

Cognitive Performance in Sport
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Much the same as all other coaching disciplines, sport psychology has compounded upon the already fragmented system of developing athletes and sport results.

Each aspect of preparation (psychological-competition-specialized- general) is interrelated and mutually dependent. The further the coaching paradigm divides itself into specialty fields (many of which are already built upon misdirected curricula) the less potential the coaches have to effectively improve upon the global development of the athlete due to the thickness of the fractures which divide each realm of specialization.

Anton Chigurh said it well in “No Country for Old Men” at 58seconds into this clip:
<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=riyC8AJNQZs>

“That's foolish...you pick the one right tool”

The cognitive development of the athlete is paramount and the process of its development must be integrated into every other aspect of preparation. This demands that every coach who is already in contact with the athletes has developed his/her skill set in that regard.

The coaches skill set must be developed such that the he/she is capable of outlining the strategies of developing the following (RE Blumenstein):

- confidence and resolve (self belief and determination)
- ability to execute tasks under pressure
- competitiveness
- concentration/focus
- anxiety control
- composure
- self-awareness
- positive thinking
- team cohesion
- thought control
- self-regulation

Those who understand these facets of cognitive and psychological preparation know that the words 'intangible' and 'mental toughness' are the language of the common folk who lack the specific knowledge to recognize and dissect what they see in themselves as well as from each and every athlete.

Psychological developmental strategies, no different than technical movement instruction, must be initiated in controlled settings and once they are 'digested' the athlete is challenged to demonstrate them at higher and higher intensities in a step like fashion until the forebrain thought/concentration works itself towards hind brain reflex.

For this reason, an emotional pep talk before a contest is a misdirection as

Working backwards from each competition calendar the coach(es) must ensure that the blueprint is in

place to strategically develop the designated psychological framework for the respective sport (and when applicable, the specific disciplines within the sport). In this way, the coach(es) enhance the possibility for consistency and reliability of technical execution during the contests.

Bench marks must be integrated along the way as a system of checks and balances; however, this does not necessitate isolated testing. To the contrary, in order to ensure transfer (RE Bondarchuk), the monitoring must be done under conditions that most closely replicate the competition.

The catch is that competition simulation must be strategically left reserved for times in which the coach(es) are confident that all realms of psychological and competition/specialized/general movement preparation are established at level of efficiency that warrants their intensification. Otherwise, the intensity of competition simulation will only solidify the pre-existing inefficiencies in any of the performance domains. Therein lies one of the fundamental elements of the training problem and the solution to this problem demands a reformatted approach to the status quo.