



# THE **RED ON** REVOLUTION

By Coach Mike Chadwick

Be Ready for Anything

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# CONTENTS

Introduction: Who I Am . . . . .	7
1. Who You Are . . . . .	19
Tactical Takeaway 1 . . . . .	40
2. What We Need . . . . .	41
Tactical Takeaway 2 . . . . .	87
Intermission A: Harrogate, 2018. . . . .	88
3. How We Do It . . . . .	108
Tactical Takeaway 3 . . . . .	173
Intermission B: Catterick, 2014 . . . . .	174
4. Why We Do It . . . . .	181
Intermission C: Back from Afghan, 2011–12 . . . . .	210
5. Where We Go From Here . . . . .	224
Tactical Takeaway 4 . . . . .	265
Intermission D: St Helens, 2007. . . . .	266
Outro: When Do We Stop? . . . . .	273
Acknowledgements . . . . .	282

## Chapter 1

# WHO YOU ARE

TO BEGIN this, I firstly want to know who you are. This is quite a difficult thing for anyone to answer, and in fact takes quite a bit of internal searching. But it's extremely important for our journey to understand your start point. Without knowing who you are right now, it's very difficult to begin and get to where you want to be. To do so, and to help me to get to know you, I'll begin by asking three simple questions, which allow me to determine your start point, your barriers and your commitment.

### **Question 1: Tell me about your current training regime, and what you want to achieve**

I want to talk about you, *right now*. What I don't want to hear is who you used to be.

I find so often that the moment I start asking these questions to people in the context of training,

most start by telling me about their previous training experience. They would explain that they could ‘do X amount of sit-ups ten years ago’; or ‘I had trials at Y in my youth’; ‘I ran a sub-three-hour marathon before I had my children’. Now, understanding previous training experience is beneficial, but that’s not what I’m asking. I don’t want a training history at this moment in time; I simply want to know about you *now*. How many sit-ups can you do right now? How fast can you run your marathon, now you have had children? This is you, today, and be ruthlessly honest in how you view yourself. If you are a long way from where you want to be, this may feel like it’s being cruel, but it’s being kind. As it’s the most helpful thing you can do come the beginning: both for me and yourself.

You see, I am not going to be working with a version of you from another era, and therefore I do not care about anything prior to today. It’s going to be about you right now and what you do from this starting point onward, and so I only want to know who you are at this point. If your answer is ‘I currently do absolutely nothing’, then that is a true and current reflection, which is fine, and we’ll change that. Reverting back to something you used to be is a trigger that most people do; it’s to shy away from who they are now in an attempt to distance

themselves from their current situation. Maybe it's embarrassment, pride, or maybe it's just mortification about how you have let a once-high standard slip. But that doesn't matter; that negative emotion is no longer needed – because you're doing something about it now. It's vital you own this situation, be honest with who you are and take pride that you are here to be better.

So, what do you truly want? Hypothetically, if you had a clean slate, what is it that you would want to achieve? Imagine you don't have to worry about time, money, family issues and other external pressures. You have no obligations and zero responsibilities as everything is taken care of; your life is just a blank slate for training. What would you want then? What is your goal, and when do you want it by? Psychologically speaking, are you doing this for you? Is it for vanity or for performance; intrinsic or extrinsic?

Your aim is your own, and so therefore there is no right or wrong answer. It can be whatever you want it to be; the more personal to you the better, as effort is often a direct reflection of interest. For instance, I was once training with an athlete and close friend of mine named Gary McNamara, whose goal was to break the world record for the fastest marathon time run by someone dressed as an item of fast food! The

aim sounds strange to most, but, in reality, it's an incredible achievement. When you can run a sub-three-hour marathon dressed as a hotdog, only then can you deem the goal silly. If the bloke who went past him dressed as a carrot is reading this, then you can say what the fuck you want.

Gary was a Royal Engineer before being selected to be a Royal Army Physical Training Corps Instructor on the same Class 1 course as myself. This aim of his had zero to do with his ability to be a Physical Training Instructor, but it was his nonetheless, and nobody could take that away from him. His aim was outrageous, but it was his and he worked his absolute arse off to ensure he saw it through. Your aim can be as outrageous as you want it be as well, as long as it's yours and as long as you can get through these three questions!

