Applied Sport Psychology and Mental Training
in Relation to Coaching

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Formidlingsrække
“Coaching – forskning og praksis”

Professional Background

Studied Physical Education and English at the Free University of Berlin, Germany
Since 2003 Sport Psychologist for German National Track and Field Association
Certified Sport Psychologist (asp/bdp)
Research areas: Motivation, Volition, Psychological Skills Training, Cross-Cultural Research, Talent Development & Talent Selection, Sport Psychological Diagnostics

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Outline

1. Brief introduction to coaching (background)

2. The Model of Systematic Sport Psychological Training

3. Case Example: Women’s Soccer

4. Discussion: What are the differences / similarities?

What is coaching?

Coaching means to develop the professional and personal potentials and individual abilities towards self-regulation.

Coaching means participation in the process of learning and development of a focus-person/-group.

Coaching means to develop the focus-person on the basis of his/her own resources.

(Stelter, 2005)
What is the purpose of coaching?

Coaching helps the focus-person

- To sharpen his/her attention on the situation
- To clarify his/her relation towards the situation
- To strengthen his/her subjective evaluation in regard to the situation (competence, valence)
- To focus on the development of own strategies and solutions regarding the task
- To relate directly towards the purpose and meaningfulness of his/her action
- To develop new perspectives regarding future actions and tasks

(Stelter, 2005)

Why Psychological skills training / Mental training?

- Tool in elite sports to enhance peak performance
- Professionalization of elite sports
- More and more nations are hiring sport psychologists
- Olympic athletes that work with sport psychologists are more successful than those who do not (Eberspächer et al., 2005).
- Moving from a “fireman” approach to a planned, systematic approach

The Training ...

• is purposeful
• is carried out methodically
• is performed repeatedly
• is controlled

Model of Systematic Sport Psychological Training (Beckmann, 2003)

• Developed in Germany due to the professionalization in the field of sport psychology

• Problem of “anything goes” and anyone can call themselves a sport psychologist

• Establishment of an education program for applied sport psychologists
Model of Systematic Sport Psychological Training (Beckmann, 2003)

- Crisis Intervention
- Advanced Training
- Basic Training (Relaxation & Team Building)

- Diagnostics
- Monitoring

What does this entail?

- Group sessions
- Individual sessions
- Talks with the coach
- Training and competition observations
- Education for the coaches
- Attending training camps
- Phone calls & Email /SMS contact
Diagnostics

I. Introductory talk with athlete

II. Sport Psychological Questionnaires
   - Motivation (e.g. sport specific achievement motive)
   - Volition (e.g. sport specific action control, volitional skills)
   - Anxiety
   - ...

III. Observations

IV. Conversation with coach, parents, etc.

Strength & Weakness Profile

Theoretical Framework: Systematic Sport Psychological Training (Beckmann, 2003)

- Crisis Intervention
- Advanced Training
- Basic Training (Relaxation & Team Building)
- Monitoring

Diagnostics
Monitoring (Stress-Recovery State)

Consequences of underrecovery in sports:
Overtraining (Lehmann et al., 1999). Consequence of a stress-recovery imbalance → Performance stagnates or declines

Tool to measure the stress-recovery state:
Recovery Stress Questionnaire for Athletes (Kellmann & Kallus, 2000)

RESTQ-Sport profile for a female rower and the area of tolerance for the total group
Theoretical Framework: Systematic Sport Psychological Training (Beckmann, 2003)

- Crisis Intervention

- Advanced Training

- Basic Training (Relaxation & Team Building)

- Monitoring

Basic Training

I. Relaxation Techniques

- Personality Development
- Self regulation
- Recovery enhancement
  (Beckmann & Kellmann, 2004)
- Foundation for Mental Training

II. Teambuilding
Relaxation Techniques

- Breathing
- Progressive Muscle Relaxation (PMR)
- Autogenic Training

- Centering
- “Fantasy travels”

Basic Training: Teambuilding

Teambuilding
What can I contribute to the team?
What do I wish for from the other team members?
What does not fit into the team?
Advanced Training

- Concentration / Attention
- Self confidence
- Goal setting
- Activation regulation
- Mental training
- Routines
- Competition preparation...

