



A STUDY OF SPORT PSYCHOLOGY AND ATHLETE PERFORMANCE

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ABSTRACT

The importance of sports psychology is a academic discipline and applied practice has grown from last three decades. Sports psychology is a science in which the principles of psychology are applied in sports setting to enhance performance of sports person. While sport psychology cannot replace physical and technical training or increase an athlete's physical potential, it can their improve ability to remain in control under pressure, increase consistency, and help athlete to perform at their highest ability level. Sports psychology plays a very viral role in enhancing the performance of sportspersons. It deals with the various mental qualities such as a concentration, confidence emotional control etc. which are important for successful performance in sports. Sport psychology also focuses on the mental skills of "stress management self-regulation, visualization, goal setting, concentration and even relaxation. This paper reviews an importance of sport psychology in today's perspective for improving Athlete performance.



KEYWORDS: - sports psychology, personality, goal setting, ability, self talk, concentration.

1. INTRODUCTION:

Sports psychology is a science in which the principles of psychology are applied in a sports setting to enhance performance. While sport psychology cannot replace physical and technical training or increase an athlete's physical potential, it can their improve ability to remain in control under pressure, increase consistency, and help athletes to perform at their highest ability level. (U.S.A. Swimming 1).

A neurologist noticed, "When people are just beginning to learn a new task, many different areas of their brains are active simultaneously... But as people become more proficient at a task, their brain activity becomes more singularly focused on the brain circuits directly involved in producing the movements" (Allman 2). Sport psychology is a rapidly growing technique with many athletes, proven by the increase from one sport psychologist on the U.S. Olympic team in 1988 to over one hundred by 1996. Richard Suinn, the first sport psychologist on the Olympic sports medicine team, said that sport psychology focuses on the mental skills of "stress management, self-regulation visualization, goal setting, concentration, focus, and even relaxation" (Tolson 2). Sport psychology effectively uses ritualistic behavior to improve athletic performance at both the amateur and elite levels.

2. GOAL SETTING:

Provides direction, feedback and motivation for athletes. Goals must be continually acted upon to make progress. Athletes can motivate themselves to work toward their goals by making goal setting charts, writing goals down, or telling them to other people (USA Swimming 2). Competitors should concentrate on doing their personal best rather than on uncontrollable factors such as other competitors' performance or the judging of an event (Allman 2). Systematic goal setting uses different lengths and types of goals to keep athletes motivated and to encourage progression. Short-term goals typically last for a few weeks. They allow an athlete to monitor their progress toward a long term goal which still feeling accomplishment (USA Swimming 2). The positive feedback from achieving short term goals leads an athlete toward completing their long-term goal by increasing self confidence (Allman 2). Long term goals are goals that usually will not be reached until the season or many seasons have passed (USA Swimming 2).

3. PERFORMANCE IS RELATED TO THOUGHTS, EXPECTATIONS, AND SELF-TALKS:

Self-talk includes all of the thoughts that an athlete allows to run through his brain. Self-talk can be positive or negative. Athletic performance decreases when athletes allow negative thoughts into their minds. Athletes need to become aware of their self talk to identify the negative and positive thought. Self talk is a method that can be used to get an athlete back on track after encountering an unexpected occurrence. If the athlete thinks negative thoughts about what just happened, they will experience anxiety, a change in breathing pattern and waste of energy. However, if they think positively and remind themselves of past success, they will be successful again. Weaknesses should be worked on only during practice, because thinking about them during competition will only destroy an athlete's confidence and lead to a poor performance.

4. CONCENTRATION:

Ability to maintain focus. This is the mental quality to focus on the task in hand. If the player lacks concentration then their playing abilities will not be effectively applied in the task.

- **Concentration varies with the sports**

Sustained concentration- distance running, cycling tennis.

Short bursts of concentration- cricket, shooting, athletic field events.

Intense concentration- sprinting events, skiing.

- **Common distractions are** Anxiety, mistakes, fatigue, weather, public announcements, coach, manager, opponent, negative thoughts etc.

Players will develop a routine for competition that may include the night before, the morning, pre competition, competition and post competition routines. If these routines are appropriately structured then they can prove a useful aid to concentration.

5. CONFIDENCE:

Confidence results from the comparison an athlete makes between the goal and their ability. The players will have self-confidence if they believe they can achieve their goal. When the player has self-confidence they will tend to : persevere even when things are not going to plan, show enthusiasm, be positive in their approach and take their share of the responsibility in success and fail. Confidence is a positive state of mind and a belief that you can meet the challenge ahead- a feeling of being in control. It is not the situation that directly affects confidence; thoughts, assumptions and expectations can build or destroy confidence.

I.HIGH SELF CONFIDENCE

Thoughts- positive thoughts of success.

Feelings- excited, anticipation, calm, elation, prepared.

Focus- on self, on the task.

- Behavior- give maximum effort and commitment, willing to take chances, positive reaction to set backs, open to learning take responsibility for outcomes.

II.LOW SELF CONFIDENCE

Thoughts- negative, defeat or failure, doubt.

Feelings- tense, dread, fear

Focus – on others, on less relevant factors.

Behavior – lack of effort, likely to give up, unwilling to take risks, blame others or conditions for outcome.

6. CONTROL:

Ability to maintain emotional control regardless of distraction. Identifying when the players feels a particular emotion and understanding the reason for the feeling is an important stage of helping the players regain emotional control. The player's ability to maintain control of their emotions in the face of adversity and remain positive is essential to successful performance. Two emotions that are often associated with poor performance are anxiety and anger. When the player becomes angry, the cause of the anger often becomes the focus of attention. This then leads to a lack of concentration on the task, performance deteriorates and confidence in ability is lost which fuels the anger- a slippery slope to failure.

7. COMMITMENT:

Ability to continue working to agreed goals. Sports performance depends on the player being fully committed to numerous goals over many years. In competition with these goals the player will have many aspects of daily life to manage. The many competing interests and commitments include work, studies, family / partner, friends, social life and other hobbies/ sports.

Within the player's sport, commitment can be undermined by :

A perceived lack of progress or improvement.

Not being sufficiently involved in developing the training program.

Not understanding the objectives of the training program.

Injury.

Lack of enjoyment.

Anxiety about performance- competition.

Becoming bored.

Coach player not working as a team.

Lack of commitment by other players.

Setting goals with the player will raise their feelings of value, give them joint ownership of the goals and therefore become more committed to achieving them. Many people can contribute to the player's levels of commitment with appropriate levels of support and positive feedback, especially during times of injury, illness and poor performance.

8. CONCLUSION:

Is vividly imaging the absolute perfect performance that an athlete would like to achieve in the next competition. It is used to overcome nervousness, reduce pain in competition and practice, learn technical skills faster and easier, overcome intimidation from competitions, and increase the athlete's self-belief (Townsend-3). Imagining making movements associated to a sport can result in improved performance because physical practice is not the only way to enhance a new skill. Since visualization is a safe form of self-

hypnosis, it is important for athletes to spend a few minutes each day vividly imagining their absolute perfect performance to bring down times, build self-confidence, and overcome recurring problems and intimidates. Visualization works because "images... are the language of your subconscious mind-and is the movies you run through your mind everyday... are programming your body for your next...performance". This technique works because, whether the athlete runs negative or positive movies through his head, either way it will greatly impact how he performs in competition. Therefore, in the present study an attempt has been made to probe the relation between sport psychology and athlete performance that psychology increase the inspiration among the Athlete with new ideas and new success at the time of competition.

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