What is Psychological Skills Training?

- PST is systematically training of mental skills to enhance sport performance
Why Is PST Important?

Key:
Psychological factors account primarily for day-to-day fluctuations in performance.
Why Are Psychological Skills Neglected?

- Lack of knowledge
- Misunderstandings about psychological skills (e.g., they can’t be learned)
- Lack of time
PST Myths

1. PST is for “problem” athletes only.
2. PST is for “elite” athletes only.
3. PST provides “quick fix” solutions.
4. PST is not useful.
Research on elite athletes shows that most successful athletes differ from less successful ones because they have

- better concentration,
- higher confidence,
- more task-oriented thoughts,
- lower anxiety,

(continued)
Research on elite athletes shows that most successful athletes differ from less successful ones because they have

- more positive thoughts and images, and
- more determination or commitment.
Athletes and coaches found the most useful topics to be

- arousal regulation,
- imagery and mental preparation,
- increased motivation and commitment (goal setting),
- confidence,

(continued)
Athletes and coaches found the most useful topics to be
- attention or concentration,
- self-talk, and
- mental plans.
PST Effectiveness

- Educationally based psychological skills training enhances sport performance.

- Intervention must be individualized, employed systematically over time, and multimodal (combining different psychological skills such as imagery, self-talk, and goal setting).

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Phases of PST

1. Educational Phase

Psychological skills need to be learned and practiced. Expect improvement as you develop these skills and refine them over time.
Phases of PST

2. Acquisition Phase

Focus on strategies and techniques for learning the different psychological skills. Tailor training programs to meet individual needs. You can provide general information to the group or team, but be specific when developing an individual’s PST program.
Phases of PST

3. Practice Phase

Learning psychological skills should progress from practices and simulations to actual competitions. This phase focuses on automating skills through overlearning, integrating psychological skills, and simulating the skills you want to apply to actual competitions.
Implementing PST Programs

**When should you implement PST?**
In the off-season

**How long should training last?**
10 to 15 minutes a day, 3 to 5 days per week

Mental training should continue throughout an athlete’s sport participation.
Designing a PST Program

- Develop self-regulation processes
- Emphasize the importance of mental skills.
- Assess one’s strengths and weaknesses
- Analyze the demands of the sport
- Determine what skills to use
- Evaluate the program.
Develop self-regulated skills

- Goal setting
- Planning
- Observing one’s skills
- Evaluating their skills
Assessing the Athlete’s Mental Skills

- Includes oral and written inventories
- Use Common Inventories
  - TAIS
  - Sport Anxiety Inventory
  - Psychological Skills Inventory
  - Trait-State Confidence Inventory
- Interview your athlete
What Psychological Skills Should be Included?

• Depends on how many weeks of practice or length of preseason.

• Depends on how much practice time will be devoted to PST

• Performance Psychological Skills are:
  – Goal setting
  – Imagery
  -Relaxation
  -Attention Control
Designing a Schedule

• Formal Program
  – Usually 1 to 2 days a week
  – Before or after practice

• In Practice
  – Daily
  – Associated with drills, strategy or skills
Evaluation of PST

• Provides feedback and allows for athletes to make changes

• Interviews and written evaluations are common
Teaching Mental Skills

Stress personal responsibility
Use goal setting
Develop pre and competition mental plans
Practice it before using it in competition!
Coaches need to demonstrate these skills in their coaching.
Coaches behavior prior to and during competition, such as being in control, is critical.
Common Problems in Implementing a PST Program

- Lack of conviction
- Lack of time
- Lack of knowledge
- Lack of follow-up
THE END