



Focus On “What” You Can Control – To Improve Your Sports Performance

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ABSTRACT

In sports today, everyone knows the best training methods has access to the best facilities and most nutritional food. Often the difference between the good and the elite is the mental qualities of the athletes.

How can our physical abilities like strength, speed & stamina remain consistent, and the answer lies in working at the mind – which we need to FOCUS on. Our minds do more than just telling how to carry out sporting activities; they also guide us to fast range at motions, attitudes & sensation that impact greatly on our sporting performance. The focus of the study is to assistance the athlete's level of psychological skills and some of the ways coaches & psychologists can influence in athletes mind so as to maximise sporting performance.

Psychological skills include controlling arousal, developing mental Imagery, concentration, self-confidence, motivation and goal setting.

Different athlete Have different ways of learning psychological skills. Athlete must be happy in mind & body to train and compete well to be a better athlete. To prevent the fluctuation in psychological regulation the athletes need to develop psychological skills - strategies to manage

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anxiety, stress, negative thoughts and emotions. The athlete must learn to take responsibility and focus on recognizing their arousal mechanism and to perform with it under control.

Key Words: Focus, Psychological Skill, Coach’

INTRODUCTION

Focus On “WHAT” You Can Control – ‘What’ here is referred to the psychological skills. The study is about focusing on the development of the psychological skills so as to master the mind and improve sports performance. An elite athlete is a rare combination of talent, hard work and right psychological profile. For a coach to help their athlete develop the “What” factor i.e. the psychological skill its essential they understand their athlete as a whole person rather than a sports person alone.

The first phase in developing psychological skill is the educational phase. In this phase the coach talks to the athlete and assess the source of psychological skills they currently using.

In the second phase the acquisition phase, the coach focuses on the specific skills that are to be acquired by the athlete. Skills to be acquired may include controlling arousal levels so as to produce peak performance, if an athlete is over aroused they may lose focus & perform badly, if under aroused their energy level and concentration will be low and they may be unable to perform well. Another skill is using mental imaginary to create positive sporting experience. Athletes can develop skills in visualizing their event so as to mentally prepare themselves for the challenges that lie ahead.

During the acquisition phase – coach must take into account that every athlete has different ways of learning new skills, some learn by listening some by watching and some by doing.

The third phase is the practice phase, here the psychological skill to be learned becomes an integral part of training.

With the help of coaches and sports psychologist athletes can train their body and their mind to achieve improved sporting success. However it is important to remember that like everyone

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athletes need complete and fulfilling life. If they are not happy on personal level their sporting performance may suffer greatly.

Decreased concentration, decreased motivation, depression and anxiety are all psychological symptoms of over training. A situation in which athletes can't keep up with the demands of sports. Psychological causes of this may be poor living arrangements, work problems, family problems or relationship problems, in these instances athletic training must be reined in and personal problem addressed.

METHOD**➤ MOTIVATION:**

In competitive world of sport an athlete cannot win without motivation put simply motivation is an individual's personal drive to succeed. Motivation is known to have 2 forms of drivers namely: Intrinsic & Extrinsic

Extrinsic drivers are those external that may lead an athlete to desire success for example a medal, money, fame or sponsorship. Setbacks are however common in sporting world. Success medals & money can take long time to achieve but these reason extrinsic drivers can be relied upon to maintain motivation. Intrinsic drivers are much more personal & have greatest staying power most athletes are motivated by a mix of extrinsic & intrinsic drivers.

Coaches may choose to develop an athlete's motivational level by inspirational or pep talks in which the value of victory is highlighted. However care must be taken while using that form of speeches. Incentives for good performance & punishment for bad performance can also be used to enhance the athlete's motivation. These methods should be used with caution.

Goal setting & feedback from coaches are both effective ways to maintain athlete's motivation.

Goal Setting is effective as it provides clear objective to be reached, giving the athlete solid objective to work towards. Feedback from coaches is effective that gives the athlete a sense of bold motion in their training. So being instructed how to improve their performance good results come quicker leading to positive emotions & a positive attitude.

➤ **AROUSAL:**

Athletes need to be mentally & physically ready when called upon to play sport. This sense of readiness is referred to as arousal and has three different forms.

Physical Arousal - it is the extent to which the body is physiologically ready to play sport. Physical arousal takes into consideration muscle activation & adrenal levels.

Mental arousal – it relates to clarity of mind focus & attention levels.

Emotional arousal – it relates to athlete emotional readiness to perform. Emotional states can swing from strong competitive aggression to calm removed sense of composure.

Different sports require different level of arousal; gymnastics is a lower arousal sport as best result is achieved with high level of mental composure and precise attention to detail & movements. Team sports are of higher arousal sports as they can require extreme physical effort in short sharp burst as well as strong competitive aggression. While different sport generally require different levels of arousal there is vast variation in terms of level of arousal that works best for different individual within that sport.

Some athletes naturally perform better when they are calm & composed others are able to channel better performance in highly arousal state.

