

Psychological Skills Training Strategies for Emerging Athletes

Cheikh Elmahdi

Laboratory of Cognitive Dimensions, and Applied Perceptions in Training Sciences through Multiple Approaches, Amar Telidji University of Laghouat (Algeria),

E-mail: e.chikh@lagh-univ.dz

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Abstract:

In this study, we dealt with a theoretical presentation and discussion of psychological skills training strategies, targeting the category of young athletes because of its great importance in preparing the future athlete. We referred in the presentation to the concepts of some psychological skills used in sports training programs based on the findings of researchers and specialists in this field. The stages of psychological skills training, methods and applied techniques used by the psychologist or qualified trainer in this specialty were explained and based on this, we reached some results, including: Emphasizing the importance of working on the development of psychological skills and training young people at an early age, which researchers have classified into relaxation, focusing attention, mental visualization, self-confidence and others, and have developed different and adapted programs based on scientific foundations and specific criteria that help the sports psychologist or qualified trainer in this field to work with them in the training process.

Keywords: Psychological Skills; Training Strategies; Athletes.

Introduction:

Mastering the psychological skills represent a crucial dimension within the diverse and essential aspect of athlete training, as they play an important role in the development of sports performance in all games, and they have become seen as one of the variables that must be addressed alongside physical, technical and strategic requirements. Elite athletes at the highest levels often demonstrate similar physical, technical, and tactical capabilities ; however, the psychological factor is the one that determines the result and the outcome of their competition ,so that it plays a crucial role in achieving that excellence and superiority.

In the field of sports psychology, the term **psychological skills'** training is used to refer to the process during which the athlete's assistant is confronted with psychological pressures and adapted to the conditions of continuous training and the competitive environment in order to reach optimal performance.

Sports training includes those psychological skills to complete the aspects of physical, technical skills and psychological preparation (Abdel-Wadood Ahmed 2019, p. 47).

Numerous researchers in the field of sports psychology point out that there are many associated psychological skills, which can be developed through mental training or so-called psychological skills, as these skills are linked and interact with each other and the improvement in one skill is followed by other psychological skills.

-The researchers classified psychological skills in models according to the sports-related skills, like so:

One of the most prominent models in psychological skills related to sport is the model presented by Martens in 1987, in which he pointed out that the basic program for training psychological skills should include both visualization skills and attention skills, goal-setting skills, psychological energy management, and stress or pressure management. (Tarek Mohammed, p.39)

Martens pointed out that there is a great degree of interdependence and interaction between the training of these five skills with each other, and in the (Allawi) model of psychological skills related to sports that include relaxation skills, visualization skills, and attention skills (Mohammed Hassan Allawi 2009, p. 195).

It is well established and known that when an athlete performs physical Or tactical ability, he does not perform this with his body, limbs, hands or head,... but he performs this using his mind and reasoning as well, so he does not give his best in sports competitions unless there is an integration and balance between physical functions and psychological skills.

Many researchers in sports training and sports psychology have highlighted that the player's failure to show the best abilities and skills in sports competition is often due to a lack of integration between motor skills, planning abilities and physical qualities such as muscular ability, speed, endurance, flexibility, fitness and psychological skills like concentration of attention, mental perception and other psychological skills.

Hence the importance of training the psychological skills of (relaxation – mental perception – concentration of attention – self-confidence – setting goals - managing psychological energy) to increase the mental and psychological efficiency of the individual.

It has become increasingly important to teach psychological skills to young athletes in the same manner as other skills are taught, and the athlete will have a large number of psychological skills if they are developed in a timely manner that will help him to improve his performance.

Sports psychologist Marc Lévêque says: "Psychological preparation suggests a set of techniques for the athlete to learn and apply in order to achieve two goals: maintaining the effectiveness of the movement in a competitive position and solidity against the impact of anxiety."

Hervé le deuff 2002, p 10 mental entraînement du sport.

