



THE ROLE OF SPORT PSYCHOLOGY IN SPORTS

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Abstract: Sport and exercise psychology is defended as the study of psychological influences on performance and participation in sports, exercise and other forms of athletic activity. Sports performance is determined by a combination of physiological factors, technical skill, tactical insight and state of mind. All four factors are critical to peak performance. The role of mind has become more important with the rapidly increasing commercialization of sport, which has presented new pressures for athletes across many levels and ages. The mind can be improved through training. This paper introduced how sport psychology is useful for athletes to learned and practiced the mental skills, the better and the more consistent the performances becomes and the role of psychologist counseling for athletes.

Keywords: Sport psychology, Sport psychologist, Performance, Learning

Introduction:

Sports psychology is a specific area of psychology that deals with the mental well-being of athletes and the mental and emotional factors that can affect sports performance. Psychologists who study and work in sports-related fields use similar methods and techniques as other psychologists, but simply have a more distinct focus on athletes (both amateur and professional) as opposed to other types of patients.

Sports psychologists may help athletes or provide research concerning a number of issues, including:

- Stress and anxiety control
- Performance enhancement through psychological techniques
- Group sports psychology
- Motivation for sports performance

For many athletes, sports psychology can be an extremely helpful discipline. Psychologists offer athletes better performance and less mental distress during competitions. Sports psychologists can provide a tremendous service for their clients and the public through the application of their techniques and can provide valuable insight into the minds of athletes.

What is Sports Psychology?

The mind is sports science last frontier; all other systems have been used extensively to improve the athletics performances. Kinesiology, the science of human movement, has been used extensively to improve the players' movements. Even the athlete's blood has been sampled and his/her biorhythms chartered (Straub 1980). He further explained that only the mind seems to have been neglected when considering the general input of an athlete. However, he defined sports psychology. As the science of psychology applied to athletes and the athletic situation. It is the science that explains why we do what we do in the sports area.

Singer (1980) asserted that psychology is, and always has been an integral part of sports. In this part of the world, this realization is very recent and not even involved in the training of the athletes most times.

According to Ikulayo (1990) sports psychology is said to be a branch of sports science involving the science of psychology applied to sportsmen/women in athletic situations. She further said, it can also be defined as an attempt to study individuals in sports situations in order to analyse, explain, describe, modify, alter or predict behavior through various psychological means.

Similarly, Vipene (2005) defined sport psychology as a science that deals with the

emotional aspects of physical performance. In the context of competitive sports it is an attempt to explain and predict behavior of an athlete in the environment of competitive sports.

The science of sports psychology does end with the athlete on the field of play only. It spill to other aspects of the competitor ranging from the field of play to his/her domestic activities which in tum will affect sports performance. Hence it becomes necessary to apply this science of sports to competitors. However, there has been cases where psychologists and Psychiatrists work with athletes. The concern has been to make the athlete better.

Roles of a Sports Psychologist

Today, a sports psychologist's role is more accepted as a part of the regular coaching staff for teams and for individual athletes. The roles of sports psychologists are numerous, but they primarily teach athletes mental game skills to improve their performance and learning.

The areas sports psychologists teach vary from one person to another depending on their experience and qualifications. Below are the top roles of an applied sports psychologist, a person who helps athletes improve performance via mental training...

(1) Help Athletes Cope with Performance Fears

Sports psychologist can help athletes overcome fears, such as fear of failure, fear of embarrassment, and general performance anxiety. This is common among athletes who are perfectionists or highly dedicated athletes that worry too much about what other people think about their performance.

(2) Help Athletes Improve Mental Skills for Performance

The most common role for a sports psychologist is to teach mental skills for enhanced performance. A mental game expert can help you improve confidence, focus, composure, intensity, and trust in athletic performance. These mental skills help athletes improve performance and can help in other areas of an athlete's life.

(3) Help Athlete Mentally Prepare for Competition

Another common role of a sports psychologist is to help athletes mentally prepare for competition and practice. This includes many of the mental skills mentioned above, but applied to specific situations on the athletic field.

(4) Help Athletes Return After Injury

Returning to play after an injury can sometimes be difficult for many athletes depending on the nature of the injury. Athletes are often left with "mental scars" long after an injury is physically healed. A sports psychologist can help injured athletes cope better with the pressures associated with returning to a prior level of performance-pre-injury.

(5) Help Athlete Develop Pregame Routine

As part of mental preparation, the role of a sports psychologist includes helping athletes develop mental skills used during pregame or prerace routines. Athletes learn how to focus on the process instead of results and be more proactive with their confidence prior to competition.

(6) Help Athletes Develop Preshot Routines

Preshot routines are another common role of a sports psychologist. Here, athletes learn how to use mental skills to prepare for a specific motor skill, such as a golf shot, free throw, or field goal kick.

(7) Help Athletes Improve Practice Efficiency

Another common role of a sports psychologist is to help athletes improve the quality or efficiency of their practice. Many athletes, such as collegiate athletes, have limited practice time. Coaches want to help these athletes get the most out of their practice time by understanding principles of motor learning and performance.

Conclusion:

Due to the immeasurable contributions of psychology to, sports, this paper therefore concludes that sports psychology is

necessary and the mind can be improved through training. Also the mental skills are learned and practiced for the better and the more consistent the performances. The role of sports psychologists is very important to counseling athletes to become success in sport.

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