

Unit 17: Psychology for Sports Performance

Unit code:	A/502/5739
QCF Level 3:	BTEC National
Credit value:	10
Guided learning hours:	60

● Aim and purpose

The aim of this unit is to develop learners' understanding of the psychological dimensions of sport and develop techniques to improve sporting performance.

● Unit introduction

How often do we hear about sporting success being attributed to a performer's mental state or the way that a team functions? In modern day sport, success is the result of several variables. These include physical preparation, appropriate strategies or tactics, nutritional plans, self control and mental strength. Sports performers are leaving no stone unturned to gain that extra edge to help them achieve success and as a result the application of psychology in sport is becoming increasingly prevalent.

This unit develops learners' knowledge of sport psychology and how psychological techniques can be applied to influence the performance of individuals and teams. Initially, learners will look at personality, which is seen as the basis for behaviour, and how this is a key factor in choosing sport and subsequent level of achievement. A second major factor in successful sports performance is the motivation of the individual and how this can be developed and influenced.

Learners will then move away from the individual and start to address the environments that sports people find themselves performing in and how these can affect both motivation levels and stress levels. The sports performer's ability to deal with increasing levels of stress and anxiety will be vital to their performance; stress often plays a positive role in sports performance. However, too much stress can cause major decrements in performance.

Learners will develop an appreciation of the social environment sport is played within and how the functioning of a group can influence the outcome that a sports team produces. Essential features of groups, such as group development, dynamics, cohesion and leadership are all examined in terms of how they influence group effectiveness.

Finally, learners will look at bringing their knowledge of sport psychology together, using it to improve their performance in a practical way. Learners will assess the psychological strengths of a sports performer and identify areas for improvement. Learners will have an opportunity to explore psychological techniques which could be employed to enhance their performance. Learners will then be able to bring this together in a coherent framework and produce a psychological skills training programme for a selected sports performer.

● Learning outcomes

On completion of this unit a learner should:

- 1 Know the effect of personality and motivation on sports performance
- 2 Know the relationship between stress, anxiety, arousal and sports performance
- 3 Know the role of group dynamics in team sports
- 4 Be able to plan a psychological skills training programme to enhance sports performance.

Unit content

1 Know the effect of personality and motivation on sports performance

Personality: definition; theories (Marten's schematic view, psychodynamic theory, trait theory, situational approach, interactional approach); types (type A and type B); effects on sports performance (athletes versus non athletes, individual versus team sports, elite versus non-elite athletes, type A versus type B)

Motivation: definition; views (trait centred, situation centred, interactional view); types (intrinsic and extrinsic); theories eg achievement motivation, attribution theory; effects on sports performance (positive, negative, future expectations of success and failure); developing a motivational climate

2 Know the relationship between stress, anxiety, arousal and sports performance

Stress: definition; types (eustress and distress); causes (internal, external, personal, occupational, sports environments); symptoms (cognitive, somatic and behavioural); effects on sports performance (nervous system responses, negative mental state, loss of self-confidence and concentration)

Anxiety: definition; types (state and trait anxiety); cause (negative effect of stress); symptoms (cognitive, somatic and behavioural); effects on sports performance (negative mental state, loss of self-confidence and decreased expectations of success, fear of failure)

Arousal: definition; theories eg drive theory, inverted U hypothesis, catastrophe theory, individual zones of optimal functioning; effects on sports performance (improvements and decrements in performance level, changes in attention focus, increases in anxiety levels, choking)

3 Know the role of group dynamics in team sports

Group processes: eg groups or teams; stages of group development (forming, storming, norming and performing); Steiner's model of group effectiveness; Ringelmann effect, social loafing; interactive and coactive groups

Cohesion: definition eg task and social cohesion; creating an effective team climate; factors affecting cohesion eg environmental, personal, leadership and team factors; relationship between cohesion and performance

Leadership: qualities; behaviour; prescribed versus emergent leaders; theories of leadership eg trait approach, behavioural approach, interactional approach, multidimensional model; styles eg autocratic, democratic, consultative, group style

4 Be able to plan a psychological skills training programme to enhance sports performance

Assessment: psychological strengths and weaknesses of the individual; identifying psychological demands of sports; performance profiling

Plan: current situation; aims and objectives; action plan to address aims and objectives; daily and weekly content of the plan

Psychological skills: motivation eg goal-setting, performance profiling; arousal control eg progressive muscular relaxation, mind to muscle relaxation, autogenic techniques, breathing control, psyching up techniques; imagery eg mental rehearsal, controlling emotions, concentration, relaxation, pre-performance routines; confidence building eg self-talk, positive thinking, changing self-image through imagery

Assessment and grading criteria

In order to pass this unit, the evidence that the learner presents for assessment needs to demonstrate that they can meet all the learning outcomes for the unit. The assessment criteria for a pass grade describe the level of achievement required to pass this unit.