-The young athlete uses his psychological abilities or one of them in training and competition situations. All young athletes have these abilities. For example, his ability to focus attention during training situations and the competitive sports environment. Thus, it can be said that the young athlete has the skill to focus. Hence, the psychological skill manifests itself in the skill of the young athlete in the proper use of his mental and emotional abilities to achieve motor and tactical goals during training and sports competition situations (Tariq Muhammad 2014, page 38).

From the above, psychological skills have a clear importance for the emerging athlete, contrary to the belief that learning them is suitable for the elite of the high level athlete only ... In fact, psychological skills training suits athletes with different ages and levels. There is a rule that makes it clear that the sooner psychological skills can be trained at an early age, the better. It is noted that when training, there is a modification in the way those psychological skills are trained. For the young player, some modifications can be made, such as the small number of goals to be achieved, shortening the time of the psychological skills training dose, the ease of verbal instructions, and providing exercises in the form of games.

Ideally, the sports psychologist is expected to implement the psychological skills training program, as it is a good qualification for this work, although it may not be available, so the trainer is expected to carry out this task taking into account that the trainer qualifies himself in this field.

Psychological skills training for athletes is not a magic formula or a quick therapeutic program, but it is a structured and codified educational and educational program aimed at helping athletes to master psychological skills. Its usefulness and effectiveness in raising the level of athletic performance and enjoyment have been proven. WinBRJ 1995 and Jane Williams 1986 indicated that there are three basic stages in psychological skills training programs, namely:

1-Stage of introducing psychological skills:

This stage is considered the first phase in psychological skills training programs, as many athletes may not have sufficient knowledge and knowledge of the importance of psychological skills training in improving the athletic level of players. Accordingly, the primary objective of this stage is to provide players with basic knowledge and information in psychological skills training and its usefulness for them, while trying to provide some applied illustrative examples that explain the impact and usefulness of these programs so that players can be convinced of the importance and usefulness of psychological skills training for them and for the development of their athletic levels.

2-The Learning and Acquisition Stage:

In this stage, the focus is on the correct technical aspects of the performance of psychological skills along with providing models of correct performance so that players can imitate the models, and players can perform either individually or collectively for the nature of each psychological skill, in addition to the possibility of the sports psychologist correcting some errors and the athlete should be aware of the benefit of the performance of each psychological day and the correct style and timing.

3-Mastery Stage:

The main goal of this stage lies in the player's attempt to master the performance of psychological skills accurately and without exerting more effort and trying to link these skills to the actual real situations of the player's performance, especially in sports competition.

Psychological Skills Training Period:

It is appropriate to start psychological skills training at an early age and before actually participating in official competitions or during post-sport competitions, which is the period when the athlete has more time to learn these skills, and the player is not under the pressure of competitions .

1.Planning and implementing psychological skills training programs:

The process of planning and implementing psychological skills training programs for athletes goes through the following stages:

- Discussing the introduction to planning and implementing psychological skills
- Assessment of the psychological needs of the athletes.
- Identify the psychological skills necessary for play .
- Design and implement psychological skills training programs .
- Relaxation skill Training.
- Evaluation of psychological skills training programs.

The psychological skills training program for young athletes according to the aforementioned models includes:

The **skill of relaxation**, which means "not performing any muscular activity at all " This means "unlocking the muscles" and secretly releasing any contraction or tension in the muscles and the lack of muscle activity completely or reaching almost zero degree of muscle activity, Abdul Sattar Ibrahim (1997) pointed out that relaxation means the complete cessation of all contractions and muscle contractions associated with tension.

Relaxation in this concept is a mental skill that must be learned and acquired in the same way as motor skills.

We can determine the importance of training relaxation skills in the following aspects:

- Contribute to reducing the levels of stress and anxiety of the athlete before, during and after the sports competition.
 - The ability to reduce the level of muscle activity or muscle tension under any circumstances.
 - Ability to adjust the level of muscular and emotional arousal
 - Helping to reach high levels of psychological comfort , calmness and tranquility .
 - Awareness of the fundamental differences between relaxation and contraction or muscle tension.
 - Increased ability to acquire some types of motor perceptions.
 - Relieving certain muscular tensions in specific muscle groups according to the player's desire.
 - Contribute to the delay in the appearance of muscular or mental fatigue and the speed of physical or mental recovery.
 - As a factor that helps to sleep or overcome insomnia that may accompany the player participating in the sports competition.
 - Gaining Positive and pleasant Emotional states.
 - The Ability to control biological responses such as heart rate.
 - Control the body temperature of the and the electrical activity of the skin surface or other responses.
- Many specialists have indicated that it is the right way to start training relaxation skills.

