

CONTRIBUTION OF SPORTS PSYCHOLOGY IN GAMES & SPORTS

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Abstract

The importance of a sports psychologist as an integral member of the coaching and health care teams is widely recognized. Sport psychology is an interdisciplinary science that draws on knowledge from the fields of Kinesiology and Psychology. It involves the study of how psychological factors affect performance and how participation in sport and exercise affect psychological and physical factors. In addition to instruction and training of psychological skills for performance improvement, applied sport psychology may include work with athletes, coaches, and parents regarding injury, rehabilitation, communication, team building, and career transitions.

Key words: Sports Psychology, Games and Sports

INTRODUCTION

It has long been acknowledged that psychological skills are critical for sports man at the elite level. Sports men with the requisite “mental toughness” are more likely to be successful. In the past, it was assumed that these skills were genetically based, or acquired early in life. Now, it is commonly accepted that athletes and coaches are capable of learning a broad range of psychological skills that can play a critical role in learning and in performance.

ROLE OF SPORTS PSYCHOLOGY

The importance of a sports psychologist as an integral member of the coaching and health care teams is widely recognized. Sports psychologists can teach skills to help athletes enhance their learning process and motor skills, cope with competitive pressures, fine-tune the level of awareness needed for optimal performance, and stay focused amid the many distractions of team travel and in the competitive environment.

Psychological training should be an integral part of an athlete’s holistic training process, carried out in conjunction with other training elements. This is best accomplished by a collaborative effort among the coach, the sport psychologist, and the athlete; however, a knowledgeable and interested coach can learn *basic* psychological skills and impart them to the athlete, especially during actual practice. Many experts believe that sport performance is 75% -90% mental. If this is true, then clearly athletes who are better prepared mentally are the ones that are consistently perform with less errors and at higher levels to be successful in any sport or academic endeavor. There is a powerful force guiding athletes to these super performances. It is the subconscious mind. The athlete must allow their subconscious mind to become the dominant driving force when they perform. When the athlete is able to control their subconscious, they

become better at tapping their mental power to perform more consistently at a high level. Only when tapping into your mind's power will your body be able to operate on pure instinct and more consistently under stress. The result is more opportunities to achieve peak performances. Elite athletes are constantly looking to improve their performance to acquire an edge on their competitors. No matter how physically prepared an athlete is, it is their mental preparedness that makes the difference when competing against each other. Conditioning the mind is just as important as conditioning the body! Think of your mental attitude as the ultimate secret weapon that gives you an edge.

The essential goal is to establish a method and an approach that fuels success. At the center of this concept is strengthening an athlete's inner belief that they can achieve greatness. Achieving your goals begins at the subconscious level, where all of our memories, beliefs, and experiences are stored. Although there are many different methods and approaches to working with athletes, it is only when change is created at the subconscious level that real transformation occurs. When working on the subconscious level, athletes can effectively program their minds to achieve success by releasing old ideas that limit performance to experience positive and lasting results.

Sport Psychology can help you to:

- Explore and examine the thoughts and beliefs that are creating the current experiences.
- Reverse and release limiting thoughts that are blocking you from achieving peak performance.
- Program effective auto suggestions for enhancing optimal states.
- Anchor positive states for easy future access.

Simple psychological skills to help the athlete manage the competitive performance environment include: 1) learning relaxation skills (e.g. progressive relaxation; slow, controlled, deep abdominal breathing; or autogenic training); 2) mastering all of the attentional styles (types of concentration); 3) imagery (both visualisation and kinesthetics); 4) appropriate self-talk; and 5) developing a precompetition routine to be employed immediately prior to competition on game day (these routines are short [1–2 minutes] and use all of the mental skills just presented).

CONCLUSION

The importance of a sports psychologist as an integral member of the coaching and health care teams is widely recognized. Sport psychology is the understanding of how the mind influences an athlete's performance in their chosen sport. Within the principles of sport psychology are various concepts such as how do athletes prefer to learn, what is their personality, how can they attain states of relaxation and concentration (narrow and broad focus), how does an athlete learn to visualize a successful performance, do they understand and overcome their limiting beliefs and how does an athlete develop high levels of self-awareness. The importance of sport psychology has been realized for decades, however many coaches and athletes pay too little attention to how it can help them perform better. Many coaches and athletes still overly focus on the physical aspect of sporting performance at the detriment of the non-physical. To conclude we can say that sports psychology plays a vital in enhancing the performance of the players.

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