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Annals of Biological Research, 2013, 4 (1):48-52
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Sport Psychology in Professional Karate Athletes: give psychological guidelines in order to improve their act in the competitions

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ABSTRACT

Through the world most of the people who do and exercise, wish one day wear national team shirt of his own country and participate in national camping and get many experiences. Every sport man wishes to get a chance to attend in a world championship competition and learn many things. If every athlete fulfilled his wishes, never forget these competitions. Each professional athlete wishes, for at least one time in his age stand on a championship platform and show glorious flag of his country in front of other countries and shed tears with eagerness and happiness and bring proud to his country. This research with the aim of showing important points of sport psychology that each professional athlete should consider for take part in country, continent or world competition. In other word, this research includes some guidelines that have the best psychological-mental conditions for athletes.

Key Words: Karate, Professional Athletes, Negative excitement, Motivation, Self-confidence.

INTRODUCTION

Sport psychology is a branch in psychology studying human behavior in sporting events and physical activities. Psychology is the main element in sport competitions [3]. In order to reach the suitable results, psychological factors are considered important along with champion's physical and skillful training. Physical fitness may not guarantee success in sports; moreover a successful athlete needs spiritual fitness [7].

Championship and psychological training

There was a thought that championship will achieved just through physical fitness but nowadays everybody knows that in-addition to physical fitness, %90 of championship is because of inner and mental aspects [10]. Today attention and concentration on psychological trainings for championship have been increased. In order to raise champion and a high rank karate athlete, we have to increase their "belief" toward their abilities and powers [2]. Reason of lots of failures in unbelief, lack of assurance, unconscious tendency toward defeat and not having a relish for victory. Failure has lots of reasons [1]:

1. Indifference: lack of necessary motivation, certain goal; And enthusiasm are the most important factors that cause indifference in karate athletes.
2. Doubt and Hesitation: karate athletes will ask themselves: Have acquired necessary techniques of preparation for competition? Can I use all my power and abilities? Can I defeat my opponent? Collection of such questions in addition to lack of self-confidence will bring doubt and hesitation in to karate athlete's mind.

3. Anxiety: incorrect information about opponent believes that competitions or opponents are so powerful and undefeatable, think that the results of probable failure is unforgiveable and other reasons like attendance of adherents and ones who are waiting for karate athletes victory will cause anxiety in karate athletes.

4. Unnecessary Precaution: Sometimes karate athletes will gain high percentage of physical fitness before the competition but because of factors like anxiety, Lack of self – confidence not experiencing big competitions and so on they are so careful in their mouse and because of that they confront with huge failure.

5. Carelessness and weakness: The reasons we point out in the first part in addition to being indifference will cause carelessness and weakness in doing excursions and trainings.

Arousal

Arousal is the rate in which one is psychologically and physically active and aware one of the factors that impressed athletic performance is rate of athlete arousal, relation between performance and arousal follows reversed U law. According to this law correct performance of any skill needs certain amount of arousal; we call this "optimal level". If the arousal was less or more than desirable amount it will damage the performance quality. Extra arousal in addition to anxiety will cause deficiency in performance [9].

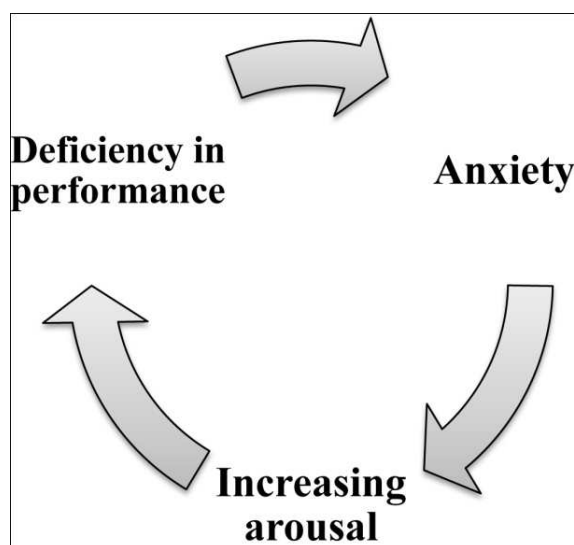


Figure 1. Arousal and Anxiety

Anxiety

Anxiety use to describe negative and inconvenience emotional conditions it means worry and anxiousness will created because of uncertain dangers along with, not knowing what to do, insolvency and arousal [3]. Sharkey (1996) believes that anxiety is so close to fear and it is something more than "being worried" [11]. Because self-esteem will threat a person. Different kinds of anxiety are: 1. State anxiety; 2. Trait anxiety; 3. Competitive anxiety. Here we want to talk about competitive anxiety which is expressing unusual apprehension and sadness before the competition All the researchers specially Nazariyan et al. (2011) shows that being busy with physical activities will decrease anxiety. The effect of this relief is the reason for warming-up before the competition.

Stress

Whenever a person loses his physical and psychological ability of compatibility to environment he/she will be full of stress. Stress has two aspects: positive and negative aspect. Positive aspect is desirable stress and negative aspect is extra stress. Eliminating stress in meaningless and harmful; Stress follows reversed U law. Some stress will cause weakness and tranquility and extra stress will lead to mental problems. Amount of stress which the person could handle and is temporary and short term might motivate a person [4].

Martens believe that a manner in which stress arises in athletic situations is matches with following formula: Environmental stimulation → negative thoughts → arousal = stress

Psychological skills

Psychological skills help the athlete to do his / her exercises better, enjoy sport and achieve athletic successes. If a karate athlete couldn't control his temper during the competition he won't have any chances for victory [5,6].

Using mental imagery is one of the ways for strengthening and improving the spirit. This method is being used by most successful karate athletes for solving their exercising problems and improving them. Mental exercise during the competition is useful because of following reasons:

It reinforces the techniques that karate athlete is aware of using them.

