



Psychology

What is psychology?

Fundamentally defined, Sport Psychology is the scientific study of people and their behaviors within sport and exercise scenarios, through all stages of before, during and after. Studying and indeed understanding Sport Psychology methods and principles can be very beneficial for players and coaches in both team and individual participation. This Introduction will look at 3 key areas of sport psychology with a particular connection to soccer:

Team Cohesion / Dynamics:

Every individual is uniquely different and thus sport psychology has a role to play in both understanding and implementing principles tailored towards the individual athlete Vs. team sports. A golfer, for example, can choose to practice and play how he/she wants to or feels is best for their own performance. A coach however, may choose for a team to practice and play with the objective being “what’s best for the team”. Therein lays factors which can affect different individuals within a team such as; motivation, competition, communication, self-confidence, relationships and stress. To ponder these influences, think about this example – why does the soccer team with clearly the better individuals not always succeed against teams with perceived lesser individual abilities? The same can be argued for individual sports such as boxing or tennis. Further study on team cohesion and individual participation, in a psychology context, can have its advantages because as we know – the favorite doesn’t always win!

Motivation:

Motivation can be clearly defined as the direction and intensity of effort. As mentioned above, motivation can produce different results depending on a team or individual situation. It must also be recognized that motivation is influenced by both intrinsically (from within the participant) and extrinsically (from outside factors such as the coach, spectators, the environment etc.). As a coach, understanding your participants can help to positively influence their levels of motivation. Further study on this topic will include the 3 generally accepted orientations toward motivation; ***The Trait-Centered View***, which contends that motivation is primarily influenced by individual characteristics. ***The Situation-Centered View***, which contends that motivation levels are influenced primarily by the situation and the ***Interactional View*** which states that both the trait-centered and situation-centered views interact and influence levels of motivation.



Goal-Setting:

Setting goals is a common practice within Sport and indeed all walks of life. The key is getting people to identify and set the right kind of goals. Defining goals can be split into 2 views, Objective goals and Subjective goals. Objective goals focus on specific details, attaining a result i.e. achieving a specific win/lose record by the end of the season or a striker setting a target of 20 goals for the season. Subjective goals however are general statements of intent which can't be measured as easily i.e. "I want to enjoy this game; I want to be strong in midfield today". Further study on this topic will include the 3 types of goals; **Outcome Goals**, **Performance Goals** and **Process Goals**. As a coach, understanding how these different types of goals effect players' motivation and self-confidence can greatly influence their performance.