Types of relaxation skills training:

The types of relaxation skills training are many and varied, and the most important of which are: Progressive relaxation training, self-training, and there are some types that are clearly related to the training of relaxation skills, the most important of which are the following:

Meditation, hypnosis and suggestion, relaxation responses, vital feedback, perception of relaxation.

2. Training mental perception skills:

The perception of the mind is a psychological skill and a mental skill that can be learned and acquired. It is seen as a mental means and mental performance through which you can program the athlete's mind to respond to this programming. The mental perception in sports means that the player thinks with his muscles. Harris and ot. (1987) pointed out that mental perception includes recalling, evoking or retrieving the memory of things, manifestations and events stored from the reality of past experience. On the other hand, the perception is not limited to merely recalling or retrieving these experiences, but rather works to create and create a love. This means that the individual does not retrieve in the mind or mind the old experiences only, but can address them by modifying and changing them and producing a new image and ideas.

Among the types of mental perception:

Visualization of the external mind: is a type of visualization that occurs outside the individual, such as the visualization of watching a recording of a motor performance by the individual, and the visualization in this case tends to be visual.

The perception of the inner mind: is the type of perception that occurs within the individual himself that performs a certain movement from within him, not in terms of being an external viewer. In this case, the neural activity is visual and kinesthetic. Sometimes the mental perception can be divided according to the type of senses that require perception. Therefore, it can be said that there is a visual, auditory or kinesthetic

perception, as these types may occur alone and often fusion may occur between more than one type. The mental perception bears the composite character of the uses.

The benefits of training the skill of mental perception include:

- **Helping to quickly learn motor skills:** Mental perception exercises can be used to help the player quickly learn different motor skills by mentally recalling the correct model of them and its traditional attempt, as well as by mentally visualizing the repetition of the performance of the motor skill that he is trying to learn or master.

To help quickly learn and master play plans: Mental perception can be used to help the player visualize his movement in some tactical sentences of different sports. Many coaches have indicated that players can quickly learn some offensive and defensive plans by using mental perception training programs.

- **Help in solving performance problems:** Mental perception can be used in some situations where the player faces some performance problems by the critic's perception of the aspects of performance in an attempt to solve and try to reach the optimal solution such as mental attitudes related to creative aspects. The first is linked to critical thinking through which new and innovative solutions can be reached to performance problems.

- **Practice some psychological skills:** Mental perception can be used to practice some psychological skills such as attention control, relaxation skills, activation skills, and other psychological skills that are closely related to mental perception ability.

- **Helping to control physiological responses:** The results of experiments in the applied game indicated that mental imaging can affect the functions of the body that can be mentally visualized, such as heart rate, breathing, blood pressure and skin temperature, as in the process of meditation, given that there are many sports situations that require not to control physiological responses in terms of the degree of excitation, whether by working to reduce or raise them before motor performance in proportion to the degree of excitation best and appropriate for the player.

- **Performance review and analysis:** Through the mental perception of performance, it is possible to carry out a mental review of performance in a specific sports competition and try to analyze the strengths and weaknesses, both for the performance performed by the player or for the performance of competing players and try to stabilize the strengths and note the weaknesses in the performance of competitors.

- **Improving self-confidence and positive thinking:** The athlete can, through mental perception processes, try to visualize a previous motor performance characterized by success and accuracy.

- **Preparedness to perform in certain circumstances:** It is possible, through mental perception, to try to perform well in certain cases, circumstances or requirements, such as cases of poor weather or competition in the face of competitors characterized by violent play or in the case of encouraging the release of a team or emerging players. It is also possible, through mental perception, for the player to visualize some important advice that the sports psychologist or sports coach has provided to the player that can contribute to the positive psychological mobilization of the player.

