
SPORT PSYCHOLOGIST'S DIGEST

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Genetically Determined Athletes

This article is the first in a special edition of the *International Journal of Sport Psychology* addressing the role of nature (talent) and nurture (training) in the development of motor skill expertise. The authors critically evaluate current understanding of how expertise is developed by drawing on contemporary literature dealing with hereditary and genetic accounts, the influence and potential value of practice, necessary environmental conditions, and the potential interactions of these influences on motor performance. Specifically addressed are hereditary accounts of overall health and well-being, physical attributes, personality characteristics, information-processing capabilities, and intelligence. The quality of practice settings and genetic predispositions that might influence adaptability to training are also considered. An integrated, collaborative approach is recommended for advancing conceptions of expert performance beyond their current status.

Singer, R.N., & Janelle, C.M. (1999). Determining sport expertise: From genes to supremes. *International Journal of Sport Psychology*, **30**, 117-150.

Significant Others and Goal Orientations

This study examined the relationship of athletes' goal orientations to perceptions of the criteria used by parents, coaches, and peers to assess their sport success. Unlike many studies of North American adolescents, findings indicated that these Spanish athletes exhibited two distinct goal profiles: one that was high in both task and ego orientation and one that was task oriented. The authors explain these findings, in part, as resulting from sociocultural differences between Spain and North America. Specifically, Spanish children might be socialized to be less ego oriented in their approach to sport competition and achievement than children in North America are. Additional findings indicated that athletes who were high in both task and ego orientation perceived that peers and adults used success criteria that were high in both task- and ego-involving criteria. Task-oriented athletes perceived infrequent use of ego-oriented criteria of success by adults and frequent use of task-oriented criteria by peers. The authors discuss these results in relation to achievement motivation theory and previous research assessing the socialization of goal orientations in sport.

Escartí, A., Roberts, G.C., Cervelló, E.M., & Guzmán, J.F. (1999). Adolescent goal orientations and the perception of criteria of success used by significant others. *International Journal of Sport Psychology*, **30**, 309-324.

Long-Term Goals and Improvement Trends

The authors reanalyzed data previously published by Bar-Eli et al. (1997), in order to investigate the dynamics of goal attainability as a function of goal difficulty and proximity. They found that Israeli high school students who were assigned relatively long-term (8-week) goals gradually increased sit-up performance, whereas those assigned shorter term (4- and 6-week) goals attempted to attain them earlier in their training program. They interpret this finding relative to "efficacy-performance spirals" (Lindsley et al., 1995) and suggest that distal goals lead to gradual rather than sudden improvements because of the absence of frequent mastery experiences. In addition, this study revealed that easy (10% improvement) and difficult/realistic (20% improvement) goals were more beneficial than very difficult/unattainable (40% improvement) and do-your-best goals, regardless of the designated goal period. These findings are discussed relative to previous research assessing goal setting in sport and exercise.

Tenenbaum, G., Bar-Eli, M., & Yaaron, M. (1999). The dynamics of goal-setting: Interactive effects of goal difficulty, goal specificity, and duration of practice time intervals. *International Journal of Sport Psychology*, **30**, 325-338.

What Makes a Good Coach?

In this study, 239 youth athletes (aged 10–13 or 14–18 years) and 1 parent from each family completed the Leadership Scale for Sport (Chelladurai & Saleh, 1980). Both age groups of athletes expressed preferences for similar coaching characteristics. The athletes preferred coaches who allowed them to have input into decision making about group goals, practice methods, and game tactics. They also preferred coaches who developed warm interpersonal relations with team members and who created a positive group environment. Youth athletes, in general, gave higher ratings for democratic behavior and social support than did parents. Female athletes tended to show a greater preference than did boys for coaches who allowed more athlete input, and mothers had a greater preference for democratic behavior than did fathers. Both athletes and parents indicated that positive feedback, training, and instruction were important. The authors suggest that youth sport programs should use the Leadership Scale for Sport to help develop more effective programs.

Martin, S.B., Jackson, A.W., Richardson, P.A., & Weiller, K.H. (1999). Coaching preferences of adolescent youths and their parents. *Journal of Applied Sport Psychology*, **11**, 247-262.

Outcome Goals Aren't Always Harmful

Most athletes are taught that setting outcome goals is not an effective means of improving performance, but performance goals have been encouraged. Research on successful athletes has found, however, that they do set outcome goals and that setting multiple types of goals might be to their advantage. In this study, 40 college students were assigned to one of five goal conditions: outcome goal only; outcome goal and process goal; process goal only; outcome, process, and performance goals; or no goal. All goal conditions included training in the technique of centering, which involved relaxation techniques. Outcome goal participants were to affirm