first three months, I tried to do it half and half, I tried to incorporate the techniques that I new from before, and his, and see if I could make a hybrid form and it didn't work. So I really had to let go, I had to unlearn, and be willing to start fresh, and start with a beginners mind, and really embrace him and trust him as a person. So, he really teaches me a lot of the avenues of the volleyball technical side. I have another gentleman, Brian O'Reilly, who really helps with opening my mind and asking questions that reveal the truth and that hit you right down to the core of my body and through the bones, you know, and he's been great. And he's more important when I have losses and failures, because he really gets in to the heart of it. And I love reading books, I love being on the Internet and exploring other people's views, and the interesting thing is, when I find an opposing view to my view is to not make one wrong, and to not think mine is right. I really try – I really do what they say is “try it on,” so I try and experience it from another point of view and see how it goes, and really try and work out the best way to move forward.

A H T : Excellent, excellent. And you've done a number of various courses over the years as well, is that something that you will continue to do, continue to evolve in that way?

N C : Yes, I guess it first started with Kurek Ashley in fire walking. After the 1996 Olympics as a 21 year old and a bronze medalist, the first time this sport had been to the Olympics, I really felt like there was this dimension missing, and it was the dimension of spirituality and personal growth. And I didn't have much to do with it until that time I came across Kurek and we did things like fire walking and glass walking and parachuting and facing fears, and that was the start I guess, of my personal growth, and my journey. And since then I have done courses like Landmarks education, I've been to New York and done a knife fighting courage course with Dan Millman, who is one of my very favorite authors of The Way of the Peaceful Warrior, and he has a series of about 20 books, and I love those sorts of interactive courses where you get to feel and experience, because the only way for you to truly know anything is to feel it and experience it yourself, you can't really get it from a book, you can't get it from someone telling you – you've got to go out there and stand on the edge of a plank, and fall off the building and know what it feels like.

A H T : Most definitely. Fabulous courses, and I'm familiar with a lot of them – and I'm actually just reading The Way of the Peaceful Warrior again by Dan Millman, so I'm looking forward to enjoying that again. Who would be your favorite authors, someone asked?

N C : Well, apart from Dan, who was the first book I really read in that realm of personal growth, I do resonate with some of Wayne Dyer's books, Deepak Chopra's books, Donald-Walsch... Conversations with God..?

A H T : Yes, Neale Donald Walsch.

Yes, I really enjoyed the pathos of that and the fact that everything was black and white, and all at the same time. And that turned my mind upside down and allowed me to explore a lot of things. And I love the autobiographies, so I love reading other people's stories, Lance Armstrong, Michael Jordan, Michael Johnson, the track athlete, Ian Thorpe, anybody who has written anything about their journey is really engaging to me, and if I can get something very small from it, then it's worth it.

A H T : That actually brings me to one of the questions I was going to ask earlier. We talked about Lisa Curry being an early role model for you, who do you look now on having been an influence in your life as a role model?

N C : Yes, along the way there has been a lot of athletes, and it's Michael Jordan, Greg Norman, as a golfer/businessman. Now, I tend to look to some of the athletes in my sport, and the male athletes, Emmanuel Ricardo, the number one team in the men's side, I really enjoy watching men's volleyball and seeing if I can draw something in to the women's game from that. They are a lot more powerful, a lot stronger athletes, but some of their tactical and skillful things I think the women can pick up on, especially blocking and playing defense. And also, my coach, I really am impressed with A Lemao as a world champion himself, and the way he carries himself, and the way he sees the game. We have some wonderful conversations, and he's become a very recent and wonderful role model for me.

A H T : All right. Just some little, quick questions: what do you enjoy most about your sporting experience? Do you enjoy the results, do you enjoy the process, do you enjoy the people, the travel? [no response] Are you there with us Natalie?

To Audience: I've got quite a few questions, I hope everyone has been enjoying this, and really listening to the distinctions between how Natalie is thinking, and how she applies herself towards her goals, versus perhaps in the ways that you're thinking. Are you thinking about what you need to do to be the champion? What are you looking at? What do you need to read? What do you need to learn, that constant learning, to be open to ideas? Are you looking to see, what is your mindset when it comes to looking at your results? How long do you take to go from worrying and being negative about a result, to transferring that to thinking about, well, what next? What are the solutions? And on the other side, if you have a great result, how long will you live in that great result before thinking you've got to do it again, so you're not living in one moment, but looking towards the next?

N C : W ell, I've just returned to the call Netty, so I got most of that question, I think. So you let me know if I've missed anything.

