

Mental Training in Playing Competitive Sports Tournaments

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Abstract: Athlete's performance is versatile. It depends on the partnership between physical, tactical, technical and psychological factors. The psychological factor is usually that defines a winner and a loser in sports. Mental training is preparation for competition in developing athlete's sport skills and tactics level. By combining the psychological factor with modern day competitive behaviors, the paper article presents different designed ways to enhance the psychological qualities through methods described in the development of mental training. Mental Training is an integral part of sports psychology that focuses on helping athletes those who breakout through the mental barriers and helps them in achieving peak performance. The article is a model of intervention and structured framework to increase mental health of an athlete, and respond to the needs of athletes who are at the edge of facing, or experiencing difficulties in the performance. The purpose of this article is to study the importance of mental training and its relation with sports performance. The article comprises of mental training and its importance, remedies and development of winning attitude through strong mental toughness. Conclusion and future scope in these areas are also discussed. The method explained in the article can be used for improvement of mental toughness.

Keywords: Psychological, Psychology, Potential, Mental

1. Introduction

In modern day sports era, sports experts appreciated that mental components like confidence, self-control, focus, and motivation are highly important for achieving peak athletic performance. The most competent practice to improve athletic performance is achieved through mental training. Mental Training comprises of high expectations from self, family and coaches, perfection, fear of defeat, lack in emotional control and focus. Athletes can overthrow these situations through mental training practices that aims to increase in confidence, focus, calmness, belief and mental alertness [1].

Mental training is considered to be one of the most important psychosocial skills an athlete can attain to be successful in sports competitions. Mental training has also been said as one of the most popular terms used in sport psychology. The concept of mental toughness focuses on how mental toughness should be defined and improved by the course of time [2]. Mental training has been studied as an important factor that allows athlete to deal efficiently with challenges and to perform in match pressure situations [11].

Mental Training has its highest impact in competitive sport but its importance is now recognized in a wide range of other life domains. There should be an understanding that while the definition of mental toughness may have common attributes across several roles, there may be differences among differing sport-specific roles, such as those of players and coaches [16]. For example, athlete-specific mental toughness of a badminton player will be different than mental toughness of chess player. Therefore, mental toughness can be trained in different ways as per the specifications of the sport. Specifically, mental toughness can be expressed in many different ways across different sports. It is important that an athlete must be engaged and focused on giving a high impact performance in any situation there are in. The situation can be anything such as someone is bounded by a time period or competing against other athletes, this toughness must make the athlete remain competitive and at the top the others, not just a feeling of participation in the competition. It is better for a athlete to perform in no pressure condition. It is more important to keep the level of energy high when fatigue or pressure is on a high over the athlete.

2. Definition of Mental Training

Mental training is an approach to improve performance by developing self-confidence and creating a positive mindset through smart goal setting, positive self-talk, visualization, imagery, and self-efficacy. Mental toughness is defined as the psychological state or gifted psychological advantage, mental skills, which allows to adjust easier than other competitors in competition or training. As mind reacts with body, and body reacts with mind. They are not separated with each other, they are together. There are many ways of mental training. At Positive Performance, we develop our strategies based on the discipline like Positive Psychology, Meditation, Mindfulness, Self-Talk, Deep breathing, Goal setting, Visualization.

2.1. Why Mental Training Is Necessary

Mental training can be beneficial in our life. Mental training provides an extra benefit in the competition by teaching how to mentally outplay your competitors. It helps build mental strategies to prepare for overcome mental and physical barriers such as nervousness, mental or physical fatigue, injury, lack of focus, low confidence, perfectionism, lack of emotional control, or unwillingness to take risks.

Those who practice mental training:

- 1) Stay focused – During the match and before the match
- 2) Be confident - Regardless of the situation
- 3) Quick recovery - From bad points played
- 4) Play until fatigue occurs
- 5) Grow as an athlete
- 6) take brave decision
- 7) Maintain calmness - Keep their emotions under control
- 8) Play freely - Regardless of the scoreboard or game clock.

First of all, it is necessary to understand what difference is happening in the game. To succeed in a match best is to improve thought processes and stick to one tactic and fight with this change. If the problems are still coming in the way, come with a different plan for the problem. Try something different to what you are currently focused into bluff the opponent. In such situations remain calm and focused. Mental training is needed when a player is frustrated with the performance and feels like giving up when a player cannot play with same confidence in competition that he has in practice sessions.