Elements based on the individual strength & weakness profile

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Theoretical Framework: Systematic Sport Psychological Training (Beckmann, 2003)

- Crisis Intervention
- Advanced Training
- Basic Training (Relaxation & Team Building)
- Monitoring

Diagnostics
Crisis Intervention

Conflicts
New coach / training group
Time management
Career termination

Sport Injury

Clinical Issues
Depression
Eating Disorders

(Competence & Ethics!)

3. Case Example

Faculty of Science
1. FFC Turbine Potsdam

The 1.FFC Turbine– this stands for successful women’s soccer from Potsdam.

The coaches' reasons...

- High performance level (high training load)
- Tough competition
- High pressure
- Want to improve performance
Organisational Frame

- Financing through a research project\(^1\)
- School supplied classroom for the sessions
- Sessions integrated into the regular training schedule

\(^1\) Financed by the Brandenburg Ministry for Education, Youth and Sport.

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Players’ attitudes

Very positive ("useful", "have always wanted to do this", "important")

Topics players wished to address
- Reducing feelings of fear and experienced pressure
- Increase self confidence
- Reduce anxiety before the game
Structure & Content

**Structure**
8 sessions 90 min. / 2 groups
Only group sessions

**Content**
Diagnostics, Monitoring, Basic psychological skills training & Selected advanced psychological skills

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Diagnostics/ Monitoring

Recovery Stress Questionnaire in Sports
- Kellmann & Kallus (2000)

Anxiety Questionnaires
- SAS-d (Brand & Hochwald, 2004)
- CSAI-2d (Ehrlenspiel, 2005)
Results Recovery-Stress Levels

General & Sport Specific Stress Levels

ok

General & Sport Specific Recovery

too low

Results – Anxiety (Trait)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Concentration disruption</th>
<th>Cognitive Worry</th>
<th>Somatic reactions</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mean: Older soccer group n=13</td>
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<td>11,8</td>
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<td>11,9</td>
<td>12,2</td>
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<td>Normative data: normal / optimal</td>
<td>4 - 8</td>
<td>7 - 11</td>
<td>7 – 11</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Results CSAI-2g (n=17) before important match (state)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>cognitive</th>
<th>Direction</th>
<th>somatic</th>
<th>Direction</th>
<th>Self confidence</th>
<th>Direction</th>
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<td>5 – 10</td>
<td>12,00</td>
<td>8 – 13</td>
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Basic Training / Advanced Training

Teambuilding
Relaxation Skills
  • Breathing
  • PMR
  • Centering
  • Fantasy travel

Self Talk
Concentration
Preparation for a competition
Dealing with anxiety
The Players’ Assessment

„I finally found a tool to help me fall asleep“
„Centering really helps when I am too nervous before a game“
„I do not like progressive muscle relaxation – it is too strenuous!“

Breathing, Relaxation, practical exercises
Individual feedback from the questionnaires
Talking about the team

Significant reduction of somatic anxiety symptoms and worry problems
4. Discussion: Similarities & Differences

Coaching ↔ Systematic Sport Psychological Training

Similarities between coaching and psychological skills training

- Self regulation as one of the most important goals
- Learning and development
- Performance enhancement
Differences

Psychological skills training is very goal and result oriented

Certain elements are very much limited to peak performance in sports

Time pressure

Institutional constraints

The journey is not the reward / “Der Weg ist nicht das Ziel”

Which elements might be interesting for the coaching process?

Specific techniques to achieve goals (e.g. relaxation, imagery, team building etc.)

Diagnostic tools (general tools)

Evaluation of the process
Thank you very much for your attention!

Questions?
Comments?

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