A H T : *All right. I'll just quickly reiterate it for the benefit of the listeners. What do you enjoy most about your sporting experience?*

N C : I think it's the battle with myself to be the best athlete I can be at any given time. And you see athletes all over the world doing a different discipline; I chase a ball in a sandpit, Tiger Woods chases a little white ball around grass with a stick, you know, and it really is as simple as that. And I just enjoy trying to be the best I can be every single day.

A H T : *I wonder what keeps you going? Obviously, the motivation to be the best. How much longer do you want to be the best? You know, what sort of goals have you set for yourself from today, for example, beyond Beijing?*

N C : Well unfortunately, over the last three years, my body has been breaking down, and my mind is still fresh and young and youthful and playful, and would love to keep going. And I've often seen athletes along the way fall by the wayside because of injury, and I just thought and hoped that it would never happen to me. But unfortunately, I have a persistent knee problem, which I'm just 100% focused on getting to Beijing fit and healthy, and I guess I'll reassess my situation after that. But, you know, four Olympics, whether I go to five Olympics, it really is just making sure that once I stop loving it, once I stop trying to be the best, and I'm just doing it for fun, then I really should stop trying to compete at an international level, and potentially just play socially and have fun with my friends, and maybe get some time to play some golf. So, my short-term vision is absolutely on Beijing, and doing the very best I can do there. And if I'm fit and healthy, and if Tam sin is fit and healthy, then I truly believe that we've got a great shot at winning and being in the medals, and if I make it on to London, then the Gods would be shining.

A H T : *Do you harbor some secret goals about golf that you'd wish to share with the listeners?*

N C : I was a really talented golfer at the same time that I fell in love with volleyball, and unfortunately, golf was the transition sport from swimming. And swimming as an individual sport with a lot of solitude and no interaction with people, and human relationships, I went to golf, which is the same thing with just hitting golf ball after golf ball, and was very lonely. So, part of the attraction for volleyball for me was to be able to have relationships with people while I was playing my sport. And I really did love the game of golf and I thought I could be really good at it, and now I don't really hold any resentment, or think that I have made the wrong choice, because beach volleyball has given me the most amazing life. And I would just be grateful if I could play golf once a week with my father and my friends, and enjoy the outdoor lifestyle, because that's what I love about beach volleyball and I wouldn't ever want to lose that.

A H T : *Fantastic. Hey Natalie, we talked about learning and learning from experiences, I wonder if you could share with us, what did you learn from your experience in Athens?*

You know, you went in to the competition with an injury of the shoulder, which obviously got worse, and yet you made it through the semi finals, and almost pulled off another medal. Can you share with us, what can you learn from that experience?

NC: It taught me really to go beyond what I thought was a show-stopping event. I actually thought that I wouldn't make it with my shoulder, and I wouldn't even get to the games. And once I sort of saw the way my mind got fearful and doubted, and started to go in to the cycle of doubt, I knew that the power of the mind was just as powerful to go the opposite way. And I really convinced myself that I could have won. I really believed in the end that through the power of the mind I could have still won the Olympic Games with no shoulder. And that was my biggest learning that even though I didn't succeed in that moment, my mind and my body, apart from my shoulder, was telling me to go for it. And that was a really big learning for me that whatever you choose to focus on, and whatever you choose to believe can happen.

AHT: And that must be a great experience for you to draw upon, going to Beijing, this time again with not 100% health, as it is currently.

NC: Yes, well this time if I'm even 80% there, I've got a great chance. And, with five months to go, I really am taking care of every aspect of the game, physically, emotionally, mentally, and that really — the experience in Athens, it just sort of left me with some unfinished business, and it really allows me to draw inspiration from that, and take one step further, and make sure that I'm — I don't want to be playing in Beijing hurt, so it really has inspired me to maintain my physical fitness, and to be the strongest athlete I can be because if that's the case, then I know that I have got a shot at it.

AHT: And obviously your preparation for Athens was different from your preparation for Sydney. In Sydney, you were fit and healthy, and you really went in there with specific preparation, and won the gold. And a new partner for Athens, and an injured shoulder, can you share with us how is your current preparation? What have you taken from Sydney and reproduced, and in what way is it different, or is it completely different and a new hybrid blend of it all?

NC: I think it is completely different. Tam sin is a very different athlete to Kerri, who is a different athlete to Nicole, that's been one thing that has been a huge learning for me, is how to interact with my playing partner, and effective communication, and taking collective responsibility in to every action. And really, Tam sin has a different approach to the game that I have had to learn, and then therefore, unlearn some of my things, because it really doesn't help our team dynamic with me trying to say, you should do this, and you should do that, and me thinking that I know what is best for her. She really does approach things very differently, and I respect that, and we really had to find our own way as a team to get to be as effective as we can be in Beijing. So, what that looks like is understanding the game tactically and technically, and strategically because Tam sin is still very new at the game of beach volleyball, and so we watch a lot of video, and try and understand why certain things work, or don't work, and then we go out and we work really hard on that. And we also work on our relationship, because we have to be able to

trust each other 100% . I think that was the big thing with Kerri; in the end Kerri and I had this utmost respect and trust for each other, and we knew we would live and die for each other, and that is just something Tam sin and I are working on, and we've got five months to go, and hopefully we get there in time.

