Sports Medicine Essay, Research Paper

Today in sports athletes endure many mental and physical obstacles

from there competitive environment. Many of today’s best athletes work

with sports psychologists to help them handle the pressures found in this

competitive atmosphere. One question that athletes ask is, why cant they

play in big games as well as they anticipate themselves doing? Sports

psychologists feel that spending all their time on body conditioning and

athletic skills will not ensure that athletes reach their peak performance.

Through various studies, psychologists conclude that the psyche aspect must

also be in shape to maximize the performance potential in sports as well as

education or running a business corporation. Psychologists conclude that

by fine-tuning athletic skills, and making real-life movements more

automatic, it will install a sense of calmness as athletes prepare for the

pressure of competition. They call this technique guided imagery. They

use this technique for the mental aspect of fundamental skills.

Psychologists recommend that athletes mentally practice their events on the

eve of competition.

When it comes to sports, the winning edge throughout the world of

sports may have less to do with strength and talent, and more to do with,

what sports psychologists call it, mental toughness. Sports psychologists

James Loehr, calls “mental toughness,” the ability to handle and even enjoy

the psychological pressure of a competitive situation. (Harry Hurt, 1996,

p.12) Many of today’s best athletes seek help from sports psychologists, in

order to help them with their overall game.

Negative thoughts and psychological pressure from competitive

moments; create many distractions for athletes who do not focus mental

pictures in their minds. A vivid picture, is one that allows individuals

to see stress and negative thoughts as a challenge, rather than a threat.

Psychologists assist athletes in coping with many obstacles that might

occur, so that when they get in a pressured dilemma, they can react quickly

to the situation. Prior to the 1992 Olympics sports psychologists James

Loehr, spent a considerable amount of time mentally preparing Jansen’s mind

to set high goals, so that he wouldn’t repeat failure, as he experienced,

in the last two Olympics. (Harry Hurt 1996, p.12)

Psychological pressure has a major effect on athletes’ performance

and individual ability, rather than the physical state. Psychologist tries

to set high standards for athletes to maintain poise and discipline.

Athletes must make sacrifices, in witch they have to follow steps in order

to complete these tasks: first, relax, and let your mind replace all the

negative thoughts with positive ones. Secondly, learn from mistakes and

make adjustments. To achieve ultimate physical performance it is necessary

for one’s mind and body work in tandem. The mind is a message center that

allows the body to accomplish whatever it wants. Coaches and psychologists

believe your mind determines, how fast, you can achieve your goals.

Psychologists feel as though, with out self-confidence in yourself, nothing

really matters, because in your heart and mind, your have already

classified your self as a failure!

In Today’s field of work, sports psychologist are trying to use

different techniques to improve athletes’ performance. After comprehensive

research and development, psychologists came up with the following

findings: first, athletes who view stressful situations as a threat,

produce hormones and chemicals in their body that can impair physical and

mental performance. (Harry Hurt, 1996 p.12) Second, athletes who meet as a

challenge create a rush of adrenaline and sugar inside their body.

According to medical sources this is called a natural high, which is

responsible for athletes exceeding in their performance. Additionally,

James Loehr believed that, the findings mentioned above are difficult to

perform, but players that develop self-discipline to commit themselves to

do it right, succeed in the sports world, as well as life in general.

Musicians, actors, professional business executives, sprinters, and

athletes are different in terms of their size, quickness, thinking ability,

movement and other characteristics associated to this group. To be

successful James Loehr has several techniques that are implement into their

daily activity that will make them very successful. According to all his

research, it all comes down to is, being able to do these things techniques

on constant bases and one performance will be far better than the average

person will. These techniques will provide the ingredients, in order to

allow their brain to clearly see the task before them.