- **Helping to endure pain and speed recovery after injury:** Mental health can be used to face pain and try to imagine recovery in the event of injury by focusing on mental perception to face pain in the place of injury

One of the basic things is training on mental perception, which is how important and useful it is for the player to develop his level and to prepare his psychological capabilities for competitions. The sports psychologist or sports coach should familiarize the player with the correct knowledge and information associated with training on mental perception, its objectives and expected results so that he can convince the player of it and gain the correct awareness that training on mental perception is simply an auxiliary method or method in addition to physical, motor and planning exercises, which can contribute to increasing the effectiveness of the play on performance, especially in sports competitions

- **Assessing the mental perception abilities of the player:** In the event that the player is convinced of the usefulness of mental perception and before applying any training program to mental perception, the player's mental perception abilities should first be evaluated, as the player, as mentioned above, needs to use all his senses and emotions when training on mental perception.

Therefore, it is important for the psychologist or sports coach to have a clear idea of the player in these areas. It is possible to give introductory exercises for the mental perception of the player in the light of which the mental perception abilities of the player can be identified. Some intelligence can also be used to measure the abilities of the player to mental perception. In light of the results of this intelligence, the sports psychologist

or sports coach can identify the strengths and weaknesses of the mental perception of the player by using his different senses: (the senses of sight, hearing and motor sensation, as well as his emotional feeling).

-Basic training on mental perception skills: It is known that players differ in their motor abilities and therefore they also differ in their mental perception abilities in terms of psychological skills, but they can develop their mental perception abilities through training. The basic training of mental perception skills is similar to the basic training of physical qualities or motor skills in the preparatory stage of the sports training process. As the player in the preparatory stage of sports training acquires basic physical qualities and motor skills, the basic stage of mental perception training aims at acquiring the basics of mental perception, especially the mental perception of motor, which helps the player to benefit from it during sports competitions. The basic training of mental perception includes three sets of exercises aimed at: developing vivid, active and active images, developing the ability to voluntarily control visualization, and developing self-perceptions of sports performance.

- Implementation of mental perception programs: After the player has mastered the skills of mental perception as a result of practice and practice on the basic exercises of mental perception mentioned above, that is, when the player has mastered the experience of living images and control them and the use of visualization to become more self-aware, as well as when he has mastered the use of all his senses and emotions During the process of mental perception so that it can create interaction between different types of sensory perceptions to bring about holistic sensory perception experiences, then the player is qualified to start using codified and regular programs for training on mental perception. We must bear in mind that in order for the skill of mental perception to be effective and effective, it should be trained in a regular and codified manner. This type of training should not be an additional or marginal part for the athlete, but it should be an essential part of the player's training plan, such as training on motor skills and play plans, and it should be linked to the needs of the player and his sport in which he specializes. It should not be long or complex, and starting is easy to difficult, taking into account that it is very difficult Designing mental perception training programs suitable for all types of sports activities for all sports players, but the sports psychologist can develop such programs in light of the objectives or intended uses of these programs as well as in light of the times when mental perception programs can be used as well as the type of method used Mental perception programs.

The times of practicing mental perception:

Among the most appropriate times during which mental perception can be practiced

.Daily training: Some experts advise that in order to be able to practice mental perception in a regular and controlled way, exercising daily for a period of about 10 minutes is suitable for many players.

. Before participating in the sports competition: It is helpful for the player to perform the mental perception exercise before each competitor participates in it and to have this exercise individually in proportion to each player. The player can imagine himself in the position of the sports competition as he performs some motor skills or individual or collective plans that he imagines may occur in the sports competition with the mental perception of colleagues and real competitors who will participate in the same sports competition and in the specific place to conduct it.

.After participating in a sports competition:

Among the times that may be appropriate to practice mental perception is the period after participating in the sports competition, so that the player can mentally assess his performance in the competition, and to help increase the player's awareness of what actually happened during the competition and to identify the nature of the successes and mistakes that occurred in order to gain experience of such situations when trying to recall them again.