A H T : Excellent. Do you find then that there are things, there again, to learn about yourself to take to all relationships, not just your relationships with in sport, with in your team mates, your coach, and support people, but also in your business and social life?

N C : Absolutely it helps me everywhere, most importantly in my family. I used to take my family for granted, and I used to expect my mom to do everything for me because she did, she used to do that. And so I continued that expectation that it would continue, and I took it all for granted, so it's allowed me to understand that my family is just as important as I am, and as important as everything else in my life. And now I spend a lot more time with my family, my business relationships are much more effective, and I give people more, I guess, leeway, and don't expect it to be done my way, and I've really allowed them to shine and to bring their expertise into that field, and I've had to let go a lot. And then, my friends have probably noticed that I'm not as intense, not having to win everything, and not having to get my word in there, I've become a very active and good listener, and I am a lot more patient than I used to be, and so all of my experiences through sport have enabled me to become what I think is a much better and balanced person.

A H T : And does that then help your sporting results? Do you find the difference on the court having all those skills, because you know, when you think, okay, who is a role model, and you've got to agree that in some sports there are some high profile athletes that probably don't have the desirable role model qualities, but young boys might be looking up to them. For example, footballers, and think, well, you've got to be a certain way to be a champion. And so now I'm listening to you, and you've got these qualities that make you a better person, are you still able to be a champion with all those qualities?

N C : I questioned that in the beginning, and really did struggle with — well, I can't be nice to people all the time and then go and win. You know, you have to be aggressive, and you have to be mean, and that's the only way you can win. And I did struggle with the concept of balance in life and balance in other relationships, and being successful on the sporting field. So, it went up and down for me. I really think now that through the last three or four years that life is bigger than winning a volleyball match, for me, and I do think that there are more important things in the world. And it has been a struggle to change my persona, my personality, and my belief systems, to what I would say to be a softer person. And as a softer person, how do you become a more successful athlete? And that, I think, has been the fine line, and it comes back to discipline, to doing what I have to do when I have to do it as an athlete. And then when I get off the court, I can become the softer person, and it's much more rewarding, and yes, I do think that champions have the ability to be able to do both. Initially, in my early days, I didn't think that and it's probably because no one showed me the way. So, I'm very grateful to

my teachers over the last sort of five or six years that have showed me a different path, and said, you don't have to be aggressive all the time, you don't have to be mean or nasty. That was some of the feedback I was getting from my friends, and so, yes, it has been a fun, challenging up and down journey, but I think I'm more up now than I was down.

AHT: *It's great to hear, Natalie, because it's a topic that I'm quite passionate about. I'm a true believer, and this is what I teach, that what we believe becomes our reality. And so if we believe that we can't be nice and win, then that becomes our reality. And so, I encourage you and our listeners to examine what champions have got both of those qualities, of being nice and are able to win. And I'm sure that a number of role models that you do have, have those qualities. And it's being able to look at those, versus the ones that have that negative quality that we're trying to associate with. Would you agree?*

NC: Yes, I think that is evident in Roger Federer, Tiger Woods, Michael Schumacher, you know, those sorts of athletes that are at the very, very top of their game, and are very, very humble, Ian Thorpe, the same thing. And it really is an inner person, and inner athlete struggle to find the balance between winning at all costs, and respecting human relationships. And the human relationships are the most important part of our lives, that's what I'm learning and I truly believe that it is possible to win volleyball tournaments at the same time. So, fingers crossed, that's what happens in Beijing, and I can be humble and nice and smiley, and successful.

AHT: *It is an interesting philosophy, and change in sentiment that is also being seen now in business, where it used to be a "win at all costs" attitude, that's how you got ahead in business. But now we're learning, you can have a win-win mentality, and how can we all work together and still win, whatever the win is for you? I'm just going to change tracks, because I have an important question asked by another listener, and she asked: in the moment — have you ever doubted yourself and your ability, and then how specifically did you turn those moments into winning ones? How have you, or how do you fire yourself up when the going really gets tough?*

NC: Well, I absolutely have found myself in moments of doubt, and when something doesn't go right, especially if it doesn't go right a few times in a row, and then the doubt cycle comes, and the key is to be aware, and to identify that. And once you identify it, you can sort of dig your heels in, or dig your ice pick into the side of the mountain and stop the slide. And from there, it's just making better choices and doing different actions to climb back up the mountain, and that takes determination, and that takes willingness and passion, and you've got to go one step at a time. If you slide three down, you can't just take one back up, you've got to take three back up, and it takes patience. And drawing on my experiences over the last 15 years with the fire walking and the glass walking and being in high pressure situations and losing, and being in high pressure situations and winning, all of those experiences helped me to get myself back into a high performance mode and being successful again.

