
PSYCHOLOGICAL FACTORS IN SPORT PERFORMANCE

(10 pages)

CONTENTS

Anxiety	p2
Motivation	p3
Personality	p5
Agression	p6
Feedback	p6
Learning	p7
Open & Closed Skills	p10

Psychological Factors & Skill

It's all in the mind

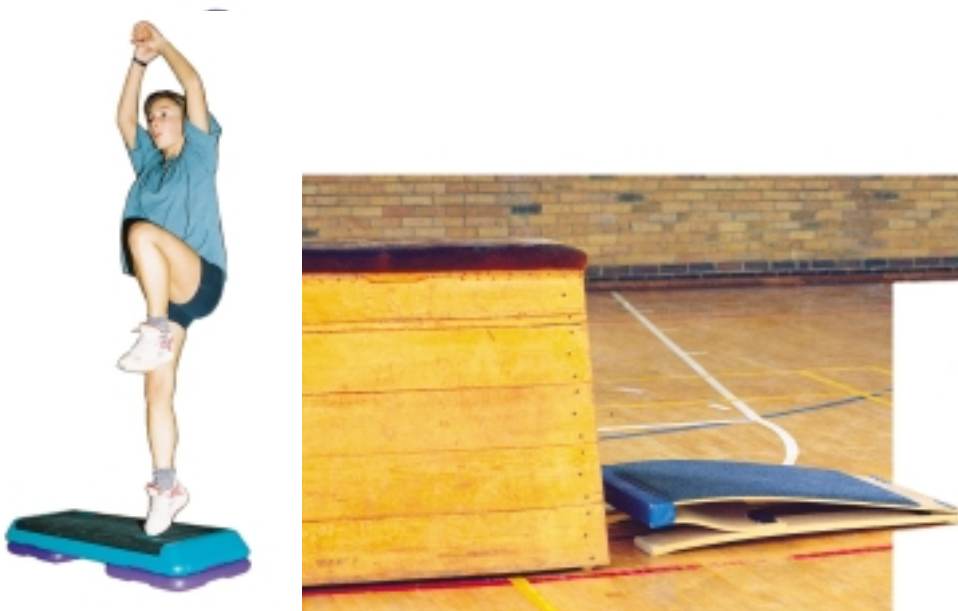
Tension is a state of arousal arising from anticipation, apprehension (worry) about a situation, which results in a state of readiness of the body. This is experienced by an increased alertness and muscle tone. It grades into anxiety if the situation is seen as threatening.

Anxiety

Modern research on the relationship between personality and performance is concentrated more on the analysis of anxiety and its relationship with performance.

It is important for anxiety and arousal to be under control and at levels appropriate for the activity. The right level of arousal is needed for performance to be at its best. Questionnaires have been produced which investigate the type and level of anxiety.

Performing a new activity can be an anxious moment, especially when we are unsure of our physical capabilities, teaching and experience replaces the anxiety with confidence



Trait anxiety - this refers to a person's tendency to become anxious in almost all situations. People who always worry a lot would be said to have a high level of trait anxiety. This type of anxiety is a relatively fixed part of a person's personality, and not easy to change.

State anxiety - this refers to the anxiety you develop and show in specific situations, because of that situation, eg. when climbing a rock face, or when waiting for the start of a race. This type of anxiety can be controlled and adjusted. Teachers and coaches can develop plans to help performers deal with state anxiety using relaxation techniques.

Boredom

Is a poorly defined state, although it is widely used by people who are receiving little stimulation from their surroundings or activities. It tends to reflect a passive state of mind which is expecting stimulation, rather than a state of mind which is generating interest in the surroundings and activities, or which is capable of generating internal thought processes which release the subject from being a slave to their immediate surroundings or circumstances.

- How much do you want to learn a physical activity?
- How much effort are you prepared to put into your programme?
- How hard are you prepared to work?
- How much are you prepared to sacrifice to succeed?
- Can you stick at it?

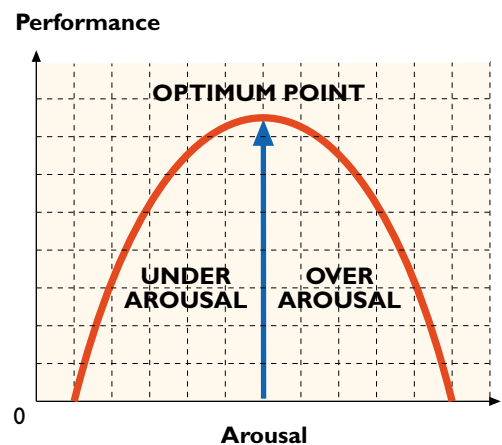
Motivation

The answers to these questions reveal your motivational level. Motivation is a very broad term which involves a sense of purpose, commitment, and determination. It affects the intensity of feeling which an individual brings to a situation. Intensity of feeling is also called arousal. Motivation involves a general level of arousal to action, which is focussed and sustained. The 'Inverted U' theory relates levels of arousal to the quality of performance.

Inverted U theory

In this theory, arousal level increases to an optimum point, at which you are performing at your very best (psyching up). Past this point you begin to lose control, and your performance gets worse as you are trying too hard. Some people only reach their optimum arousal in serious competition or performance, whilst others are too easily aroused, and pass their optimum level in competition or performance (psyching out).

It is important to remain in control and not to 'psyche out'. When you begin to worry, or get anxious, you begin to doubt yourself and performance declines (see Personality and Performance: p.47). Loss of self-confidence is a major problem when people feel under pressure. Arousal should be controlled, if you are to benefit fully from it. Preparing yourself mentally in the right way, remaining focussed and in control during your performance is very important.



Over arousal can interfere with performance, especially skills, like taking a football penalty kick.