Establishing just what you want to achieve is a huge part of finding your Why: because if you are not clear on what you want, then I will not be any clearer on what you want – and therefore not only are you not going to push yourself to get there, but I also won't have the best tools to help you along the way. The more I know and understand you, the more I can help to define your pathway for success. I want to get you realising just how important that is: being honest with yourself on where you are now, and being

clear on where you want to go. As I would mention to all my army recruits during their first day on PT, ‘Be proud of who you are, where you are and what you aspire to be.’ Go big with your aim, be bold in what you want, and be brave in attacking it. If you aren’t nervous, or have no fear of failure in that thought, then potentially the aim is too small and might not be worth your time and effort. Only when we find your Why can we build systems and create habits to bridge the gap between you now and where you want to be. If you believe in your why and the process, then you might make it. But if you don’t start with a why and/or you lack belief, then you will not make it. Believing in what you are about to do does not guarantee success, but a lack of belief will almost certainly prevent it.

**Q2. Tell me about your life: your responsibilities and commitments, and any factors present or upcoming that may be a barrier to you reaching your goal**

Having understood your dreams and your perfect-world scenario, it’s time to tell me all about what is going to stop you. Is it your family, your other hobbies, your access to a gym or to exercise equipment, your working hours, your economic situation? All these factors have a common denominator: time. And with time being everyone’s currency, it’s these things



that add together and make up your environment. Like all environments, yours will be fluid and it will inevitably change. I call this your 'battlefield' and we will use this term going forward.

Everyone's battlefield is different and individually unusual – it could be physical, mental, or a mixture of both. What everybody's battlefields do have in common is that they all demand dedication, perseverance and motivation to ensure the highest possible chance of success, however it looks and whatever it changes to. The changing environment and climate of the battlefield places both intense physical and psychological demand, on you. Success on the battlefield demands the ability and willingness to fight and win decisively against anyone or anything anytime and anywhere. This may sound very army-centric, but you can apply this to any walk of life where you want to be successful. Whether you're trying to be the number one car salesman in your showroom or the best goalkeeper at your football club, willingness is an enthusiastic acceptance of the need to be better and fight your way to the top.

Training for these environments is vital and steps should not be skipped. From the desert to the boardroom, I want you to WIN AT ALL COSTS. Now, for the majority of people, trying to be the

best and winning everything is daunting and often not even considered! I want to take this moment to explain what I mean by winning.

A win is to be successful or victorious. The dictionary doesn't stipulate any further, which means it's in anything. So, if your aim is to lift your granddaughter up to put the star on the Christmas tree, then getting a personal best in a strict press is a win. It doesn't mean you have completed your aim; it doesn't mean you have the world's heaviest strict press – but it means *you are winning!* And you will need a lot more wins en route to raising that little girl high up above your head to place that star on the tree. Aims are like this, and even when the most decorated athletes win the most medals in the best style, they shouldn't forget about all those little wins that led to those moments. Hundreds and thousands of small wins every day is what it takes to be successful.

The fear of success is actually extremely common: so, if this is you, then you are not alone. The fear is when you have an ongoing anxiety about succeeding and winning, so much so that you can often be unintentionally self-sabotaging your ability. It's not even that you think you may fail or you're incapable of succeeding to a certain standard – it can often just be the fear of change that comes with success,

and whether you're up for it. Now, if this is you, then I want you to know that I genuinely believe in you. I believe that you are braver than you think, smarter than you let on, and stronger than you believe; and you, just like many before you, who too doubted themselves, can be a winner, and you can be great. Whether you want to run your first mile without stopping, or become a Royal Marines Commando, you will have to accumulate loads of small wins consistently to make your dream a reality; but, with the right framework and pathway, it is possible. Now, let's not kid ourselves, winning can occasionally fall into your lap through other people's lack of preparation, or you can get lucky and win something. But, to do it repeatedly takes effort and it takes time, yet it is achievable.

