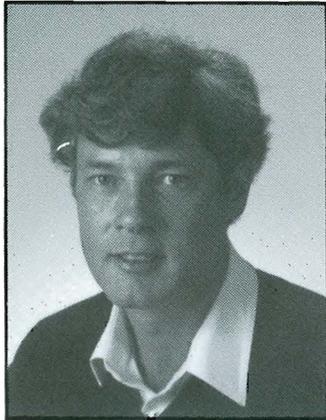


PREPARATION OF DIFFERENT TYPES OF TEAMS

SPORT PSYCHOLOGY
Part Eight in a Series
by Dr. Keith Henschen
University of Utah



Dr. Keith Henschen is the Director of the Sport Psychology program at the University of Utah. He has published over 80 articles and presented in excess of 100 times. He is a member of the US Olympic Registry for Sport Psychology and has worked with golf, track, basketball, tennis, softball, gymnastics and football teams.

The psychological preparation of the different types of teams is a problem that confronts all coaches. The coach who only knows one way to attempt to psychologically prepare his players is successful just a small percentage of the time. Each team is unique and must be handled as such. There are basically four types of teams a coach must learn to psychologically prepare: the quiet team, the vocal team, the smart team, and the not-so-smart team.

Quiet Team. This seems to be one of the hardest teams to prepare, for most coaches; because the coach is looking for some kind of emotional response, but doesn't usually receive one. The athletes on this team are introverted and need to be given time (individually) to prepare themselves. A perceptive coach will watch each of the players and find a particular technique for each athlete. Instead of a "rah-rah" pep talk before competition, allow each player 10 minutes for self preparation. Quiet teams appreciate quiet times to get themselves ready. During this quiet time, the coach should converse with each athlete and help them feel comfortable concerning the upcoming competition.

Vocal Team. This type of team is one of the easiest types to prepare. When a group of athletes feel comfortable in expressing themselves, are loud and vocal, and are hyperactive; the best form of psychological preparation

is any method which lowers anxiety levels. In other words, these types of teams respond well to relaxation techniques. Frequently, vocal teams are that way because that is how they have been taught previously. A change of pace with this team will catch their interests and remotivate them. Music is another effective method for enhancing performances of vocal teams. Loud and upbeat music before competition and more mellow music after competition is ideal. Vocal teams respond well to all forms of sound, especially when used appropriately.

Smart Team. Some groups of athletes just seem to be brighter than others. These teams readily grasp new ideas and strategies; and herein lies an effective method of preparing this type of team. Smart teams enjoy an intellectual challenge. A perceptive coach will involve this type of team in many of the major decision making chores confronting the team. When the team is directly involved in the decisions affecting them, they will invariably give a 110% effort. The worst thing a coach can do to the smart team is attempt to motivate them by means of coercion or pep talks. Smart teams need more than these techniques. Smart teams need more than just physical involvement. Be sure to utilize the intellectual capabilities of the smart athletes in all phases of the preparation for performance.

Not-So-Smart Team. This type of team must be shown exactly what to do a number of times. The coach cannot become overly sophisticated with this group of athletes. Players of this type become confused and anxious when they have to think about what is going on. Athletes of this nature respond well to overtraining and lots of practice. They need to practice skills to a point where they become virtually automatic. Since thinking is often confusing to the "not-so-smart" athlete, the coach needs to prepare these athletes by encouraging them to have fun when competing and allow their bodies to perform without thinking interference. Not-so-smart athletes perform well when working under the proper conditions.

In summary, each team is a unique commodity. How a coach psychologically prepares a team has a great deal to do with how they perform in competition.

★ This was the last article in a series which has covered the following topics: Sport Psychology – The Missing Ingredient; Motivation and Psyching Up; Psychological Profiling; Group Dynamics – Forming, Storming, Norming, Performing; How to Break the Losing Tradition; What About After The Game?; Pre-competition Preparation; and Preparation of different types of teams. It is hoped that the knowledge presented will help in your coaching of your athletes. We thank Dr. Henschen for writing these informative and insightful articles. Sport Psychology is virtually an untapped area of coaching and these articles were of great worth.