Training for elite athletes: a psychologist’s perspective

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The 14th Annual Conference for the Society of Chinese Scholars on Exercise Physiology and Fitness

Macao
22-23, July, 2015
- Constant search for exceeded

- Need for continuous adaptation
  - Physical, Technical, Social, Psychological ...
Integrative Model of Physical & Mental Aspects of Training

Physical & Technical goals of Practice

Thought & feelings associated to performance practice

Intense practice according to the integrative perspective of excellence:
- physical
- technical
- MENTAL
- EMOTIONAL

Adapted from Beswick, 2010
Preparation to Performance

PERFORMANCE

Total Preparation State

Physical Preparation State
- Physical Capacity

Mental Preparation State
- Mental Capacity

Emotional Preparation State
- Emotional Capacity

Adapted from Beswick, 2010
Emotional Stability

Performance

Wellbeing

Athlete

Team

Coach

Family/Significant Others
PSYCHOLOGICAL FACTORS AND OLYMPIC SUCCESS
(Gould & Maynard, 2009)

**Personal Disposition**

- Optimism
- Motivational orientation (task, ego)
- Adapted perfectionism
- Competitiveness
- Sports intelligence
- Hope trait
- Locus control
- Intrinsic/Extrinsic motivation
Emotional States/Attributes

- Confidence
- Concentration
- Determination/commitment
- Optimal zone (emotion, arousal, anxiety)
- Emotional control
- Flow
- Commitment
- Body awareness
- Pain Management
- Self-consciousness
EXCELENCE
(Expertise)

Consistent performance and superior to high performance peers
- Produces concrete results (apart from the high skills)
- Should be replicated in the laboratory (sport competitions)

Ericson, Prietula & Cokely, 2007
- **Deliberate practice**
  * Focused on tasks beyond the level of competence and comfort

- **Competent Coach**
  * orientation of deliberate practice
  * teaching of self-coaching
- Deliberate practice
  - Individualized training
  - Specific tasks
  - Continuous and persistent efforts
  - Aim to improve performance

- Uncomfortable psychological zone
- Physical & psychological suffering
- Frustration
Belgium athletes: How many talented juniors make a successful transition to seniors?
(Vanden Auweele, et al., 2004, in Stambulova, 2013)

• 167 Belgian track & field athletes of 14-18 years old (age-group national champions in their events)

• 5 years later experts evaluated their athletic career developments and realized that:
  – 17% - made senior national team
  – 31% - stagnated
  – 28% - performed irregularly with ups & downs
  – 24% - dropped out
Giftedness and Talent

**GIFFTEDNESS**
- natural capacities of the subject

**TALENT**
- high performance in one or more areas of activity
Differentiated Model of Giftedness and Talent (Gagné, 2010)

**CHANCE**

**NATURAL ABILITIES**
GIFTS = top 10%

**DOMAINS**
- MENTAL
  - INTELECTUAL
  - CREATIVE
  - SOCIAL
  - PERCEPTUAL
- PHYSICAL
  - MUSCULAR
  - MOTOR CONTROL

**ENVIRONMENTAL**
MILIEU: Physical, Cultur. Social, Fam.
INDIVIDUALS: Family, Peers, Teachers
PROVISIONS: Enrichment, Administr.

**CATALYSTS**

**INTRAPERSONAL**
**TRAITS**
- PHYSICAL
- MENTAL
**GOAL MANAGEMENT**
- AWARENESS
- MOTIVATION
- VOLITION

**DEVELOPMENTAL PROCESS**
ACTIVITIES: Access, Content, Format
PROGRESS: Stages, Paces, Turning Points
INVESTMENT: Time, Money, Energy

**COMPETENCIES**
TALENTS = top 10%

**FIELDS**
- ACADEMIC
- TECHNICAL
- SCIENCE & TECHNOL.
- ARTS
- SOCIAL SERVICE
- ADMINISTRATION & SALES
- BUSINESS

**GAMES:** Video, Cards, Chess, Puzzles

**SPORTS & ATHLETICS**
Why athletes overcome sport difficulties and physical/psychological suffering?
RESILIENCE

- Linked with the preservation of the physical and psychological well-being of athletes
  (Yi, Smith & Vitalino, 2005)
- Capacity to overcome obstacles
  (Holt & Dunn, 2004)
- Higher values in young footballers as compared to students
  (Ruiz, De la Vega, Poveda, Rosado y Serpa, 2012)
- Development of appropriate behaviors towards adversity or risks

- Emphasis on the strengths of human beings (not in deficits)
1. - As a TRAIT

“personal quality that allows the subject to be successful in the presence of adversity” (Connor & Davidson, 2003, p. 76)

“positive personality characteristic that favors the individual adaptation” (Wagnild & Young, 1993)
Components of Resilience
(Wagnild e Young, 1993; Connor e e Davidson, 2003)

- Perseverance
- Self-sufficiency
- Meaning of life
- Existential uniqueness
- Resistance
- Clarity of goals
- Orientation for action
- Self-esteem
- Adaptability
- Problem-solving ability
- Humor in the face of adversity
- Patience
- Tolerance
2.- As RESPONSE

“demonstration of competence in the context of significant challenges to adaptation or development of the subject” (Masten & Coatsworth, 1998, p. 206)

Adaptation promoted by internal and external protective factors
Resilience – Process-response