This can't just happen by training, physically, in the right way at the right time with the right amount of stimulus – you need to also surround yourself with like-minded people, as your battlefield does not only involve you. It is one thing being personally prepared and driven and able to work within your battlefield, but you need to ensure that everyone around, attached and dependent on you, psychosocially, is happy with you doing this. I'm confident you would have heard the term, 'You're only as strong as your weakest link.' This applies here.

So, if you want to do this, you need to think about how you are going to make it work not only for you but for the other people in your life. A great example of this in practice is people wanting to go on UK Special Forces selection. Now, this selection is regarded as the toughest in the world, and any external and negative influence would hugely degrade your already extremely low chance of success. Whenever somebody applies for my coaching to prepare them physically for it, I would always ask the question, 'Are you sure your family are okay with it?' During COVID lockdowns and restrictions, the isolation periods prior, and the not being able to go home at all throughout would add strain to any relationship. Back to the original point, this would reduce your chances of passing a course that you already only have less than a ten per cent chance of passing anyway! Family aside, with aims this big it's vital that, if everyone isn't on board from the get-go and respects your goal, then you either cut them off or consider a new aim. You need to work with people around you and involve them in your thinking and planning early on. If anybody within your circle isn't working with you then they are working against you. Opportunities in life come through people. Who do you need to distance yourself from or connect with to gain access to the opportunities you want?

An awareness of your battlefield and your barriers is the perfect way to ask yourself whether you still want this, and to force you to establish your priorities. You are never too busy to do something; you have just prioritised what was more important. You should be able to work around the barriers you have highlighted, regardless of your environment. If you are a smoker, then don't tell me you can't afford a gym membership. If you watch the football at the weekend, then don't tell me you don't have time to train. If your aim requires a lot from you physically, then your priorities must change to ensure that developing physically is near the top, and small tweaks to your life – like how much TV you watch, or how many beers you have – are made to accommodate your aim.

For those of you that have a new-born baby, you will understand that time is taken away from you very quickly. If you aren't a parent yet, then you'll realise how much spare time you actually did have if you do become one! Even as a parent, and even though you have time before and after work to train, the fact you are deep into sleep deprivation means you will prioritise sleep before it and therefore miss out on training. That's okay! Because you need to be fresh (ish) for work to bring money home to feed the baby, before repeating the cycle. That's life, and priorities

are placed accordingly. It's probably therefore not the best time to announce to your partner and new-born child that you are going on UKSF selection, or you're going on stage to compete in a bodybuilding comp in six months. The nutrition alone will consume a lot of your life, never mind the hours and hours you will need to train. But if you say that, and do prioritise that huge aim above all, and everyone supports you for doing it, then your mindset and resolve and support team, combined with arduous training, will put you in a very good place to be successful.

Finally, an absolutely crucial consideration while you are identifying how you will operate within your battlefield is: 'Can you maintain it? Are you sure that routine is for you?' One of the struggles I find in coaching the highly motivated (especially common in tactical athletes) is that they ripe too soon and therefore rot too early. They overtrain and before long, underperform. This is extremely common in those going for arduous courses. They cannot sustain the initial pace they begin with. It's the same for those with a low training age, just starting out, all excited and raring to go!

If you are looking to train at 9pm because of your work and family commitments, are you going to be okay to work at 7.00 the next morning?' Can you see why I'm asking these questions? If you are

getting up to train at 4am after being on a feeding shift with the baby from 1.00–3.30, then you may get it done once, but you've got to pay the piper. And then try keeping that up for three months! It just will not happen. The gold standard example of this is the New Year's resolution. 'New year, new me', and all that good stuff. It wouldn't be shocking to hear that over 80% of New Year's resolutions are binned off by the second week of February. Most of that 80% don't even make it that far. Research conducted by Strava in 2019, using over 800 million user-logged activities, predicted that the day most people are likely to give up on their New Year's resolution is 19 January. Just 19 days into an aim! Strava called it 'Quitter's Day'.

I often find Quitter's Day comes much earlier, and the way I frequently catch people out on how much they really want something is by starting a training programme on any other day but Monday. Now you may be thinking, 'What sick human starts a training cycle or nutrition plan on a Thursday?' Nobody starts a training programme or nutrition plan on a Thursday or Friday. But why?