A H T : *I like the analogy of using the ice pick, I think it was Bob Proctor or Brian Tracy who talks about even if you are ice climbing, with the ice picks, you can only go up to the next step, and once you've gotten to that one, then you start looking for the next step.*

N C : Absolutely, you can't look too far ahead because the ice pick only goes a certain distance, you can't grab it from throwing it too high up the mountain. And it's the same with just riding the storm, when the weather is bad, and some things happened to me on the weekend, like I was describing the match that I lost. There were points in the match that God was looking after, the ball sort of hit the net and dropped over, and they are out of my control, I can only be in control of the things that I can have control on. And once I realized that other things that are out of my control I can't influence, then I can go about working on what I can influence, and making that the best that it can be.

A H T : *Very, very wise words, Natalie Cook. Can you perhaps just share with us now, what is coming up for you? Because there are some exciting things happening in Australian beach volleyball very, very soon, so perhaps you could share that with us before we end the call, or even open up to our listeners.*

N C : Yes, it's actually the next two or three weeks for us is the most exciting time in beach volleyball in a long time, here in Australia. We've got the finals of the Crocs Tour Australia at Glenelg Beach, and that will be played inside the arena that is going to host the Adelaide open, which is the Swatch FIVB World Tour, it's the first leg for 2008, it's an Olympic qualifier, and it's right here in Australia at Glenelg Beach, and I happen to be living on that beach at the moment—well, not literally on the beach, I have an apartment in walking distance to the beach. And we're going to see the world's best athletes out here for both men and women, and Tam sin and I are training very hard to get ready to show the world what we've got. And I'm excited, and I think that the whole volleyball community in Australia is excited.

A H T : *I'm definitely excited. And that is at Easter, is that correct?*

N C : Yes, first up is the end of the Australian tour is the Easter weekend, and then the 25th to the 30th of March is the world tour. So, we sort of get a little bit of a head start by having an event the week before, and some of the Americans are coming to play on our local event, and hopefully that gives us some match experience to then take into the world tour, because most of the European teams, it's their winter, so they've been having a rest, some of them travel to Brazil to do a little bit of preparation. But we've had a wonderful summer here, and we'll be able to hit the Adelaide open running. So, we hope to get a bit of a head start on our opposition.

A H T : *I look forward to being there, and if you haven't got your ticket now, the best way to source that is through the Australian Beach Volleyball Tour. I'll set up a link on my website to make that easier as well, or if you want to send me an e-mail info@annetteffect.com.au, then I can send you the details about those tournaments. And I'm just going to open the line and see if we have any other questions from our listeners. Okay, so I've just un-muted the line, so if you have a question for Natalie Cook, please*

introduce yourself, and give us a question. Okay, they're all shy. All right Natalie, any closing words of advice that you would like to give, if there is one important piece of information for someone who wants to become a champion, what would that be?

NC: Well, one piece of advice for something that has taken me 15 years to sort of try and grab a hold of, I would say that it comes down to my important ingredient in the beginning is passion. To be a champion in anything you have to love what you do, and if you don't love it, then that is not the thing to choose to be a champion in, and persistence. And you've got to be persistent through the ups, the downs, and providing you have that passion there, and it's what you really truly want to do, then just stick with it all the way to the finish line.

AHT: Thank you so much for your time Natalie, I know you've only just flown back from Perth, and I really appreciate you taking the time to share with us all your thoughts on what it has taken for you to be the champion that you are. I look forward to seeing you in Adelaide in a couple weeks time representing Australia, and I also look forward to watching you in your journey towards Beijing.

NC: Thank you so much Annette, and I look forward to seeing everyone come watch us play in Adelaide. Thanks!

AHT: Thank you Natalie, have a great evening. Bye bye.

NC: Bye Bye.

AHT: And thank you so much for attending this live teleseminar, please even send the recordings to your friends, tell them about it, they can still register for it. And if you do have any further questions, please do e-mail me info@annetteffect.com.au, and have a wonderful evening, a wonderful week, and I hope to see you in Adelaide as well, and also at future calls. If you have a particular champion that you would like to delve into the mindset of, also send me an e-mail. I would love to hear from you, and to see if I can get some of the other champions, other sport, whatever sport it is you want, then we will contact them and get them on the call for you. Have a wonderful evening, good night.

[End]