

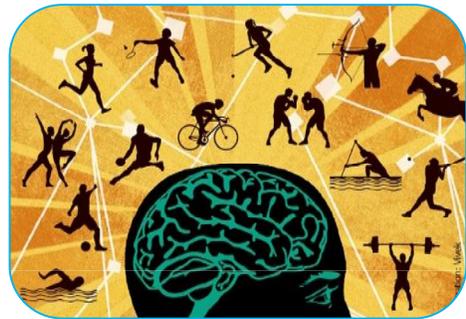


THE ROLE OF SPORTS PSYCHOLOGY IN SPORTS PERFORMANCE ENHANCEMENT

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ABSTRACT:

Sports Psychology is about improving your attitude and mental game skills to help you perform your best by identifying limiting beliefs and embracing a healthier philosophy about your sport. Below is a list of the top ten ways that you can benefit from sports psychology: Mental Game Coaching is the segment of sports psychology that concentrates specifically on helping athletes break through the mental barriers that are keeping them from performing up to their peak potential. By focusing on the mental skills needed to be successful in any sporting competition, mental game coaching seeks to achieve the overall goal of performance improvement. Roles which sport psychology could play in the sports performance enhancement, which subsequently could lead to sports development in the country. Some of the identified roles in the article include resolution of the Athlete's emotional conflict, mental preparation, team building discipline etc. Problems encountered by the sports psychologists in the country are also mentioned such as; non-utilisation of the sports psychologists by sport organizations, low budget for sports, lack of awareness of the roles of the sports psychologist. Some recommendations are also made such as organization of workshops, conference and employment of sport psychologists by various sports ministries and councils. The paper concluded by saying sport psychology should be employed as a scientific training means for Nigerian athletes in order to enhance sports performance.



KEY WORDS: *Sports Psychology, Sports Performance, Competition.*

INTRODUCTION

Sports Psychology does apply to a wide variety of serious athletes. Most of my students (junior, high school, college, and professional athletes) are highly committed to excellence and seeing how far they can go in sports. They love competition and testing themselves against the best in their sport. They understand the importance of a positive attitude and mental toughness. These athletes want every possible advantage they can get including the mental edge over the competition. Sport psychology may not be appropriate for every athlete. Not every person who plays a sport wants to “improve performance.” Sport psychology is probably not for recreation athletes who participate for the social component of a sport or do not spend time working on technique or fitness to improve performance. Young athletes whose parents want them to see a sports psychologist are not good candidate either. It's very important that the athlete desires to improve his or her mental game without having the motive to satisfy a parent. Similarly, an athlete who sees a mental game expert only to satisfy a coach is not going

to fully benefit from mental training. Sport psychology is not just about improving athletic performance. Sport psychology plays a much large role within performance. Sport psychology can be about developing interventions which help to prevent mental health among the athletic population. Sport psychology can be about teaching athletes transferable skills that they can use in not only sport but also in work and family life. Sport psychology can be about helping athletes to manage transitions and deal with issues associated with retirement. Athletes can be particularly vulnerable to mental health problems due to the intense pressure associated to elite sport and sport psychologists can help athletes to deal with some of these issues.