It improves and reinforces mental and physical reactions and karate athlete's performance.

It increases concentration and self-confidence

It decreases the competition pressure, stress and anger [3,4,5,6].

Mental imagery is more effective and more important than positive thoughts and positive self-talk. Imagery will increase concentration and self-confidence and also it causes reviewing competition or play strategies and in this way it will affect training or performance of skills. In a study by Behboudi (2011) et al, they figured out that excellent players who fight in country level in comparison to non-athletes, most of the times used mental preparation techniques to control their anxiety and optimal their overall state of motivation [1].

Self Talk

When somebody thinks we call it self talk he might talk about his thoughts or just review them in his mind. Nazarian et al. (2011) has named some applications for self talk in sport. Some of which are as follow [10]:

Improving incorrect habits, increasing attention, adjusting arousal, increasing self-confidence, increasing self-usefulness, and maintaining exercise behavior. One of the ways of increasing self-confidence is talking positively with you. This is a common exercise between athletes.

Self-Confidence

Self-Confidence will increase positive feelings, concentration ability and athlete's successes. Martens (1987) in his researches points out that: Since now in most of coaches and athletes we observe that self-confidence is the most important factor in achieving athletic successes [8].

Champions believe that there are two factors for success: one is self-belief and the other one is self-confidence during the competition. Coaches, sport psychologists and researchers believe that self-confidence is one of the most important mental states before and during the competition. Vealey (1988) considers self-confidence as athlete's belief in his abilities through process of success [12].

Motivation

Alderman defines motivation as follow: preparation for making choice and direct the behavior that controls by relations to the results of that behavior and also resistance in behavior until getting to the certain point. In sport, motivation means athlete's enthusiasm and interest for getting championship. In same physical conditions the athlete who is motivated is the best one [3,9].

Concentration and Attention

Significant athletes know where and when concentrate their attention. Nazarian et al. (2011) figures out that when champions are performing, they won't concentrate their attention to the results [10]. On the contrary they pay attention to the assignment. Sport has some terms that participants have to concentrate on its activities otherwise they lose their points.

Novel approaches in improving karate athlete's performance in competitions

According to what was said before, basic and important approaches that every coaches and karate athlete for participating in country, continent or world competitions have to know just few days before the competitions are:

Members of the team should be in the place where the competitions are held just few days before the competition so that they'll be familiar with environment. Coaches, supervisor, and athlete should take a look at existing factors and be familiar with them. For example visiting competition stadium and practicing in it will decrease athlete's feeling of stress and he will feel compatible with environment. The athlete will get used to the weather and he also becomes familiar with environment [5].

Karate athlete's thoughts in first half hour in the morning have the most influence on the events that happens during the day. Maybe karate athletes haven't realized this fact but this is a fact that exists. While karate athlete has wake up and he is not so conscious and aware he has to repeat the word "victory" continuously and dominate the feeling of freshness and happiness inside himself, and think about the techniques that he exercise in last few months and according that gain the whole ability for getting points and perform all those techniques to overcome his opponents

and take points from judge. He also can think about the katas who he dominate over and see himself with his opponents in tatami that with each kata all the judges raise their flags for him. Then he has to get up just on time and full of confidence and with open arms go to welcome the competition [6].

This part consists of approaches before the competition each approach consists of instances that guarantee the best physical, mental and psychological conditions at the beginning of competition [10].

Table 1. Approaches before competition

Factors that should be considered	Approaches before competition	
	Prevention design	Supporting design
Diet	Use carbohydrates just like previous days. Avoid foods which are hard to digest and are useless, in the morning got competition and eat light and nutritious foods.	By way of precaution bring some food with you.
Equipments	The night before the competition check your equipments and pack your bag.	Control yourself and use deep breaths for keeping yourself calm.
Trip	Wake up one and half hour before heading to stadium wakeup slowly do some stretch exercises and be relaxed.	Do some mental exercises and positive self – talk on the bus.
Warm up	Warm up regularly do stretch exercises completely review, your skills, think positively.	If it is necessary warm-up a little more and be ready for competition, but don't make you tired.
Mental Preparation	One night before the competition listen to the relaxing tape. Do mental exercises at the night and morning of competition. In the morning listen to the freshening tapes.	If you are worried use deep breaths. Instead of thinking about yourself pay attention to your techniques and skills.

DISCUSSION

Victory is not an occasional event. Sport psychology researchers like Behboudi (2011), Mohammadzadeh et al. (2009) and Nazarian et al. (2011) have studied excellent athlete's behavioral pattern before and during competitions [1,9,10]. They observe behaviors and tendencies like what is said below, before the competition. Athlete's intensity and endeavor in trainings is usually less than the intensity and endeavor during the competition.

Distinguished athletes have some probable plans for competition if the competition wasn't what they expected, they use those plans. Athletes prefer to be alone and silent before the competition. Athletes use comforting methods review their successful performance and self-talk to reassure themselves. They don't think about their components before the competition. They do regular mental reviews. They concentrate on the competition during preparation term. They can confront with normal situation or the anxiety before and during the competition. They continue fighting even when they hurt. They don't give up, they can tolerate poor judgment [3,7].

CONCLUSION

Nowadays existence of sport psychologists in professional sports is so common. They help athletes to learn psychological skills. Sport psychology is known as a profession that needs expert. Sport psychologists have been working with professional athletes in Canada and Europe for many years. Lots of countries have hired full-time sport psychologists for their national athletic organizations. There for getting the highest points in competitions we'd better use the expert psychologist coach in our national teams for psychological and mental state preparations, increasing motivation and self-confidence in athletes especially in combating sports.

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