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Is there a Correlation in Improvements of TOPS Scores and Improvements in Track and Field Performances in Collegiate Athletes?

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ABSTRACT

This presentation will share the results from a study conducted on college track and field athletes at the NCAA division II level. The study compares the results of scores on the Test of Performance Strategies (TOPS) and, individual athlete's improvements in their event area according to the International Association of Athletics Federation (IAAF) scoring charts for track and field. A select group of primarily middle distance and distance runners was selected for the study. These athletes were given a baseline TOPS examination to evaluate their prior knowledge and use of mental skills in their athletic experiences. Personal best times in the athlete's primary events were recorded from the previous year. During the nine weeks of the outdoor track and field season that this study took place; athletes were introduced to a wide array of activities associated with improving their mental skills. Such activities included goal setting, imagery, relaxation, optimum level of arousal, affirmations, and the use of positive self-talk and routines. Athletes would have an organized mental skills session at least twice each of the nine weeks of the season. Athletes also had an individual meeting with the coaches to go over goal setting and the use of their mental skills to enhance their physical skills. After the outdoor season was completed the athletes took a post-examination TOPS. The scores were compared with their pre-test scores as well as their improvement in personal best times in their main events on the track.



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Author's Note

While working on this study Trey was an undergraduate student at Emporia State University in Emporia, Kansas. Since graduating this past May with a Bachelor's of Science in Education, Trey has decided to pursue a master's degree in Exercise Science through the University of Northern Iowa.