Assessment and grading criteria		
To achieve a pass grade the evidence must show that the learner is able to:	To achieve a merit grade the evidence must show that, in addition to the pass criteria, the learner is able to:	To achieve a distinction grade the evidence must show that, in addition to the pass and merit criteria, the learner is able to:
P1 define personality and how it affects sports performance	M1 explain the effects of personality and motivation on sports performance	D1 evaluate the effects of personality and motivation on sports performance
P2 describe motivation and how it affects sports performance		
P3 describe stress and anxiety, their causes, symptoms and effect on sports performance		
P4 describe three theories of arousal and the effect on sports performance	M2 explain three theories of arousal and the effect on sports performance	
P5 identify four factors which influence group dynamics and performance in team sports	M3 explain four factors which influence group dynamics and performance in team sports	D2 analyse four factors which influence group dynamics and performance in team sports
P6 assess the current psychological skills of a selected sports performer, identifying strengths and areas for improvement [IE2]		
P7 plan a six-week psychological skills training programme to enhance performance for a selected sports performer. [CT5, RL1, EP3]	M4 explain the design of the six-week psychological skills training programme for a selected sports performer.	D3 justify the design of the six-week psychological skills training programme for a selected sports performer, making suggestions for improvement.

PLTS: This summary references where applicable, in the square brackets, the elements of the personal, learning and thinking skills applicable in the pass criteria. It identifies opportunities for learners to demonstrate effective application of the referenced elements of the skills.

Key	IE – independent enquirers	RL – reflective learners	SM – self-managers
	CT – creative thinkers	TW – team workers	EP – effective participators

Essential guidance for tutors

Delivery

The aim of this unit is to teach learners about the psychological dimensions of sport and develop techniques to improve an athlete's performance.

A wide range of delivery methods can be used in this unit, including lectures, learner presentations, learner group work, practical learner tasks, worksheets, videos and internet research.

Gaining an understanding of the effects personality has on sports performance will require a mixture of tutor-led input and individual learner research to develop an understanding of personality theories and their limitations. It is of key importance that learners are able to complete a variety of questionnaires that analyse personality types and then examine their validity and reliability.

Motivation work can be delivered in a manner to enable learners to analyse their own motivation and the effect of their own thought patterns on their motivation.

The relationships between stress, anxiety, arousal and sports performance will also require a mixture of tutor-led input and individual research to develop an appreciation of the terms 'stress', 'anxiety' and 'arousal'. Learners need to be clear about the effects these psychological factors have on performance.

Learners will need access to tests that measure the levels of anxiety sports performers experience. For example, CSAI 2 and SCAT are well recognised and valid tests of anxiety levels.

Group dynamics should be explored from a theoretical and practical perspective. Learners should be encouraged to examine the groups of which they have been members and how they developed to become effective or ineffective.

The theoretical framework of group dynamics and leadership is very important to appreciate, as is the understanding that groups work as processes rather than static entities.

The psychological skills training programme brings together the rest of the unit to develop the 'hard' skills a sports psychologist will use. An understanding of the theory is invaluable and learners must be able to apply it in a practical way. It is essential that learners experience as many psychological skills techniques as possible.

Psychological skills can be delivered in two ways: either integrated into each part of the course or delivered as a block at the end of the course. For example, once motivation has been taught, goal-setting could be explored as a method of influencing motivation; once arousal theories have been examined, relaxation techniques could be looked at to control arousal levels. This method ensures a blend of theory and practice throughout the course. Alternatively, teaching the skills at the end gives focus to the skills and to the development of the psychological skills training programme.

Outline learning plan

The outline learning plan has been included in this unit as guidance and can be used in conjunction with the programme of suggested assignments.

The outline learning plan demonstrates one way in planning the delivery and assessment of this unit.

Topic and suggested assignments/activities and/assessment
Introduction to unit and the field of Sport Psychology
Assignment 1: Personality and Motivation and Their Role in Sports Performance (P1, P2, M1, D1). Tutor introduces the assignment brief
Personality – presentation of definitions and theories of personality and group discussion of their strengths and weaknesses; how personality affects sports performance; assessment of own and others' personalities and analysis of tests
Motivation – learners can research definitions of motivation; types and theories of motivation and the factors which affect the motivation of athletes
Motivational climate – learners can examine sporting environments and identify how a motivational climate has been created
Assignment 2: Stress, Anxiety, Arousal and Sports Performance (P3, P4, M2). Tutor introduces the assignment brief
Stress, anxiety and arousal – learners to research and present definitions of each term, their causes and their relationship to sports performance. These can be presented to the group
Assignment 3: Group Dynamics in Sport (P5, M3, D2). Tutor introduces the assignment brief
Learners to research group dynamics, cohesion and leadership and how they influence sports performance
Observation of group situations in sports: learner practical activities to observe group behaviour and any changes in group behaviour
Assignment 4: Psychological Skills Training Programme to Enhance Sporting Performance (P6, P7, M4, D3). Tutor introduces the assignment brief
Learners to research and participate in methods of developing psychological skills
Learners to examine methods of assessing strengths and areas for improvement
Learners to compile a six-week training programme – includes time allocated for learner-initiated private study
Review of unit and the role of the sports psychologist

