

# SPORT PSYCHOLOGY

## Part Three in a Series

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### PSYCHOLOGICAL PROFILING

This particular article is written to stimulate the coaches who read this journal. Are you, as a coach, doing everything possible to enhance the performance abilities of your athletes? Are you providing the newest and scientifically most accurate training theories, nutritional knowledge, strategies, etc.? Correspondingly, does your psychological program incorporate the newest procedures? If not, maybe this article can help you develop the proper psychological program for your team.

In order for any athlete to prepare mentally for competition, a planned program of all variables must be available. If an athlete is to attain his/her actual potential, the psychological portion of their training must begin early and continue throughout their careers. This is currently not the situation. Very few coaches or programs offer much of a psychological component. At best, the psychological offerings have been spontaneous and/or temporary in nature.

The following outline is proposed for your scrutinization. But do not be misled, this program is not the answer at all levels or situations. On the other hand, I must be candid and confess that the outlined program has been used by athletes and teams in the sports of basketball, softball, tennis, skiing, golf, track and field, and gymnastics. Bear in mind as you examine this program that it is

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are Similar Regardless of Level.***

not the sole answer; but possibly a step in the right direction. You should carefully examine the contents of the program and then consider adopting the applicable concepts and ideas for your own situation. A collegiate team is not the same as possibly a club sport team or a high school team; but nevertheless, the **psychological demands of performance are similar regardless of level**. So when examining the program of psychological profiling, it would be wise to attempt to creatively assimilate its contents into your own circumstances. Remember — each program or athlete is unique as to psychological needs.

The psychological profiling program includes:

- Testing
- Counseling
- Interventions
- Group dynamics



A complete Athletic Peak Performance Program concentrates on the mental as well as the physical aspects of training.

The testing program should be decided upon between the coach and the sport psychologist. It is first necessary to decide which psychological variables are most crucial to the sport in question. Once the variables have been identified, then the problem becomes determining the best manner in which to assess these factors. Research has shown that the following psychological variables are necessary to be a high level athlete: a high self concept, a manageable level of anxiety, good concentration skills, and a high success orientation. My advice is to contact either a school counselor or a local sport psychologist to conduct this testing. Tests frequently used to assess the aforementioned traits are: self concept — Tennessee Self Concept Scale; anxiety — the Competition Anxiety Scale; concentration — Test of Attentional and Interpersonal Style; and achievement motivation — Scale for Sporting Environments.

The counseling program is based on the results of the previously mentioned tests. Each athlete should be individually counseled as to his/her psychological strengths and weaknesses. Then the interventions come into play.

Since each athlete is unique, a variety of interventions should be employed in order to develop the desired psychological skills. Interventions that can be used are: progressive relaxation, autogenic training, assertiveness training, meditation exercises for concentration, hypnosis, and imagery. It should be made perfectly clear to the athlete that any intervention requires dedication and work to develop just as dedication and work are part of learning

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and retaining physical skills. Regardless of the intervention utilized, this mental training is an ongoing process that does not start or stop with the parameters of one season. Ultimately this program works best if the coach uses a sport psychologist to conduct the interventions. The intervention phase of the program is a direct result of the testing. It is not good enough to just identify psychological needs; rather, ways should be found to meet these needs: Thus the use of the aforementioned interventions is recommended.

The final portion of the psychological program is the area of group dynamics. This topic is so extensive and important that an entire article will be devoted to it in the next issue of this journal.

In summary, the reward of this psychological profiling program are many: witnessing the athletes pulling together as a team; developing each individual athlete as a strong psychological entity; and developing a profile for each athlete which is the basis for future training. This program establishes a psychological profile for each athlete which aids both the coach and the athlete in the present and in the future. Good luck on the profiles of your athletes.



The rewards of psychological profiling can result in the athlete competing with top proficiency on a consistent basis.

**EDITORS NOTE:** *After reading this article, I thought how could I use this information as a high school coach. First, it is important for me to realize that dealing with the athletes innerself is as important as their physical development. Second, recognizing that I am not an expert in this area, I would be on the lookout for someone who is an expert. Personally, I would not feel comfortable with testing and interventions. However, I would not hesitate in utilizing someone who has a knowledge and an interest in this area. This person might even be in your own school or at a nearby university. Since Sport Psychology is relatively new, I believe most people would be eager to help. You may be able to get valuable assistance with just a phone call. I also recommend to screen potential people carefully.*

## MOTIVATING ATHLETES

TO LIFT — Continued from page 16

people into the three aforementioned weight classes and set the bar at the appropriate weights. Since the totals tend to be astronomical, and no one fails, this is a great confidence builder. We also schedule a bench press meet with another school, hopefully in January, to prep the kids for the judging criterion and three-lift strategies that they will face later. At the conclusion of the weight training season we schedule our all-school meet. This is held at night and admission is charged. We obtain media coverage both before and after the event; we publish the results and a very thorough program sheet for fans. We bring in alumni lifters to help spot and judge the event. This meet is a big event in the lives of many of our lifters who may not participate in other school sports; and even among those who do, is a great leveller as the athlete who may have had his share of the limelight in other sports is brought to parity with the kid who struggles and works hard. We keep it in our own school because of the positive incentive of "staying within the family." However we do advocate and sponsor our lifters to compete in extra-school lifting events. Modified AAU rules prevail in the three powerlifts.

**I am not afraid of failure, only  
the failure to try**

**Coach Shepard**

**Pictures:** Each year we photograph the highlights of our February meet and frame 8x10 glossy pictures of the senior winners along the wall of the weightroom as a sort of Hall of Fame. The school newspaper and yearbook give us a good lay-out, too.

**Bulletin Board:** This is a useful device in that it keeps the group informed of upcoming events, training blurbs, alumni and their progress, and so forth.

**Diaries:** We use training diaries in the form of either 4x6 cards or file folders. In these the lifters will keep a progress log. As coaches, we can check their routines and their progress. All is kept confidential.

**Music:** A must for the high school weightroom. Rare is the introverted, concentrating teenage lifter. Play the music loud and keep the place moving.

**Supplements:** We sell protein supplementation and weight gain formula to any athlete who wants it by having them pay 25-cents a week for powder additive. They are to bring milk from the cafeteria and use it as desired. Ideally, we would like to store and sell canned drink, but storage problems limit us. Even small things like this help foster a sense of unity and purpose. In the case of supplements, even if the result is only placebo, it still serves a purpose.

All told, we feel that these extras help bring more athletes into the weightroom, charge up those we have, and take a little drudgery out of a sport that many have not yet grown to love, but will.