Why do we always have to wait until Monday, or the New Year? At what stage do we stop repeatedly moving the start point, stop making excuses, stop dreaming and start doing? What you do now in the present will shape what your future looks like. If

that's a Thursday, then you are already increasing the gap from what you would have been on Monday. It doesn't matter how ridiculous and scarily close to being unachievable your aim is. Stop dreaming and start being. It's crazy how many people this puts off, but it's a great filter for me to determine who genuinely wants their aim. The day of the week we start training is irrelevant – it's just another day closer to success. We start today, we start right now, and we dictate how successful tomorrow is and we control the outcome of the aim, regardless of how crazy or difficult that is.

While it's harder to remain on track and achieve a large goal as opposed to a smaller one, the difficulty of the goal is irrelevant. Once it's set, achieving it isn't nearly as important as whether you develop the kind of habits that allow you to stay the course and at least attempt to be successful in that goal. Falling short isn't as bad as quitting. I can accept someone not quite being good enough after effort is applied. But giving up is different, and it is not something I condone. I spoke a lot about winning earlier and didn't want to touch on losing until now. I will go into more detail on the ups and downs of development in depth more in Chapter 3, but at this stage it's key to point out that nobody has ever won everything.



Floyd Mayweather may never have lost a professional fight: the main statistic we will all remember. But to get there, he lost eight amateur bouts, came up short in multiple training sessions, he lost rounds, he missed weight and no doubt he lost friends and coaches throughout. How many tournaments do you think one of the greatest ever golfers, Tiger Woods, has lost? This is collateral; it's inevitable, and in order for them to win so often, they had to learn what losing felt like. When you lose, you must learn, and I can assure you, you never want that feeling of losing again and you double down to ensure it never happens.

The ultimate point of Question 2 is to get you considering whether your aim is achievable and sustainable by understanding the obstacles external to your ability that also stand in the way of success. Somebody with a clean slate, no commitments and no time restraints is an easy win. But I've been in this game long enough to realise that very few people have this luxury. The closest I've come to someone almost having free rein on their life was training a prince for the Commando course; and, even then, his schedule was chaotic. It's still chaotic now, just a little easier done with his green lid on and dagger on his arm.

Just like the prince, and like every other athlete I work with, I need you to think about your

environment so early on because once we commit to an aim and we agree to do it together, I need you to be fully aware of the reality that you will be training in – so that we can plan, sustain and sidestep any obstacles, and eradicate any excuses, straight from the off. You might even realise that you don't want that goal after all. Or it might just not be feasible right now and it's something you may have to hold out for. All of which is okay. It's better to learn that now, than after spending weeks or months going for something that you actually don't want.

### **Q3. Are you still in?**

Some people want things to happen. Others even wish and pray they would happen. But some of us, and it's only a small percentage of us, actually get out there and make it happen. All you get is two options. You swim or sink. You win or lose. If you take the easy road you will fall short, you will fail and you will deserve to. You will then spend the rest of your days telling everyone who will listen how you could have made it 'if only ...'

We find a way to win. Now if you want to win, however big or small or how indifferent your wins are, then I'm fully in with you and we must set the conditions early to succeed later. This is a deal, and it will not be the first automated, subconscious deal

you have made in your life. You make these small arrangements all the time, especially when training. During every session we make multiple deals, we cross multiple barriers and present ourselves with multiple options. From a coach–athlete perspective, the coach provides the plan, and the athlete agrees to conduct the session and hit every distance, rep and set within. This is a deal. The athlete then has multiple barriers throughout the session when they ‘hit the wall’ or nearly fail the last rep, but were motivated enough to complete the set. The option is then whether the athlete feels they have enough time or energy to conduct the last set. Knowing they nearly failed the rep before, the easy option is to leave it. But that wasn’t the deal! If you agree it, then you get it done.

So, you’ve now considered what you want, and you’ve addressed the potential barriers you might face in getting there. The next question is: ‘How do you overcome these obstacles when training gets a little difficult and the odds start stacking up against you?’ The easiest road to take is the easiest option. Its direction is simple: you do not continue. You therefore do not develop as an athlete, and you do not grow as a person. The only reward for this option is that it is easy!