3- Attention Skill:

Any individual will accept, through the different senses, many information or stimuli, whether from the external environment or from within it, in what is known as the process of sensation. The individual identifies this information or stimuli in what is expressed in the process of perception. When the individual is aware of this information or stimuli, both external and internal, he can thus make a decision whether to continue or not to direct his awareness towards stimuli or information that sharpens these stimuli or perceptual information. This decision-making process requires attention to all or some of these perceptions. Attention in the light of the previous presentation is the mental process or the cognitive process that directs the individual's awareness towards perceptual topics.

Internal factors affecting attention:

. **The distinctive characteristics of the senses:** which are the distinctive characteristics of the sense of sight that give the player the ability to pay attention, focus attention on a specific goal, topic or event.

. **The level of arousal and activation:** so that high arousal or high activation can be understood while it can affect attention. Some researchers (Karati 1989) have pointed out that the degree of arousal or activation best for the player can lead to good attention

.**Personality traits:** Some player personality traits are among the most important factors that can affect attention.

.**Motor learning level:** Some studies have indicated that the large number of motor skills learned and mastered by the player, which require only a small amount of thinking, help the player to distribute his attention or focus on many playing situations because he does not need to focus his attention on skill performance due to his excellence in the mechanism.

. **Anticipating stimuli:** The more the player's ability to anticipate the occurrence of certain stimuli, the more he was able to pay attention to them and prepare to respond with a high degree of accuracy. In the event of inability to anticipate stimuli, the player's attention is distracted towards a larger number of expected stimuli.

.**External factors affecting attention:** including

Quantity and difficulty of information or stimuli: The greater the information or external stimuli affecting the player, the easier it is in the ability of the player to pay attention to them with a small degree of accuracy.

. **External pressures:** More external pressures on the athlete's shoulders may lead to his inability to pay attention and focus, as is the case in cases of noise or counter-encouragement of the spectator.

. **Time required focusing attention:** The more time available or required for the player's attention to a stimulus, the more the player was able to focus his attention on this stimulus and thus his ability to respond in a faster and more accurate manner. On the contrary, the longer he was, the more effort he exerted for the player in trying to focus his attention.

. **Attention training and measurement:** Attention skills and attention concentration skills should be learned, acquired and trained on a regular basis so that they can be used during motor or planning learning processes or psychological preparation processes for competitions to a high degree of accuracy and effectiveness.

The importance of setting goals:

The Topic that has received controversy and attention among scientists and researchers represent the most used technical methods in the field of sports psychology and is considered one of the entrances to motivation in the field of sports. Loki 1981 points out that the setting of goals works in a preliminary way as a dynamic mechanism to influence the degree of effort, perseverance and struggle to achieve the goals set.

The setting of goals is defined as "**what the individual is trying to achieve,**" or as Garland pointed out, it is a future performance document that the individual wishes to achieve. "**Loki**" confirms that each goal includes a basic dimension: the direction, quantity or quality of the product and includes the direction of choice, especially about how to direct the behavior of the individual, while quantity and quality suggest the minimum performance standards to be obtained. Research and studies have confirmed the effectiveness of setting goals as a regulator of human movement over the years and working to achieve them is an effective tool in developing performance, focusing attention, building self-confidence, managing time and other ways of efficiency.

Goals can be employed to help the player develop athletic performance and reflect on the player's behavior in training, competitions and his daily life. Setting goals is an effective method only when the selection is made in a specific way that you can measure and can challenge the player. It is important that the coach participates in providing feedback on goals.

In order to set goals, this needs to be an integral part of the player's general program, and this requires that the coach find the necessary time to plan and review the objectives of training and competition. It is important to set goals with no play, especially in learning to acquire motor skills. Training contributes to the mind through motivational training and programming short and long goals in defining the player's specific requirements for each of these stages. Among these stages are the principles of setting goals. The most important principles of setting goals are the following:

- Performance Objectives vs. Outcome Objectives.
- Specific Objectives vs. general Objectives.
- Challenge Goals vs. Easy Goals.
- Realistic vs. unrealistic goals.

- Short Goals vs. Long Goals.
- Individual vs. Collective Goals.