1. Improve focus and deal with distractions. Many athletes have the ability to concentrate, but often focus is displaced on the wrong areas such as when a batter thinks "I need to get a hit" while in the batter's box, which is a result-oriented focus.
2. To instill a healthy belief system and identify irrational thoughts. One of the areas I pride myself on is helping athlete identify ineffective beliefs and attitudes such as comfort zones and negative self-labels that hold them back from performing well. These core unhealthy beliefs must be identified and replaced with a new way of thinking. Unhealthy or irrational beliefs will keep you stuck no matter how much you practice or hard you try.
3. Improve or balance motivation for optimal performance. It's important to look at your level of motivation and just why you are motivated to play your sport. Some motivators are better in the long-term than others. Athletes who are extrinsically motivated often play for the wrong reasons, such as the athlete who only participates in sports because of a parent. I work with athlete to help them adopt a healthy level of motivation and be motivated for the right reasons.
4. In inspiring athletes, the sports psychologist uses his or her individual intelligence actions. This time encouraging the athlete to take part in training by different means, makes him or her feel the success of training, and also makes them have a say in the training plan. Motivation does not signify material reward like money, home, vehicle etc.
5. Another important tension field where sports psychology can assist in improving sports performance is stress management. Stress management in athletes is established. There are different strategies to deal with
6. Enhancement of Physiological Capacities :Sports psychology plays a very unique role in the enhancement of physiological capacities such as strength, speed and flexibility etc., Motivation plays a major role in the enhancement of physical capacity of sportpersons. It is well-known as well as an established fact that psychological capacities or powers can increase physiological capacities of individuals.
7. Learning the Motor Skills : Sports psychology plays its major role in the learning of motor skills. Motor skills learning depends on the individual's level of readiness, i.e., physiological readiness and psychological readiness. Physiological readiness in children is development of the necessary strength, flexibility and endurance as well as the development of various organ systems so that they may perform motor skills required in the activity. Psychological readiness is related to the learner's state of mind. It means the desire and willingness to learn the particular skill. In psychological readiness, sports psychology plays an important role. Sports psychology is also helpful in the cognitive stage, the a social-active stage and the autonomous stage of motor skill learning.
8. In understanding the behaviour : Sports psychology helps in understanding the behaviour of athletes or sportpersons engaged in competitive sports. Coaches also come to know the interest, attitude towards physical activity, instincts, drives and personality of sportpersons. It does not play its role only in understanding of behaviour but it also plays its role in medication of behaviour in various sports situations.
9. In controlling the emotions : Sports psychology plays a very important role in controlling the emotions of sportpersons during practice as* well as competition. Generally, these emotions may bring spontaneous changes in the behaviour of sportpersons. These are anger, disgust, gear, negative self thinking and feeling of ownership, etc. If these emotions are not controlled well in

- time, the performance may be decreased. Sports psychology plays a vital role at such juncture. It helps in balancing the arousal of emotions which further improves the performance.
10. In preparation of athletes psychologically for competitions : Sports psychology also plays its role in preparation of athletes psychologically for competitions. Intact, it has become a trend to give psychological tips to athletes or team players before and after the competitions. That is why, sports psychologists' services are required with a national level and international level terms. They create the will 'to win' in the players.
 11. Role in the emotional problems of sportspersons : Stress, tension and anxiety are natural during practice period and competitions or tournaments. There may be some other emotional problems such as depression, frustration. Anorexia and panic etc. The knowledge of sports psychology may be helpful in such situations. Techniques of relaxation and concentration for stress management can be applied on sportspersons who are under such problems. Conclusively, it can be said that sports psychology plays a very vital role in enhancing the performance of sportspersons. It deals with the various mental qualities such as concentration, confidence, emotional control and commitment etc., which are important for successful performance in sports and games

CONCLUSION

For decades, the value of sports psychology has been achieved, but very few coaches and athletes think about ways to enhance their results. Many coaches and athletes also concentrate on athletic success, but a mix of physiological factors, technical abilities, tactical insight & state of mind decide sport performance. The top performance of all four variables is critical. But it can be argued that the last is the executive function, when the mind decides whether or not what you've trained in recent years is made known – but it's that part of sports success that is generally least regarded in training for competition at the time when it's necessary. Therefore it is the mind that provides maybe the greatest opportunity for competitive advantage in a world where many athletes are mentally, technically & tactically more and more alike Failure or success in the area usually depends on mental aspects almost as physical ones. Sports psychologists realize the remarkable effect of the athlete's mindset and concentrate on preparing the brain to conquer obstacles on the field while improving trust for optimum performance Every single one of us has an untapped source of energy which may be drawn upon to take about outstanding outcomes. Enhancing inspiration is essentially about a difference of attitude, creating a good could do' mindset and engaging in systematic behaviours- the short term practice objectives that facilitate improvement.

Sports Psychology does apply to a large number of extreme athletes. Most of the pupils (junior, professional athletes, college, and high school) are highly devoted to excellence and seeing the distance they are able to go to sports. They like tests as well as competition themselves against the very best in the sport of theirs. They realize the value of an optimistic attitude as well as mental toughness. These athletes would like every possible benefit they are able to buy like the mental advantage of the competition.

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