



PSYCHOLOGICAL FACTORS THAT IMPACT ON TRAINING, PERFORMANCE AND RECOVERY

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Abstract:

Introduction:

Sports psychology is the sport science that seeks to understand psychological and mental factors that affect performance in sports, physical activity and exercise, and apply these to enhance individual and team performance. Sports psychology is now so important to performance at the top level of sport. The physical and mental health complex is claimed as achievement of the 21st century, whereby also among the sportsmen and sportswomen, beside the somatic medicine, growing attention is devoted to the psyche as well. The sports psychiatry was dragged in and put into service to enhance performance after all biological weapons run out of ammunition, and the long-awaited results still failed to come about. Moreover, despite the energy increasingly invested it was going from bad to worse. Among athletes many psychiatric disorders call attention, either by the high prevalence or by the development of a specific syndrome. Symptoms of depression, chronic stress, anxiety, fatigue syndrome of overtraining, enervation, sleep disturbances, eating problems, burnout, eating disorders, personality factors and the chemical addiction are all extremely important.

Four 'Cs' for optimal performance:

There are four major performance skills for all elite sportsmen and women, these being technical, physical, tactical and mental. The latter skill is one that can make the crucial difference for athletes performing consistently to their abilities. Sport psychology has played a significant role in

the understanding, training and ultimately the use of mental skills for peak performance. Sport psychology gives us an advantage over our self that no physical training can ever provide. Sport psychology allows the athlete to use all of their mental strengths. This gives them a huge advantage over their opponents, as usually their biggest opponent is themselves. The work of sports psychologists tends to focus on techniques that athletes can use in competitive and training situations to maintain control, concentration, confidence and commitment (the four 'Cs') and so optimise their performance:

- **control** — the ability to maintain emotional control regardless of distraction
- **concentration** — the ability to maintain focus
- **confidence** — the belief in one's own abilities
- **commitment** — the motivation to continue working to agreed goals.

Control

An athlete's ability to maintain control of their emotions in the face of pressure or adversity and remain positive is essential to successful performance. Performance (or competitive) anxiety and arousal levels are two emotional control factors that can impact on performance.

Performance anxiety

Anxiety can be defined as a maladaptive emotional state that is typically associated with heightened arousal and the interpretation of a situation as threatening and/or dangerous. Performance or

competitive anxiety can cause athletes to react both physically and mentally in a manner that can negatively affect their performance. Performance anxiety can manifest itself in two ways:

- **Physical (or somatic) anxiety** — butterflies, sweating, nausea, needing to go to the toilet
- **Mental (or cognitive) anxiety** — worrying, negative thoughts, confusion, lack of concentration.

To help the athlete control competitive anxiety, a range of somatic techniques such as progressive muscle relaxation and cognitive techniques such as mental imagery can be used.

Arousal and performance

Arousal in sport can be defined as the degree of activation (both physiological and psychological) that an individual experiences when faced with a sporting situation or task. It can be viewed as a continuum ranging from drowsiness/sleep to a psyched-up, hyperactive state.

In the field of sports psychology, many models have been created to explore arousal levels as they relate to athletic performance. These models include the following.

1. **Drive theory:**
2. **Inverted-U hypothesis:**
3. **Catastrophe theory:**
4. **Optimum arousal theory:**
5. **Multi-dimensional arousal-anxiety theory:**

Until recently, the inverted-U hypothesis had been the primary model used by sports psychologists to describe the arousal-performance relationship. However, many sports psychology researchers have challenged this relationship, and the current trend is a shift towards the more 'multidimensional' view of arousal-anxiety and its effects on performance.

The following techniques can be used by athletes and coaches to increase or decrease arousal levels:

- **Progressive muscle relaxation (PMR)**
- **Centred breathing**
- **reading their body**
- **Pre-competition 'psyche-Concentration**

Concentration (or attention) is the mental quality to focus on the task at hand while

ignoring distractions. The capacity to concentrate is widely regarded by athletes, coaches and sports psychologists as one of the keys to successful performance in sport. Coaches have long been concerned with how concentration or attention levels among athletes can be improved and maintained and how distractions can be avoided common distractions appear to be anxiety, skill errors and mistakes, fatigue, weather, public announcements, opposition players, 'slogging' and negative thoughts.

Research on concentration and attention suggests that coaches can assist athletes to improve their level of attention by:

- assessing the attentional strengths and weaknesses of their athletes —coaches should encourage athletes to think about when and where they displayed good concentration and under what conditions or situations their concentration tends to wander
- assessing the attentional demands of a given sport — each sport is different in terms of its attentional demands. The demand for attention varies from sport to sport and even from skill to skill:

Confidence

Confidence results from the comparison an athlete makes between the goal and their ability. The athlete will have self-confidence if they believe they can achieve their goal. When an athlete has self-confidence they will:

- persevere, even when things are not going to plan
- show enthusiasm and motivation
- be positive in their approach and take their share of the responsibility in success and failure.

To improve their confidence, an athlete can use mental imagery to visualise previous good performance and to remind them of the look and feel of successful performance, and to imagine various scenarios and how they will successfully cope with them.

Commitment

Successful sports performance depends on the athlete being fully committed and motivated towards achieving their goals.

Motivation may be defined as 'the causes of the initiation, maintenance and intensity of behaviour' In other words, motivation is a

reason for participating in an activity, learning the skills involved, training and practising and dedicating effort to improvement. It is also linked to the satisfaction gained from participation and from achieving ambitions. Athletes with high levels of motivation often exhibit the following characteristics:

- A desire for success
- A willingness to take risks
- An acknowledgement of their own ability as crucial to their success
- An ability to increase their effort and concentration as the task difficulty increases.

Athletes who do not have this level of motivation are less likely to perform successfully and less likely to achieve elite levels. Therefore, coaches have been greatly concerned with what optimally motivates athletes.

Conclusion:

As per the above description it can be concluded that Sports psychology is the sport science that seeks to understand psychological and mental factors that affect performance in sports. 4 'Cs' (**control • concentration • confidence • commitment**) are very important for players and coaches to enhance their performance

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