



## PEAK PERFORMANCE AND TRANSFORMATION OF MENTAL TRAINING PATTERN IN SPORTS TRAINING

**Bhisham Singh**

### KEYWORDS :

#### Introduction

Peak performance is the foal for all athletic training and competitions. In sports psychology, traditional research defences peak performance by emphasizing optimal level of anxiety, stress, arousal or flow state. The core idea behind peak performance is that athlete would have perfect performance when they possess an optimal psychological state some examples of this concept include the ideal iceberg profile of mood (Morgan,1989) optimal level of Anxiety (Materns et al.,1990) individualized zone for optimal functioning (Hanin 1989) optimal combination of physical arousal and cognitive anxiety (Hardy& Parfitt, 1991) and flow state (Jakson, 1996). However , problems with these traditional mental training models are three-fold: (1) how to operationally find these subjective peak states in the athletes may not have had the chance to experience such peak states in the previous competitions; (2) how to operationally activate peak states in the athletes at the time when they need them; and (3)as conditions change and adversities appear which can interfere with or destroy peak states, how to continuously maintain the peak states during competitions. The traditional researches have these weaknesses? One of the reason is that the used inappropriate research methods. The traditional researches tended to be nomothetic in nature, emphasizing group experimental designs, and the use of standardized questionnaires and psychometrics. It is clear that the approach is not so suitable for elite sports and top athletes. Another reason is that the traditional research focused too much on human's perfect rationality and optimal mechanism to solve the problem. The third reason is that these theoretical models strongly emphasized on the psychological trait/state rather than the current environmental factors and past learnt experience as the cause of sport performance.

This presentation will explore a new definition on the peak performance developed Dr. GanyanG Si on the basis of his past experiences in sorts practice. Peak performance is not about performing perfectly, it is about coping with various adversities rationally. Adversity in competitions is normal, and athletes' success in coping with each adverse situation is closely related to their successful performance. In another words, even when athletes may not achieve a "peak" state at the time of the competition, if they can reasonably cope with most or all adversities, effectively overcome their mistakes or compensate for their loss, their performance may still be judged as successful. There are three key elements of this new definition: the first is the adversity, namely the situations which impede athletes from achieving their competitive goals; second is coping, namely the awareness and methods to overcome or cope with adversities; and third is the rationality, namely to control own irrational minds and to utilize opponents' irrational minds.

The new definition emphasizes on adversity coping in a rational way in athletic training and competitions, it implies that a the better your ability to cope with adversity, the higher your level of performance. Pursuit of rationality means to control your irrational mind and to utilize the irrational minds of your opponent. Kahneman won the 2002 Nobel prize for Economics, by proposing the Prospect Theory. The theory deals with how human make decisions, emphasizing the difference from rational utility theory. The theory points out that (a) most people are risk avoiding when facing with a gain situation; (b) most people are risk-preferring when facing a loss; and (C) people are more sensitive to losing than gaining; and those behaviours are irrational. Many of our athletes followed the same line of thinking

during competitions and received negative results.

The presentations defines adversity as those situations which impeded athletes from achieving their competitive goals, and coping are method to overcome or cope with diversities, and coping strategy is the various categories of coping methods. The mental skills athletes used for coping adversity might be the same as those employed for facilitating technique learning, training competition preparation (e.g. arousal adjustment skills, concentration, imagery, self-talk, behavioural routine), however, the way in which these skills and strategies are used when coping with adversity is quite different , for coping strategies, on strategy that many Chinese and Hong Kong top athletes effectively use is " Ah Q" coping, which is closely related to the Chinese traditional culture. Four questionnaire items ( all items for measuring "Ah Q" Coping are Chinese Idioms which are orally used by athletes) are listed below in English.

#### "Ah Q" Coping

- Winning or losing is normal in competitions
- The problem will resolve on its own on its own good time
- Allow nature to take its course, for everything is pre-arranged
- Take a step backward and you will see things from wide perspective

A training program of the adversity coping based on the new definition of peak performance has been set up. It includes four steps as follows:

1. To identify and confirm typical adverse situations of the athletes.  
These should be specific to the sports, a particular competition, and to the individual athlete.
2. Seek appropriate coping methods.  
These contains coping strategy or method integrated coping strategies and pursuit for rationality
3. To conduct individualized training  
The training includes (a) evaluating athlete ability of adverse coping (b) strengthening athlete awareness, learning skills, forming habits (c) long period training and short period training
4. To evaluate training outcomes  
The training program could guide sport psychology intervention in practice more operationally and effectively. In this approach, the awareness and recognition of adversity could be evaluated and trained, and the effect of learned coping behaviours could be evaluated and re- built. With the model, peak performance is possibly one step close to the situation of "you can pursue it with effort". The application if this training program was introduced with example of chinese and Hong Kong top athletes and compared with traditional psychological training methods, his program has following advantage (a) coaches involvement is strengthened (b) athletes have more direct interest and clear goal, (c) the training period is more flexible (d) diversification of evaluation (e.g. rationality). (e) tightly integrated with on- field support service.

Finally, the guidelines of the athletes adversity coping have been established, for the purpose of strengthening athletes awareness and guiding their behaviours.

#### Guidelines for adversity coping for athletes

- Frustration is outline, while smoothness is exception

- There is always something happening at wrong time
- You cannot obtain every necessary factor, which can ensue your success
- A prepared plan can never be carried out exactly when confronting a strong rival
- Important things are always simple things
- Simple things are always hard to do
- If you feel you still have something which needs to prepare right before the competition, it probably means that you have prepared too much
- If you have thought about your rival in every aspect, remember that the rival has done the same thing to you
- Previous success will never appear again in the way you expect
- It is more your teammate mistake than your rivals attack that can disturb your mood
- If you know when to panned lose your mind, your rivals will never disturb your mind
- It is equal to suicide if you tend to be risk avoiding when you are approaching to success
- Accumulation of tiny negative thoughts would lead a suddenly mental collapse
- Only have currently adaptive rationality, never have permanently entire rationality

#### Reference-

1. Andeson, AG (2002) Evaluating the effectiveness of applied sports psychology practice: making the case for case study approach. *The sport psychologist* 16, 432-453
2. Bond J.W.(2002) Applied sports psychology: Philosophy, reflections and experience, *international journal of sports psycholgy* 33, 19-37
3. Dr. Ganyang Si, The New Definition Of peak- performance and transformation of mental training pattern, IICP-2009