Over arousal causes problem due to muscles tensing up & the inability to make the most split second decisions. Under arousal causes problems as concentration drops, the body becomes less responsive.

Athletes can learn specific techniques for controlling their arousal levels - listening to dynamic music, short-sharp breaths & fast sprints can help lift arousal level. Muscle relaxation, relaxed breathing & focusing on sports itself rather than your competitors or spectators can help reduce arousal levels.

➤ **MENTAL REHEARSAL IMAGERY:**

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The human mind has vast potential to visualize to imagine & to create mental imagery. Athletes can use this ability to great effect. By using mental imagery they can have imaginary rehearsal of the race, match or competition. In doing so they preparing themselves for challenges ahead.

Consider the challenges of major sporting events, the crowd is huge the level of competition is very strong & emotional stakes are high. All these things can distract an athlete from achieving best performance.

Mental imagery however allow an athlete to prepare for this experiences; there by enhancing the chance of success. While mental imagery & rehearsal can be used to overcome the distraction of game day, they can also be used to prepare for the specific skill based challenges of match conditions. Athletes can use imagery to rehearse the specific new skill as well as rehearse just how avoid the competitor. This form of imagery can be used as pure mental activity or in conjunction with physical training.

Importantly mental imagery can also be used to visualize exactly the kind of performance the athlete would like to have. By visualizing a focused performance or a victory the athlete can built confidence & make it more likely to happen.

Kinaestheticimagery is the style of imagery that allows an athlete to conceptualize the feeling of successful performance. Kinaesthetic senses are those senses that allow us to feel our body as it carries out different actions. This sensory perception is possible as the sensory nervous in our muscles, joints & tendons are constantly giving us feedback. Using kinaestheticimagery the athlete can rehearse the body sensation of a successful performance making it easier to recreate in match conditions. This style of imagery is particularly useful for sport like Gymnastics as it allows for a very thorough rehearsal in your mind of complicated body movements.

Simulation is similar to imagery& mutual rehearsal in that it prepares the mind for competition. It's different through in that it doesn't ask the mind to imagine match conditions. Simulation makes training conditions for example by using real competitions & training in front of spectators in doing so the mind is made ready for competition.

➤ GOAL SETTING, CONCENTRATION & CONFIDENCE:

Goals are an important part of an athlete's file, providing clear points of achievement to be reached by a said time. This helps to focus & organize the athlete's attention, encourages pursuance, contributes to a positive psychological state & helps to develop motivation. Goals are best achieved when divided into short, medium & long term goals. This system provides a realistic part for the athlete to travel down when working towards their long term goal. Athletes can pursue different kinds of goals depending of objectives.

Process goals focus on improving physical movements & game strategies.

Performance goals focus on improving individual performance level independent of performance of the other competitors.

Outcome goals focus on winning. These are the most difficult goals to obtain as it's not possible to control the competitor's performance.

Concentration is a key skill in supporting success. Concentration allows an athlete to selectively direct their attention & focus on what's most important. Maintain focus for long period & to make good strategic decisions. Concentration is a skill that can be developed with practice. If during their event an athlete focuses their attention on past failure or repercussions of failure in future their best efforts cannot be directed to the task in hand.

Confidence is a state of positive mind in which an athlete shows their ability. Confident athletes are more likely to stay calm under pressure, work to achieve their goals & achieve success. Success in training situation & than in match or race conditions helps develops an athlete's confidence. Positive feedback from coaching staff also helps develop an athlete's confidence. For optimum performance athletes need to reach their optimum confidence level by focusing on specific detail of their race and what they need to do to succeed.

DISCUSSION

Motivation is an individual athletes drive to succeed motivation drivers can be extrinsic or intrinsic most athletes are driven by both. Coaches can enhance an athlete's motivation with pep

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talks, incentives & punishments goal setting is effective for enhancing motivation as it provides objective to work to odds. Feedback is effective for enhancing as it helps the athlete improve performance thereby improving their attitude.

Arousal defines an athlete's level of readiness to play sport. Arousal can be physical, mental & emotional; different sport require different levels of arousal; different athletes function best at their specific arousal levels. Under arousal & over arousal lead to poor performance; arousal levels can be managed with specific exercises.

Mental Imagery & mental rehearsals is visualization of sporting activity. Mental imagery assists in practicing new skills; Preparing for match day & visualizing success. kinaesthetic imagery is conceptualization of feeling of successful performance. Simulation makes training conditions as close as possible to match conditions.

Goals offer targeted point of achievement & help develop motivation. Goals can be divided into short medium & long term goals. Goals can be focused on process, performance or outcome.

Concentration is an athlete's ability to focus; losing concentration can lead to choking in movements of pressure

Confidence is a positive state of mind. Over confidence & under confidence both lead to poor performance.

CONCLUSION

Top sport performance is not possible without a finely focused body. But a finely focused mind is equally important as everything we do in life including our performance on sporting field is controlled by our mind.

Sports psychology offers athletes the tools they need to control their minds, make the most of their physical ability & head towards by level of success.

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