Assessment

This unit can be assessed through a series of structured assignments each involving a mixture of theoretical knowledge and practical application. Learners should be given opportunities to apply the theory to their actual or observed experiences so they can appreciate the value of psychology in an applied manner.

For P1, learners must first define personality and then describe how personality affects sports performance. The description must include – as listed in the *Unit content* – a definition, personality theories, personality types and the effects on sports performance. This will be predominantly research-based and could include some of their own personality testing with their peers.

For P2, learners must describe the factors that affect the motivation of athletes. This must include a definition of motivation, along with a description of views of motivation, motivation types, theories of motivation and how motivation affects sports performance.

For P3, learners must describe stress and anxiety, their causes, symptoms and how they affect sports performance. The description must include definitions and also the other areas listed in the *Unit content* for example, types of stress.

For P4, learners must define arousal and then describe three theories of arousal and the effect it can have on sports performance. This should incorporate personal experience as well as their observations of sports performers.

For P5, learners must identify four factors which influence group dynamics and performance in team sports. This should include aspects of group processes, cohesion and leadership. This could be based on the observation of a game or match; learners could observe the changes in behaviour due to changes in the situation.

For P6, learners must select a sports performer, which could be themselves or one of their peers, and assess their psychological strengths and areas for improvement. They then need to plan a six-week psychological skills training programme relating to the outcomes of the assessment (P7).

Grading criterion M1 links to criteria P1 and P2, requiring learners to explain the effects of personality and motivation on sports performance.

For M2, which links to P4, learners must explain three theories of arousal and their effects on sports performance.

For M3, which links to P5, learners must explain the four factors which influence group dynamics and performance in team sports.

For M4, learners must explain their design of the six-week psychological skills training programme that they planned (P7).

Grading criterion D1 builds on M1, and requires learners to evaluate the effects of personality and motivation on sports performance. This means learners must make a judgement based on each of the effects that they have described/explained (criteria P1, P2 and M1).

For D2, learners must analyse the four factors which influence group dynamics and performance in team sports, building on the explanation of the effects of groups dynamics given for M3.

For D3, which builds on criteria P7 and M4, learners are required to justify the design of the six-week psychological skills training programme that they have planned for a selected sports performer.

Programme of suggested assignments

The table below shows a programme of suggested assignments that cover the pass, merit and distinction criteria in the assessment and grading grid. This is for guidance and it is recommended that centres either write their own assignments or adapt any Edexcel assignments to meet local needs and resources.

Criteria covered	Assignment title	Scenario	Assessment method
P1, P2, M1, D1	Personality and Motivation and Their Role in Sports Performance	The coach of a sports activity has asked you to use your knowledge of sports psychology to influence the performance of other performers in that sport.	Written report
P3, P4, M2	Stress, Anxiety, Arousal and Sports Performance	As an assistant to a sports psychologist you are asked to present visually information which educates sports performers about the relationships between sport, anxiety, arousal and sporting performance.	Poster
P5, M3, D2	Group Dynamics in Sport	As an assistant to a manager of a sports team you are asked to prepare a presentation to give to the manager and coach about how group dynamics can influence performance.	Presentation Witness statement/ observation record
P6, P7, M4, D3	Psychological Skills Training Programme to Enhance Sporting Performance	In your role as assistant to the sport psychologist you are asked to prepare a psychological skills training programme for a selected individual.	Written plan Witness statement

Links to National Occupational Standards, other BTEC units, other BTEC qualifications and other relevant units and qualifications

This unit forms part of the BTEC Sport sector suite. This unit has particular links with the following unit titles in the BTEC Sport suite and the BTEC Sport and Exercise Sciences suite:

Level 2 Sport	Level 3 Sport	Level 3 Sport and Exercise Sciences
Psychology for Sports Performance	Sports Coaching	Sport and Exercise Psychology
Exercise and Fitness Instruction	Leadership in Sport	Instructing Physical Activity and Exercise
Effects of Exercise on the Body Systems	Instructing Physical Activity and Exercise	Sports Coaching
		Applied Sport and Exercise Psychology

This unit links with the National Occupational Standards (NOS) for:

- Achieving Excellence in Sports Performance at Level 3
- Coaching, Teaching and Instructing at Level 3
- Instructing Physical Activity and Exercise at Level 3.

