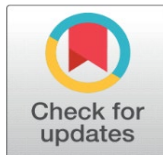
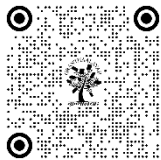


SPORT PSYCHOLOGY HELP BASKETBALL PLAYERS PERFORMANCE BY INCREASING MENTAL TOUGHNESS THROUGH DECREASING ANXIETY

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ABSTRACT

Basketball Player are constantly under severe levels of stress and anxiety to perform well. They fight for every inch and often put their bodies through excruciating pain to secure a win. Yet how is it done? How does one get the subconscious mind and body to work together without consulting the conscious and rational mind--which surely would prevent such nonsense from continuing? As is the case with any competition, there are situations that require the utmost concentration in face of difficult circumstances. These can be caused by anything from being a half boat down with 500 meters left in a crew regatta, to having to make one more touchdown to secure that extra point over your opposition. If you are able to maintain mental toughness then success will be yours. Though, what happens if you fail? You dropped the ball or jumped your slide—do these setbacks shake your self-belief and lower your motivation or do they act as a channel for even greater accomplishments? Mental toughness is clearly vital to combating pre-performance anxiety and Basketball Players success. By learning to train the mind to work along with the body, one will increase real performance by decreasing anxiety. This is one of the key areas of focus for Sport Psychology, which I will go into greater depth throughout this paper.

Keywords: Basketball, Performance, Mental Toughness, Anxiety

1. INTRODUCTION

Basketball Player are constantly under severe levels of stress and anxiety to perform well. They fight for every inch and often put their bodies through excruciating pain to secure a win. Yet how is it done? How does one get the subconscious mind and body to work together without consulting the conscious and rational mind--which surely would prevent such nonsense from continuing? As is the case with any competition, there are situations that require the utmost concentration in face of difficult circumstances. These can be caused by anything from being a half boat down with 500 meters left in a crew regatta, to having to make one more touchdown to secure that extra point over your opposition. If you are able to maintain mental toughness then success will be yours. Though, what happens if you fail? You dropped the ball or jumped your slide—do these setbacks shake your self-belief and lower your motivation or do they act as a channel for even greater accomplishments? Mental toughness is clearly vital to combating pre-performance anxiety and Basketball Players success. By learning to train the mind to work along with the body, one will increase real performance

by decreasing anxiety. This is one of the key areas of focus for Sport Psychology, which I will go into greater depth throughout this paper.

2. WHAT IS SPORT PSYCHOLOGY?

Sport Psychology is an emerging new field within the world of psychology and Basketball Players that concentrates on preparing the mind of the athlete as thoroughly as the body. Over the past several years, coaches and Basketball Player alike have started to realize that superior physical performance alone is no longer sufficient enough to win championships. Rather, the field of sport psychology has discovered that optimal performance is contingent upon mental preparation and psychological strength as well as physical preparation and technical skill. It has been this performance triad, whose emphasizes on mental toughness has molded the core of sport psychology.

3. EFFECTS OF PRESSURE, STRESS AND ANXIETY UPON AN ATHLETE

For the purpose of this paper, I'm going to use Sports Psychologists G. Jones definition of stress and anxiety. "Stress is a state that results from the demands that are places on the individual which require that person to engage in some coping behavior. Anxiety results when the individual doubts her or her ability to cope with the situation that causes him or her stress."

As the pressure to succeed and perform consistently over time increases, Basketball Player continually add both physical and emotional stress to their bodies. Mental toughness, or the ability to perform at one's optimal level regardless of circumstances, is consequentially a vital tool in helping one cope with such strenuous situations. Our study of sport psychology focuses upon an important premise: that a change in an athlete's mental state is consciously or unconsciously accompanied by a change in his physical state. If muscle tension occurs due to feelings of anxiety or worry, it interferes with the athlete's performance because the nerves are focused on the cause of tension rather than the coordinated movement for muscles. Thus, the more tension in the body, the more difficult it is to perform the coordinated actions. Anxiety affects more than simply the physical aspect of an athlete. There are accompanying physiological and psychological behavioral responses as nerves and anxieties build about an upcoming performance. Reactions to this type of anxiety many be either positive or negative (rarely both). With positive reactions—called the "fight reaction"—the person is excited about the test and thrives on the challenge.

