

PSYCHOLOGICAL ISSUES IN SWIMMER PERFORMANCE TRAINING

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Motto: “The winners in life think constantly in terms of I can, I will, and I am. “ (Denis Waitley, writer, motivational speaker)

Abstract

In the XXI century, professional sports has become a social, psychological, educational and cultural issue that concerns both society and the individual. It concerns society in the sense that its going forward and progress of mankind depends on understanding how international social relations are regarded, on which sport really focuses; the individual as the child's physical, mental, emotional and moral development is influenced by the time spent for building his own self. Currently, performance sport turns into a measure of social wealth and represents an effective means for the harmonious development of personality. Since the second half of last century, the sport has seen strong growth in terms of performance, sports centres, equipment, apparatus, facilities, structural organization, competition, management and research.

Keywords: mental preparing, water, victory,

Introduction

According to “The Oxford Dictionary of Sports Science & Medicine” performance, M. Kent, The Oxford Dictionary of Sports Science & Medicine, Oxford University Press, 2006, covers both the process and the outcome of an action. Often, the requirements imposed and reached by a person are called “performance”. If, in a general sense, it is the result of actions, outputs and processes, from a normative point of view it is perfection mastery or performance of a task as well as possible. The meaning of the term in the social sciences emphasizes, above all, addition of result to the ability of existing skills and all the previous processes of learning and maturation.

Applied sport psychology focuses on identifying and understanding the psychological theories and techniques that can be applied in sports to improve performance and capacity cultivation of those involved in the physical activity. The purpose of psychological training is learning how to create a consistent mental tension conducive ideal to boost those physical qualities that allow all athletes to give their best in competition.

As Mahonay says, sport psychology conceptual roots grow deeper in ancient times: in the early Greece and Asian cultures interdependence between mind and body was not only recognized but also highlighted as being of central importance for achieving performance and personality development.

Coleman Griffith is the American psychologist who initiated the modern application of psychology in sport (University of Illinois, 1925). After 1970, the sport psychology began to flourish in North America and be accepted more as a separate discipline within the sport sciences. Since the 1990s, research in sport psychology and applying knowledge in preparation for training and competition have increased. In Romania, the representative figure in terms of theoretical concerns and constant concern for the development of sport psychology at university level science is the teacher M.Epuran.

Methods and techniques of instruction in swimming

Aspects of technical training in accordance with psychological preparation. Psychological characteristics of swimming Epuran, M.; I. Holdevici; F.Tonița: Performance Sport Psychology: Theory and Practice. Fest Publishing House, Bucharest derive primarily from the fact that the work is water, the medium opposing a specific resistance of the body which is at the same time in a less normal position. The main request is addressed to feelings of balance and body orientation under water immersion. In the activity of learning how to swim there are involved some difficulties of accomodating to the water, specific breathing skills, coordination of arms movement with those of legs and breathing; it is known that water immersion adversely

affects kinesthetic sense and balance, and so, driving representations. A particular aspect is jumping from the tower or the trampoline where, as in gymnastics, it is appreciated the athlete's skill in leading the body to complicated and difficult exercises in terms of coordination.

Specific swimming styles in competitions are the classic ones, also practised as recreational sports: breaststroke, crawl, back and butterfly. These, however, involve the formation of complex motor skills. Motor skills involve internal processes that occur in the central nervous system of the athlete, Fitts and Posner studied through monitoring performance athletes. They described three phases of driving skills training: cognitive, associative and automated. Cognitive stage is characterized by a verbal transposition activity of execution. This process is characterized by conscious focus of attention on the details of their movements and at the same time, other aspects of external circumstances (e.g. the position of opponents in competition). The dominant sensory system, in cognitive stage, is the vision that allows control of the limbs learning the new skill. Cognitive phase is complete when the athletes can perform the technical element as it has been shown. The instructions in advanced phase of learning serve to support athletes to maintain their own level and to motivate them to cultivate their desire to improve performance.

Aspects of physical training in swimming. The design, programming and planning effort in the preparation phase is necessary to take into account the minimum effort that involves the disappearance of futile effort, economy of means, time and energy in the process of training. The law of minimum effort states that the logic of quantity is in relation to that of quality; not every training entails the athlete's development, only the one that, through training, is conceived and designed to be carried as an integral process in action imposed by competition.

Psychological substantiation of physical training, S.J. Bull, (2011), Sport Psychology - Guide to performance optimization, Three Publishing House, Bucharest of swimmers considers the

relationship between genetic skills background and practice, motor skills, interests development, overall coordination, kinesthesia, and segmental and overall coordination. Physical training is related to a psychomotor skills complex represented by speed, strength, skill, and the representation of the body scheme, sense of rhythm, space orientation, kinesthesia, balance, general coordination and segmentation. Each training factor has its importance in achieving sports performance and is therefore essential that they do not have gaps in their achievement.

Psychological aspects of swimmers preparing. Mental limits Niculescu, M.: Sport Psychology (collection of lessons), Ex Ponto Publishing House, Constance of human possibilities under maximum request are presented as system boundaries, each component of the mental states being in relation of dependence to the others and all together constitute the characteristic syndrome of overworked psyche. It is known that solving new and challenging situations depends on the activation mechanisms of thought, its creativity, intelligence level of the athlete. In special situations of sports emulation, these mechanisms suffer from blockages, crediting the solving of acute problems to insufficient efficient and adapted stereotypes. Intellectual barriers come from establishing concepts, beliefs at a certain level of possible performance. Another aspect is creativity in solving situations. Currently there is talk of tactical intention of assessing situations and ability to adapt to them. In these situations there are identifiable barriers consisting of stereotypes of perception, anticipation and resolution of refusing new enhanced mechanisms.

