

## SPORT PSYCHOLOGY: AN IMPORTANT BUT MISSING PART OF SPORT PEAK PERFORMANCE

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Winning or losing is not an ultimate goal of Olympic athletes. Instead, participation with well fighting is the real of Olympic ideal. Therefore, to fight well and do their best, they need to combine three important elements. One is their physical fitness, secondly, right skill and thirdly strong mental ability. The question is how these three elements are built and integrated?

Physical fitness seem to be a normal and longtime understood and well developed compare to the other elements. Coaches prepare their athletes' physical ability regularly with a concrete principles. Sport skill also developed with athletes since they start playing sport. Sport skills can be learned and improved progressively through hard and long term practice. The longer hours of practice, is the better sport skill performance. Sport psychology is a little difference due to its development and the nature of itself. In fact, psychology 0part of peak performance is with athletes and people involved the same time as people play sport because mind and body of people are connected. This element however seem to be less interesting, developed and understood. To be a better athlete does not necessarily mean that you must train harder or longer. It could mean that you need to address all the components that make up a successful athletic performance - mental as well as physical and skill.

Is physical practice the only component of your training program? How do you learn to maximize your performance or even to be a consistent performer? Athletes and coaches always think they must only practice longer and harder - they are reluctant to include

psychological tools in their training and performance regime. If psychological component is necessary for the best performance, why should we learn more about this component?

Sports psychology is the study of how psychology influences sports and athletic performance (psychology.about.com). It is an interdisciplinary science that involves the study of how psychological factors affect performance and how participation in sport and exercise affect psychological and physical factors. Society for Sport, Exercise & Performance Psychology (SSEPP) is an APA division 47 that give a broader definition and explain more of sport psychology as a multidisciplinary field spanning psychology, sport science and medicine. The APA proficiency also recognizes sport psychology as a postgraduate focus after a doctoral degree in one of the primary areas of psychology and licensure as a psychologist. The proficiency encompasses training in the development and use of psychological skills for optimal performance of athletes, in the well-being of athletes, in the systemic issues associated with sports settings and organizations and in developmental and social aspects of sports participation (<http://www.apadivisions.org/division-47>).

How important is psychology to athletes and people involved? Since you do not enter into competition with a completely empty head, you must include mental skills in your training and conditioning programmes as well. Psychology will enable you to develop the strategies which will prepare you to enter a competition with the

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“proper mindset” There are several reasons to confirm its importance. The vast majority of elite athletes recognize the importance of psychological training for competition. Sport performances are 90% mental, and many great athletes also credit the mental side of the game as crucially important in determining the outcome (<http://www.athletics-training.com/articles/sports-psychology.html>).

Sport psychology can help athletes in many things as follow. (Gardner & Moore, 2004; Gould, Dieffenbach & Moffett, 2010; Smith, Smoll & Cumming, 2007). Sport psychology is to 1) understand yourself as an athlete, 2) work better with parents & coaches, 3) navigate your sport career, 4) prepare your mind, 5) concentrate so you can enter the zone, 6) bounce back from set-backs, 7) increase motivation and drive and 8) handle stress and pressure.

Is sport psychology for only elite or high level sport performers? No.

People involved in sport performance psychologically are from the athlete himself as well as the coaches, parents, friends, media and etc. Among young athletes, parents may play very crucial role closes to the coaches. So majority of time when providing the service, sport psychologists spend more time with athletes' parents. Sometimes media have a very important effects on athletes mind. In fact, social is very important part of our athletes' mind that will later affect their performance. Athletes and people around them should then be trained psychology. In conclusion, sport psychology is for both athletes and people around them and from very beginning to high level performers.

Why is sport psychology neglected? The answer is most likely that coaches do not know how to teach athletes the essential psychological skills. There are also coaches that are of the opinion that psychosocial qualities are innate characteristics that cannot be taught. Some of them think that athletes either have these psychological qualities or that they don't. If they don't, then competition will eliminate them as they compete at higher and higher levels. A few coaches also believe that psychological training

is unimportant and that only hard physical work is necessary to prepare athletes.

Nowadays the vast majority of coaches, parents and teachers recognize the importance of psychological training, but simply do not know how to implement such training.

How to solve this problem to help your athletes to reach their optimum performance? System psychological training is necessary starting with having a right attitude upon being an athlete for competition. For example, they should understand what the important element of sport success is. Sweat, blood and tears would be one of their understanding as a part of athletes' life. After the evaluation of need, appropriate psychological skill training (PST) will be introduced and continuously practiced. This PST technique should do every day as part of their daily training program.

Some sport psychological practice in Thailand. A few things regarding sport psychology has been done in the past 40 years.

1. Degree in exercise and sport psychology: a hot career;
2. Psychological preparation and practice with national athletes;
3. Success of athletes who has regularly practice;
4. How to become an sport psychologist;
5. Research in the areas of sport and exercise psychology.

In conclusion I believe that the idea of getting familiarize and understand the psychology part of sport performance through it meaning and role is the very important. The importance of psychology that influence sport performance must be realized and accepted. Knowing that who involved or have been psychologically affected can help us understand the importance of this psychology component. Finally some information of sport psychology take place in Thailand for 40 years should give you an objective evidence.

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