When you give up, even if it’s something that is not very important, it becomes a habit. Which will

become a ritual, which will then allow you to give up during any situation. 'The Excuse' becomes a part of your arsenal and a normal operating procedure. To counter the excuse, you must make continuous pacts and deals with yourself. 'I'll keep going until the next tree'. 'I'll rest at the top'. 'I CAN do one more round'. We grow during those last rounds and between the distance of the tree you thought you were going to stop at and the one you are now hunting down. This is where we overload and when we discourage the easy options.

To do this you must make these deals over and over again: throughout your session, throughout your programme and throughout your life. I will go into what I mean by overload and further into the psychology of always moving forward, but for now I want to end how you look at Question 3 with this. Each deal provides a choice, and each time you must make a promise that you'll keep going and you'll uphold your end of the contract. One more rep. One more mile. One more time more than those who broke the contract and took the easy option.

### **Conclusion**

You'll probably notice at this stage that I've talked about absolutely nothing physical. There is no point in asking about any of that yet; zero point in starting

a programme if I know your battlefield is strewn with so many mines that you cannot do anything right now. I can only work with you if I know who you truly are, where you want to go and that you are in to do everything it takes to get there. After all, a physical development programme is just a series of cleverly placed words and numbers. Without the athlete buy-in and willingness to commit, even the greatest programme on earth holds no depth and is ultimately pointless.

This is an immediate taste of a central theme that runs throughout this book – that is, me helping you to rethink everything about how you traditionally approach making changes in your life: whether it's thinking about past fitness levels or jumping into a plan with both feet without first considering how manageable and sustainable it is both for you and those who depend on you. We do this work now so that there are no surprises and, more importantly, no excuses later. It's one of the reasons I called my first business Red On Fitness, and why this book is titled *The Red On Revolution*.

For airborne forces within the military, you are obviously required to parachute. Now, just before you leave the aircraft, a green light flashes and you must react on the word of command – 'GO' – and immediately leave the plane. Extremely simple.

However, a lot has to happen prior to that one moment of execution. Prior to the green light, a red light comes on, and prior to the word of command 'GO' the parachute jump instructor screams 'RED ON'. This is where you physically and mentally prepare to go. If you are not ready on 'RED ON', then you won't execute the word of command of 'GO'. Everything I do in a coaching context has a huge element of preparation. I want to prepare you to react to everything and be ready for anything thrown at you at a moment's notice, time and time again.

Consider the green light as the start point of your aim, however far into the future that is. If that's your first Parkrun, then the klaxon to begin the race is your green light. If it's the cup final in a few months, then when that whistle blows that's the jump instructor screaming 'GO'. I want you to have the ability to react when that happens. That's your green light, so this moment is your red light, this is your 'RED ON', and everything you do from here on out is to prepare you for that moment to ensure you are successful when the time comes. Not just for that one green light, but ready for anything; for every green light you will face in the future.

If you don't like your current position in life, then move! And move fast. You are not a fucking tree. You are you, and you can be incredible if you're honest

with who you currently are and you put your effort into the right things with the right people around you. The absolute start of you being greater than you used to be is being brutally honest with your current self. At the end of this chapter, I want you to understand that who you are now is okay. Because it's now, and we'll grow. For this to work it's vital that we understand and appreciate your current battlefield, because everything and everyone within it will play a positive or negative role in your development, and quite often be the determining factor in success.

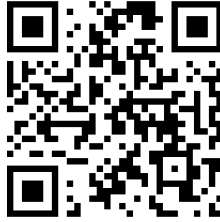
So, if you're fully in, then I'm fully in too! Let's do this.

Before we do, I want to add to the information from Chapter 1 by bringing in the first special guest appearance of this book. Click the QR code below to hear me chat with now UFC interim heavyweight Champion, Tom Aspinall. He is the most motivated, dedicated and powerful athlete I've ever coached. I have never seen anyone that big be so quick. Here I am talking to Tom about some of the thinking I have detailed in Chapter 1.

WHO YOU ARE

**Tom Aspinall podcast**

**<https://youtu.be/JiTxBlubP0o>**



*'I did the workout and I feel better for it because I know that not only physically, but mentally I've done it and kept that deal with you and myself.'*

- Tom Aspinall