Guidelines for goal setting :

We provide some criteria that should be guided when setting goals, which are:

- The setting of goals must be acceptable to everyone, the player, the coach, the team, the administrators and others, and the previous planning is done in accordance with some social controls.
- The development of the general objectives of the state in the field of sports as well as other sports organizations should be linked to sports clubs and institutions.
- Setting goals should be from flexibility down or up. Frustration and dissatisfaction can be avoided.
- In the event that there are multiple objectives, guidelines or a guide should be developed to resolve the conflict in the objectives.
- Follow up the organization and continuous evaluation through a system that connects one training and extends in a long-term program your full sleep when measuring events in training or competition.

There are five steps in the procedures for setting goals:

- Goal realization.
- Expected Objectives.
- Target Analysis
- Selection.
- Goal formation.

How to program the objectives:

The setting of goals represents the first part of the motivational training and programming of events. If there is no integration between the two parts, the setting of goals becomes a negative act. The importance of integration seems to be that in the case of relaxation, the analysis of goals leads to the production of energy. The programming of etiquette comes after setting goals in the manner previously mentioned. The preparation of integration within the player's mind. The most important goals must be chosen and formed in a fixed way. They express future achievements, but they exist in the present. Positive goals can be programmed through visual perception, learning movement and sports competitions. Visualization, mental relaxation and mental practice are used to program goals. (Mohammed Al-Arabi 2001, p. 287)

4- The skill of self-confidence which means the realistic athlete's expectation of success.

Self-confidence is very important because it is linked to self-worth and the athlete's self-esteem. Self-worth represents the basic psychological concept that must always be taken into account if we want to train players successfully. There is nothing more important for each of our self-worth and we make a great effort to protect it. Self-confidence represents the expression of a person's value. Early experiences in sports are very important in forming self-confidence for young people. A player whose early experiences are successful to become more self-confident, feel more valuable and have greater motivation changes the effort for excellence and excellence. On the contrary, whose early experiences are a failure, his self-confidence is weak and he feels a degree towards his value for himself. A coach always works to help players have a positive perception towards their value in order to help them develop optimal self-confidence. (Osama Kamel Rateb, 2004, 316)

Conclusion:

In order to prepare the young athlete in a comprehensive and balanced manner in the process of sports training and in order to achieve the highest levels of sports that his abilities and readiness allow, it is necessary to take into account in his preparation four necessary and important aspects of physical, skill and psychological education. These four aspects of preparing the athlete affect each other and are considered important to reach the highest levels of sports.

Considering that the psychological preparation pillar is very important as one of the four aspects, and the above, we discussed the mechanism in the presentation of strategies for training the psychological skills of young athletes, based on previous studies and research by specialists in sports psychology, I stressed the importance of working to develop psychological skills and training them at an early age. These researchers classified these skills as relaxation, concentration of attention, mental perception, self-confidence and others, and they developed various programs and adapted them based on scientific foundations and specific standards that help the sports psychologist or the qualified trainer in this field to work in the training process.

It is very important that they are taken into account, and that they are planned and practiced side by side, like other aspects, physical, skilled and planned, and should not be abandoned in the educational and training process for young athletes, regardless of the difficulties of their application in the field.

Through our presentation of psychological skills training strategies, we can say that trainers can help young athletes learn and acquire psychological skills, which means building strong foundations for the development of sports psychological growth that help them build a strong and balanced personality capable of achieving success during their sports career.

Recommendations:

- Qualifying young trainers in the field of sports psychology by conducting training courses (theoretical and applied) under the supervision of specialists in the field of sports psychology.
- Planning psychological skills training programs based on the data and capabilities of sports clubs that are interested in preparing young people (sports academies)
- Emphasizing the continuity in the application of training programs for psychological skills at the level of sports clubs to provide the possibilities for sports psychologists and trainers required by this type of training.
- Giving freedom of action to the sports psychologist and coach to implement their proposed programs in the field.
- Encouraging scientific research in the development of psychological and mental training programs aimed at emerging groups.
- Encouraging and assisting young athletes to work in this direction in order to develop their psychological growth and thus have the personal strength they need in the future in training and competitive environments.

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