Essential resources

Effective delivery of this unit requires access to tests for psychological assessment and normative data for interpretation of test results.

Employer engagement and vocational contexts

This unit focuses on the background knowledge and skills of sport psychology that learners need to enable them to work in coaching or fitness instruction. Centres are encouraged to develop links with sports clubs who use sport psychologists or have coaches who implement psychological techniques. This could be done through inviting them in as guest speakers or to give demonstrations of psychological techniques.

Indicative reading for learners

Textbooks

Adams M et al – *BTEC Level 3 National Sport (Performance and Excellence) Student Book* (Pearson, 2010) ISBN 9781846906510

Adams M et al – *BTEC Level 3 National Sport Teaching Resource Pack* (Pearson, 2010) ISBN 9781846906541

Burton D and Raedeke T D – *Sport Psychology for Coaches* (Human Kinetics, 2008) ISBN 9780736039864

Cox R – *Sport Psychology: Concepts and Applications 6th Edition* (McGraw-Hill, 2007) ISBN 9780071106429

Weinberg R S and Gould D – *Foundations of Sport and Exercise Psychology 4th Edition* (Human Kinetics, 2007) ISBN 9780736064675

Journals

Applied Sport Psychology

International Journal of Sports Science and Coaching

Journal of Applied Sport Psychology

Websites

BBC Sport www.bbc.co.uk/sport

British Association of Sport and Exercise Sciences www.bases.org.uk

Istadia www.istadia.com

Mind Tools www.mindtools.com

Youtube www.youtube.com

Delivery of personal, learning and thinking skills

The table below identifies the opportunities for personal, learning and thinking skills (PLTS) that have been included within the pass assessment criteria of this unit.

Skill	When learners are ...
Independent enquirers	assessing the current psychological skills of a selected sports performer, identifying strengths and areas for improvement
Creative thinkers	planning a six-week psychological skills training programme to enhance performance for a selected sports performer
Reflective learners	planning a six-week psychological skills training programme to enhance performance for a selected sports performer
Effective participators	planning a six-week psychological skills training programme to enhance performance for a selected sports performer.

Although PLTS are identified within this unit as an inherent part of the assessment criteria, there are further opportunities to develop a range of PLTS through various approaches to teaching and learning.

Skill	When learners are ...
Independent enquirers	researching definitions and theories of motivation, group dynamics and how they influence performance
Creative thinkers	compiling a six week psychological skills training programme
Reflective learners	assessing the strengths and weaknesses of an individual's psychological skills
Team workers	practising psychological skills training techniques
Self-managers	administering psychological skills tests on a partner.

● Functional Skills – Level 2

Skill	When learners are ...
ICT – Use ICT systems	
Select, interact with and use ICT systems independently for a complex task to meet a variety of needs	researching the effect of personality on sports performance, how teams develop and function, and theories of motivation
Use ICT to effectively plan work and evaluate the effectiveness of the ICT system they have used	recording data from personality tests
Manage information storage to enable efficient retrieval	recording data from personality tests
Follow and understand the need for safety and security practices	implementing psychological skills assessment tests and recording confidential data
ICT – Find and select information	
Select and use a variety of sources of information independently for a complex task	researching the effect of personality on sports performance, how teams develop and function, and theories of motivation
Access, search for, select and use ICT-based information and evaluate its fitness for purpose	preparing psychological skills test data
ICT – Develop, present and communicate information	
Enter, develop and format information independently to suit its meaning and purpose including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • text and tables • images • numbers • records 	recording data from psychological skills tests
Bring together information to suit content and purpose	preparing a psychological skills training programme interpreting psychological skills test data preparing a presentation
Present information in ways that are fit for purpose and audience	preparing a psychological skills training programme preparing a presentation
Evaluate the selection and use of ICT tools and facilities used to present information	preparing psychological skills test data
Select and use ICT to communicate and exchange information safely, responsibly and effectively including storage of messages and contact lists	accurately recording psychological skills test data
Mathematics	
Identify the situation or problem and the mathematical methods needed to tackle it	interpreting psychological skills test data
Select and apply a range of skills to find solutions	interpreting psychological skills test data
Interpret and communicate solutions to practical problems in familiar and unfamiliar routine contexts and situations	implementing psychological skills assessment tests
Draw conclusions and provide mathematical justifications	interpreting psychological skills test data

Skill	When learners are ...
English	
Speaking and listening – make a range of contributions to discussions and make effective presentations in a wide range of contexts	presenting the findings of their research into stress, arousal and anxiety
Reading – compare, select, read and understand texts and use them to gather information, ideas, arguments and opinions	researching definitions, types and theories of motivation
Writing – write documents, including extended writing pieces, communicating information, ideas and opinions, effectively and persuasively	writing a report on personality, motivation and their role in sports performance.