Situation of THREAT / ADVERSITY

SUBJECT

POSITIVE adaptation

External

Internal

confrontation

PROTECTING factors

RISK factors

Personal Experiencies/Qualities

Environment Caracteristics

Ex: Family’s characteristics (parental care, supporting family network)

(Fergus & Zimmerman, 2005; Galli, 2005; Masten & Coatsworth, 1998)
Resilience associated to:

- Psychological well-being (Hosseini & Besharat, 2010)
- Absence of psychopathology (Yi et. al, 2005)
- Sports achievement (Hosseini & Besharat, 2010)

- Present in sports talents (Holt & Dunn, 2004; Holt & Mitchell, 2006; Vigário & Serpa, 2009; Ramadas, Serpa & Rosado, 2012)
- Present in superior athletes (Galli, 2005; Gould et. al, 2002; Ramadas & Serpa, 2014)
Risk Factors:
- routine linked to training and competition
- constant demand for results
- frustration with unsatisfactory results
- injury
- performance breaks
- health problems
- transitions in sports career

(Galli, 2005; Sanches & Rubio, 2010)
Importance of Protecting Socio-Affective Factors:

- sports organization and culture
- coaches
- peers
- networks of emotional and social support to the athlete
- family

(Chambers, 2008; Galli, 2005; Sanches & Rubio, 2010)
PSYCHOLOGICAL FACTORS AND SPORTS EXCELLENCE

Environmental Catalyst

THE PARENTS
Your child’s success or lack of success in sports does not indicate what kind of parent you are.

But having an athlete that is coachable, respectful, a great teammate, mentally tough, resilient and tries their best IS a direct reflection of your parenting.
Parental Involvement in the Children’s Sports Activities

Teques & Serpa, 2009

Perception of invitations (Club, Coach. & Athletes)

Parents’ Role Construction & Self-efficacy

Perception of time & energy; Knowledge & Skills

Talents’ Parents

Ordinary Players’ Parents

PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT IN ACTIVITIES (going to trainings & competitions; Participating in club’s activities, etc)

Total: 46.5

Total: 44.1
SUMMARY

Talents’ Parents:
- Higher encouraging & reinforcement;
- Higher consistency of parental role;
- More reactive to the invitations of their children to be involved;
- Less dependence on the coaches’ invitations;
- Perception of invitations (athlete, club, coach): factor that contributes the most to the involvement of talents’ parents (react to the context);
- Perception of time, energy, knowledge and skills: main factor to the involvement of the ordinary players’ parents (self-focused).
RESEARCH ON
Resilience and Parental Influence

AIM:
- Verify the relationship between resilience and various dimensions of the parents’ influence

- 216 Portuguese young soccer players
  – Elite e Sub-elite
- Male players
- 15-19 years old (M= 17,14; SD= 0,63)
### RESULTS - Correlations

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>PARENTAL SUPPORT QUESTIONNAIRE*</th>
<th>SP. PERFECT.**</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Father’s Rejection</td>
<td>Father’s Over Protect.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Resilience Total</strong></td>
<td>-0.117</td>
<td>0.146</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Resilience Personal Competence</strong></td>
<td>-0.116</td>
<td>0.157</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Resilience Self &amp; Life Acceptance</strong></td>
<td>-0.084</td>
<td>0.077</td>
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* Sig: p=0.05
** Sig*: p=0.01

** Frost, Marten, Lehart & Rosenblat, 1990

Ramadas & Serpa, 2012
AIM:
- To investigate differences in resilience between talent and ordinary athletes

- 137 Portuguese young soccer players
  - 54 talents (members of National or Regional teams)
  - 83 ordinary players
- Male players
- 14-17 years old (M= 15.57; SD= 0.69)
### RESULTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variables</th>
<th>Talents (n=54)</th>
<th>Ordinary Players (n=83)</th>
<th>t test</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Total RS²</td>
<td>42.17</td>
<td>39.98</td>
<td>2.49*</td>
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<tr>
<td>Self Competence¹</td>
<td>24.98</td>
<td>23.77</td>
<td>2.12**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self &amp; Life Acceptance</td>
<td>17.19</td>
<td>16.20</td>
<td>2.19**</td>
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Development of Athletes’ Psychological Adaptation

PSYCHOLOGICAL TRAINING

COUNSELING

PSYCHOLOGICAL COACHING
Psychological Training

- Mental skills (arousal regulation; Imagery; Concentration; Self-talk...)
- Coping skills (stress, risks, injuries...)
- Life skills (ex: personal organisation, time management, social skills; sport-study coordination; taking responsibilities)
- Social /emotional support
- Career transitions
- Life & sport events
- Coping with success et failure
Psychological Coaching (optimising the potentiel)

- Mental preparation for competitions
- Mental attitude for trainings
- Goal setting
- Self-confidence
- Self-motivation
- Personal development (autonomy, independence...)

...
Professional X Amateur Soccer Players
Psychological Prediction?

Ramadas, Serpa & Rosado, 2014
- Top level sports career is very demanding in terms of physical and psychological well-being and health.

- The athletes need to develop a psychological structure in order to overcome frustration, adversity and risks and keep well-being.

- Resilience is a protecting psychological characteristic that may be developed by means of a cognitive-behavioral approach as well as a positive social environment.
Thank You Very Much For Your Kind Attention

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