2.2. Mistakes Through Bad Mental Training

There are many examples of mistakes that athletes have a problem which helps the opponent to have an upper hand:

- 1) *Dwelling on mistakes*: it is not the mistake that matters but your response to the mistake is important. The best way is to focus on the present play. You want to remember what you are doing well and how to correct the mistake next time.
- 2) *Focusing on outcome of winning*: this is common especially in difficult situation when the athlete is lacking behind during the game. By too much thinking on the result, athlete has lost focus on what to do in present in order to win.

- 3) *Worrying about what others are thinking*: Athletes are worried about what will happen if they perform poorly.
- 4) *Performance Pressure*: Expectation from the performance can limit success.
- 5) *Unforce errors*: fear of failure usually makes the athlete too aggressive and try too hard, which causes to make more mistakes.
- 6) *Self-Comparison*: Too much emphasis on the opponents distracts the athlete to focus correctly.
- 7) *Bringing life problems into competitions*: life worries will distract and not separates the focus from the task.

3. Benefits of Mental Training

Mental Training is improving behavior and game skills to perform best by identifying strong areas and accepting an appropriate philosophy about your sport. Some ways that can benefit from Mental Training:

- 1) Improve focus
- 2) Build confidence
- 3) Develop managerial skills to deal with failures and mistakes
- 4) Develop effective communication skills
- 5) Improve or balance motivation for best performance.
- 6) Develop confidence in recovering from injury
- 7) To develop strategies and plans.
- 8) To identify and push the limits

Methods to Improve Mental Training

The only fast way to improve mental training is to develop a structure through which athlete can release the frustration. Important is that athlete have to frame a structure which will be beneficial for himself [4].

Some few exercises through which the athlete can improve or stay focused through mental training can be:

Exercise 1: The athlete must prepare a checklist that must have the particulars related to the good and bad qualities of his game. When the athlete will recognize his qualities he must remind himself not to show his bad qualities to the opponent and focus on his good qualities.

Exercise 2: Practicing Yoga and meditation showed significant improvement in psychological variables namely cognitive anxiety, somatic anxiety, and self-confidence among athletes.

Exercise 3: Developing SMART goals will reduce pressure and makes the athlete focused on the goals. Instead of performances focus on achieving these SMART goals.

Exercise 4: Remembering past performances where the athlete faced tough situations will give the athlete confidence for upcoming matches.

Exercise 5: Identifying strength that help athlete to play well in sport.

Exercise 6: Pre-competition routine such as relaxation, thought process, reviewing the goals, listening to music and positive thinking. Night before match: visualize yourself for performing well. Morning of competition: Review the goals. Travelling to competition: listen to music, visualize past best performances. Right before game: Deep breathing, focus on

good qualities, visualize yourself in successfully executing your game plan. During match: think less thoughts and focused on your game plan.

Exercise 7: Make a check list of actions in which you need to stick during the match and perform during important situations.

4. Developing Winning Attitude

Mental Toughness is not a quality that players are born with. It is developed by days of practice and ways of approaching competitive situations in efficient ways. Coaches and parents are the ideals to help young athletes develop a healthy attitude towards achievements and face real time situations at the time of failure [7]. Some attitude that help athletes in developing mental toughness:

- 1) Training sports in fun way
- 2) Learn from mistakes
- 3) Keep on making efforts
- 4) Never put yourself under pressure
- 5) Self-Awareness
- 6) Change of plans
- 7) Improve thinking

5. Future Scope

The current mental training techniques is supporting athlete only in building awareness of mental ill-health among the athletes. Such awareness is important but not up to the mark to consult the varieties of mental health needed by the athletes. It's important to have a structured framework to promote athlete mental health and wellbeing, and respond to the needs of athletes who are at the edge of developing, or already experiencing mental health problems. Advancement in technology will cover the delivery of mental training lessons virtually through the internet to any part by of the by the help of world level mind trainers [14]. Counselling and training will be delivered from anywhere in the world and, regardless of where people live; all will have access to the same technology assisted interventions. It is important to have a platform which will be truly globalized to entire population of the world using the same interaction platform to discuss or share the experience related to mental health problems.

6. Conclusion

Because of the skills used and specifications of every sports, the psychological training of every sports are different. Though, psychological training does not have a particular approach, there are kinds types of possibilities that can be selected. Every sports federation must come up with a plan of experimental training according to the different categories and athlete character. At this modern stage where performance pressure is on peak in every stage of life, everyone needs a long-term and systemic plan on strengthening their self-psychological character. Coaching staff, parent and athletes should have to work in a good cooperative manner.

Thus, this ability to focus and concentrate allows the individual to build self-confidence which motivates them to exceed expectations in the task. Mental training and mental imagery benefits could be the key factor to prevent stress in an athlete who experiences an external uncontrollable event or has anxiety-like issues prior to competition.

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