However, most people usually experience the negative reaction—or the "flight reaction." In response to this reaction, Basketball Player get extremely nervous, to the point of nauseating, before a race and begin to focus primarily on the negative aspects of the upcoming performance. They look for excuses for a potential poor performance and thus, in effect, prepare themselves for one.

4. STUDIES

A significant amount of time was spent researching this topic. Unfortunately little scientific literature and or studies were conducted in this particular area as far as I could tell. Rather the bulk of my resources come from Academic and scientific journals, and articles written by either top coaches or sport psychologists.

The Hull researchers from the International Journal of Sport Psychology carried out a study to show how mental toughness was related to performance and cognitive appraisal. In the first study, 23 volunteers performed 30-minute static cycling trials at three different intensities of 30, 50 and 70% of their maximum oxygen uptake, rating the physical demands of the trials at five-minute intervals. Participants were classified as having either high or low mental toughness based on their responses to the above-mentioned questionnaire and, as predicted, those with higher levels of mental toughness reported significantly lower perceived exertion at 70% of maximum. No significant differences were noted at lower levels of exertion which, as the researchers acknowledged, is consistent with the cliché that 'when the going gets tough, the tough get going'. The observed differences at higher levels of exertion could reflect a tendency of the more tough-minded to somehow act on the incoming stimuli before it reaches the level of perception, to reduce the perception of strain. Mentally tough exercisers might perceive themselves as having greater control during such conditions, or interpret the higher intensity as a challenge rather than a threat.

5. PERFORMANCE ENHANCEMENT

What I have found about sport psychology is that absolutely none of these articles deal with any physical aspect of Basketball Playersism. This is in the sense that all Basketball Player need to do to unlock our full potential is believe in ourselves. A novel idea, one that thousands of coaches and Basketball Player prior to sport psychology had not had to combat. Regardless, it is important to reiterate, and realize that the athlete himself is his own worst enemy. This occurs by letting inconsequential occurrences defeat him well before any opponent does. So the question is then this: how does one program into his or her subconscious the beliefs that will drive their performance rather than hinder it? According to Mike Hughes, performance enhancement coordination for the United States Naval Academy Basketball Players Association and varsity women's rowing coach, an athlete's perceived truths, or beliefs drive his or her performance everyday. As a result, it is vital to maintain self-awareness and confidence in one's ability. Ability + belief = actual performance by being aware of one's strengths, limitations, thoughts and feelings it will become much easier to stop negative thinking before they become detrimental.

Hughes continues by stressing the importance of using affirmations to reinforce the beliefs that drive an athlete's performance in the desired direction in order to achieve success. Write down, visualize, and picture the desired end results to further mentally prepare oneself for an upcoming performance.

6. CONCLUSION

As one progresses up the chain of great Basketball Players performers, it gets continually more difficult to beat the oppositions by raw physical talent and strength alone. The higher one gets, the more even the playing field becomes. Consequentially, sport performance is contingent upon mental preparation and psychological strength. As physical preparation for upcoming competitions begins so should mental preparation. This includes a commitment to setting clear short-term goals, building confidence by entertaining positive thoughts, concentrating on using self affirmations and imagery, and maintaining control through negative thought stopping. Sport Psychology may not have founded the idea that in order to succeed, one must possess a certain level of confidence in one's own ability however this new area of concentration is focusing on the implications and importance of Psychological training. By acquiring an understanding of the affects one's mind has on their sport performance—a closer consistently of achieving maximum potential will occur. Sports, like life, is a triad containing three critical main points that must be constantly juggled. True potential can never be fully realized if all three areas of concentration—physical, physiological, and tactical—are not developed and practiced.

CONFLICT OF INTERESTS

None.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

None.

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