The first technique used by many psychologists is called, “replace

the pain.” Athletes in various sports often get depressed and discouraged

because of the different aspects of their athletic skills that they cannot

accomplish, because of fatigue or pain. To overcome these obstacles sports

psychologists have athletes visualize long term goals. Psychologists

believe that using these techniques athletes will be able to replace the

pain and not dwell on the negative aspects. Yukelson states “You should

have a strategy ready to replace the pain, and if so you can often make it

enough so you don’t end up dwelling on it. (Megan Gorman, 1997 p.46 &47)

The second technique used for athletes to remove mental and

physical pressure during competitive situations is a method called,

“Stretch your mind as well as your body.” Athletes in today’s society are

either suffering from tension or nervous build up. Through heavy research,

sports therapists have found out that athletes who have experienced recent

life stress are more likely to be injured on the playing field. Overly

stressed athletes are less to observe potentially harmful objects in their

peripheral vision and more likely to concentrate on irrelevant cues.

Moreover anxious athletes who get so excited before games build up tension

or get more nervous as time progresses. They tend to simultaneously tense

opposing muscles, leading to tiredness and injury. Sports psychologists

recommend relaxation before big games. According to Ray Palmer, “The more

relaxed Athletes are the more open their mind can be, and the more focused

they can be on their goal.” (Megan Gorman, 1997, p.46)

One thing that helps the mind and body relax is belly-rising, it

helps calm an individual and fill their blood with oxygen. Long distance

runners use belly-breathing to relax the mind and body and calm themselves

down. An example of this is when the runner is about to stop he or she

should take deep breaths, and blow out long and hard thus allowing the

relaxation and refocus the mind on the running. This method is called

“Explosive exhale.”

The third technique is called “Reframe the run,” it is used to set

aside adversities or pain. For instance, to help runners achieve a 12 mile

run psychologists tell the runner to divide the task into four three-mile

segments. In the first segment design and build a dream house in your mind,

in the second segment decorate inside the house, third landscape the

outside, and fourth move in. This concept allows the runner to remove the

pain and replace it with pleasure. Doing this allows the runner to run

much faster with less difficulty.

The Next technique that sports psychologist use is “Live in the

moment.” Few athletes realize the effect a positive attitude has on a game,

a positive attitude helps athletes stay completely focused, and it helps

them from worrying about whether or not their performance level is at there

peak or not. Athletes must stay “In the moment,” if athletes keep this in

mind they will accomplish any goal that they encounter. Doing so builds

confidence using self-talks. Living in the moment also allows the athlete

to remove the negative thoughts as well as bringing in the good.

The final technique is called “Visualization.” By creating a

mental picture of the task the brain can develop the situation within the

brain creating awareness before it actually occurs. Thus having this

picture in place, your mind will have better control over your emotions.

This makes it much easier to control their performance.

These mental techniques, which psychologists have prescribed for

athletes allow them to reach the peak of their athletic performance. These

techniques help athletes visualize images before they occur, find effective

relaxation system and set realistic goals, so that they can achieve them.

My overall viewpoint of this complex and growing concern in the

world of sports as it relates to pressure versus achievement can only be

accomplished through the utilization of mental exercise. A high-

carbohydrate diet, and systematic self-brainwashing to achieve a maximum

performance. A considerable amount of athletes at are utilizing the

psychological service of sports therapists, in order to balance the area of

achievement. Mental training has been proven to help in many aspects of

life not just sports.

As an Athlete myself I can testify for the psychologist that even

when I practiced for hours on end with out being in the right mental mind

frame I was not on top of my game. Also I noticed that when I was mentally

prepared for a game even if I had not practiced my skills as much that week

I still performed very well during that weeks game. But I also noticed

that when I practiced during the week visualized myself hitting the winning

homerun or striking the last batter out and than was able to relax before

the game, I play my best and others notice it to.

In closing, people such as, Michael Jordan, Tiger Woods, and Bill

Clinton, are some of many individuals participating in different

occupations, with different skill levels, faced with ongoing crisis that

are daily. Maintaining a solid sub-conscentious mine, they were able to

achieve maximum potential and results. It takes all of these components

outlined in this report to accomplish the objectives. However, all were

able to control the mental aspects that enable them to achieve higher goals

than the average person in today’s society, through this educational

process of self therapy.