Emotions and motivation represent some of the most characteristic aspects of limit situations. Fear that a sportsman lives is of different origin, as the danger is physical, organic or moral. With heavy use of the body, fatigue or physical exhaustion allows disinhibition of brakes, the athlete's feelings taking strong aggressive forms, uncontrolled, reducing thinking and decision capacity. Voluntary control of behavior, as a constituent of athlete psyche, has its oscillatory or contradictory moments, being depend-

ent largely on the factors mentioned above and at the same time, on the degree of self-education and exercise capacity. Capacity of voluntary effort can be greatly enhanced in training, leading to performance.

Performance capacity, Ibid 2, is set at a certain level above which there are subjective difficulties, judgment, confidence and conviction. Often the subjective barrier is unconscious, representing time, either adding repeated failures or from the acceptance of disincentive ideas. In sports, the barriers can be designed as:

- Limits of a performance level still unreached;
- Limits of the performance established of a particular sportman that can not overcome himself, it's about fixing the level of aspiration, even unconsciously.

Mental barriers, Ibid 4, are double conditioned: socially and individually. From the social point of view, they are determined by the influence of group awareness and individually, barriers consist of many limiting factors that lead to the formation of subjective attitudes of distrust, fear. Mental barriers of limit states are not only affective-emotional or driving, but intellectual. Lack of imagination and creativity acts as a barrier that an athlete exceeds it very hard, through the means of an incentive: encouraging suggestion, motivation, cognitive restructuring, affectivity level adjustments, restructuring in technique and tactics. Reached a certain level of performance, the difference is very small between training levels achieved by these athletes and the most important factor that decides the winner is the ability of each to face psychological pressure, capacity consisting of multiple components: motivation, effort, concentration, confidence, and especially the ability to withstand the stress of competition, in the words of the famous American economist George P. Schultz, Cited Zbenghe, T. : Kinesiology - Movement Science, Medical Publishing House, Bucharest, "from the moment you talk about what you will do if you lose, you lose."

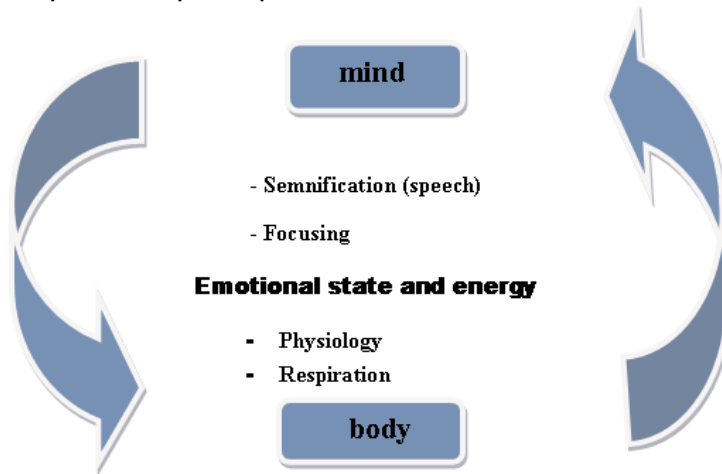


Fig. 1. Mind - body relationship and psychological effects on the athlete.

Instead of conclusions

As part of the total training, mental training of the swimmer is particularly important in the formation and education of the spirit of the performance. According to some authors, the origins of mental training is in antiquity, being mentioned by Platon. In the last two to three decades, the mental component is used in most sports, the Special Forces training, and various fields in the form of coaching or mentoring.

Mental training, Grosu, E., F. : Mental training techniques, edition 2, vol.III, from the "Motor action and mental action" GMI Publishing House, Cluj-Napoca is a very important and complementary means of technical and tactical training of athletes, supporting or even replacing practical training when it is interrupted for various reasons: accidents, long trips, etc.. Concentration, confidence, control and commitment are considered to be the main qualities of the swimmer's performance. Mental training Epuran99 Epuran, M. : Traction and psyche in bodily activities. FEST Publishing House, Bucharest defines as "the process of

maintaining and strengthening the representation of movements and actions resulting in formations neuromuscular activation, and therefore practical work efficiency.”

Michael Fred Phelps is more than a confirmation of the above notions. American swimmer, he is a multiple world champion and Olympic to different swimming samples, it is 14 times gold medalist to Summer Olympics (the greatest number of medals won by any other sportman) and is the holder of seven world records. In the spring of 2001, Phelps broke the world record in 200 meter butterfly (his first world record), becoming the youngest swimmer in history - 15 years and 9 months! And this is happening considering that, in childhood, had been diagnosed as suffering from ADHD - attention deficit hyperactivity!

Legend of the Olympics, Phelps wrote the book *No Limits*, where he talks about himself, about how he trained, physically and mentally in order to perform impressively, imposing new standards for success. His book is an inspiration and motivation to millions of athletes in the world and is also a guide “step by step” on the path to success. One of his favorite mottos is “performance can become reality” and is typical of the attitude he adopted in the struggle for breaking world records and winning gold medals.

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