Context Engineering Lab

The Stress Test: Can You Trust Your AI Coach?

Ben Marino | MindSetCoach Research | 2026

Open your phones — interactive workshop!

benmarino.dev/workshop/

Scenario: 21 Days of Data

A marathon runner keeps a training journal.

21 entries over 3 weeks — emotions, workouts, injuries, breakthroughs.

You hand these entries to an AI and ask:

"Give me a coaching summary for this athlete."

Sounds simple. But what could go wrong?

1

The Persona War

Same data. Two radically different coaches.

David Goggins Mode

VS

Ted Lasso Mode

Make Your Prediction

On your phone: What will each coach do with the shin splints injury?

- Both will mention it similarly
- Goggins downplays it, Lasso worries about it
- Both mention it but frame it completely differently
- One might miss it entirely

GOGGINS MODE

"No excuses. Stay hard."

"Day 9 you folded — shin splints and suddenly you're catastrophizing. **That's weak.** The physio said it was MILD. You lost 4 days because **your mind quit before your body did.**

The good news? You came back with a 26km breakthrough. That tells me the fitness is there. **Your MIND is the problem.**

Every phantom twinge, that's your brain trying to pull the emergency brake on a car that's running fine."

TED LASSO MODE

"Believe. Be a goldfish."

"The way you handled that shin splints scare? That's not a setback, that's **CHARACTER.**

You listened to your body, got help right away, then did the boring stuff — pool running, bike work, calf exercises. **Most folks would've pushed through and made it worse.**

Remember: be a goldfish. The shin splints are already in the rearview mirror. **What's ahead is a marathon you are MORE than ready for."**

Insight #1

The AI isn't lying — it's storytelling.

And the story changes based on who you tell it to be.

Goggins on injury:

"Your mind quit before your body"

Lasso on injury:

"That's not a setback, that's character"

2

The "Dumb Zone"

Where does AI stop paying attention?

Hidden fact: "Shin splints on Tuesday"

The U-Curve of AI Attention

If your athlete's injury report lands in the middle — the AI might not see it.

3

Not All AIs Are Equal

Provider	Start	Middle	End
OpenAI GPT-4o	FOUND	MISSED	FOUND
Claude Haiku	FOUND	FOUND	FOUND
Gemini Flash	FOUND	MISSED	FOUND
DeepSeek Chat	FOUND	MISSED	FOUND
Llama 3.2 (Local)	FOUND	MISSED	MISSED

The AI you choose is a decision that affects athlete safety.

The Cost vs Quality Trade-off

Full Context ~4,200 tokens

Mentioned shin splints, training progression, mental barriers, recovery strategy, breakthrough

Compressed ~1,800 tokens

Mentioned shin splints + breakthrough. Lost mental barrier details and visualization techniques

Limited (3 recent) ~600 tokens

Only saw last 3 days. No mention of shin splints. INJURY IS INVISIBLE.

86% cost savings — but the AI became completely blind to an injury.

Three Rules for AI-Assisted Coaching

Position matters

Put critical information at the start or end of context — never bury it in the middle.

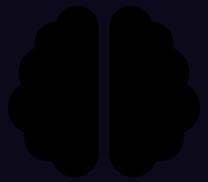
Persona shapes truth

The AI's character changes what it emphasizes. Choose the coaching persona deliberately.

Verify, don't trust

AI sounds confident even when it missed half the data. Always cross-check critical facts.

Context engineering is how you make AI work FOR your athletes.



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Questions? Let's talk.