Olympic Consensus on Youth Athletic Development

Attempting to develop healthy, capable, and resilient young athletes, whilst attaining widespread, inclusive, sustainable and enjoyable participation and success for all levels of athletic achievement, can be a challenging quest for stakeholders in youth sport. In an attempt to advance a more unified and evidence-informed approach to youth athlete development, the International Olympic Committee (IOC) convened a consensus meeting of experts in 2014. This panel was tasked with identifying the key considerations and challenges in competitive youth sport, critically evaluating the current state of science and practice of youth athlete development, and creating guidelines for a sustainable model on the topic. This paper provides the results of these discussions. Specifically, it forwards evidence-based guidelines on maturation (i.e., the assessment of biological maturity status and timing, physiological and performance changes across maturation); challenges to health, well-being, and performance (i.e., specialization, injury and health concerns of systematic training and competition, injury rates and prevention, clinical health conditions, psychological overload, safeguarding, nutrition, and environmental challenges); and youth athletic development (i.e., frameworks, talent identification and development, coaching education and effectiveness, developing fitness and athleticism, and physiological monitoring). The IOC presents 27 guiding principles to minimize illness and injury risk, enhance well-being, and promote sustainable, enjoyable, long-term athlete development, performance, and success in all youth athletes. Specifically these guiding principles are separated into five categories: general principles (e.g., “adopt a wider definition of sport success that is centered on the whole athlete and development of the person”); coaching (e.g., “provide a challenging and enjoyable climate that focuses on personal assets and mastery orientation”); conditioning, testing, and injury prevention (e.g., “encourage regular participation in varied and age-based strength and conditioning programs”); nutritional, hydration, and exertional heat illness (e.g., “educate on the risks of dietary supplements and energy drinks”); and sport and sports medicine governing bodies and organizations (e.g., “make competition formats and settings age and skill appropriate”). Finally, the IOC presents a challenge for all youth and other sport governing bodies to emphasize awareness, education, and implementation of the proposed recommendations.


Journal website: http://bjsm.bmj.com/
Author website: http://youthsportsoftheamericas.org/leadership/

Aim to Learn, Not Just to Win: Group Goals Impact Group Strategies

The authors examined differences in group processes and performance as a function of two types of group goals: learning or performance. Goals were assigned so that participants would focus on either the outcome (i.e., performance goals) or the group’s improvement of process and task strategies (i.e., learning/process goals). The authors argue that differentiating between process and outcome goals is particularly important when examining group goal setting contexts due to the complexity of group performance. They hypothesized that groups assigned process goals would enhance discussion of task related strategies, be positively related to the group’s level of collective efficacy, and be positively related to the group’s task- and performance satisfaction. Undergraduate participants completed a group task based on the game of Boggle®, where groups of three participants were assigned to one of three conditions: a learning-goal condition, a performance-goal condition, and a do-best control condition. In the learning-goal condition, groups were informed they would be evaluated based on how well their group worked together and the effort put forth by the whole group. In the performance-goal condition, groups were informed that their goal was to score in the top ten percent of all groups that had performed before them. Lastly, the do-best control group was instructed to do their best as a group. Strategic activity was assessed using video recordings of each group performing the task; two trained raters coded the communication of strategic information. Collective efficacy and satisfaction were assessed using questionnaires completed at the end of the task. Team performance was assessed by tallying the group’s Boggle® score at the end of the task. Results indicated that learning-goal groups discussed significantly more strategies than the other two conditions. Groups assigned learning goals also reported higher satisfaction with performance compared to the performance-goal condition but not compared to the do-best condition. Groups in the performance-goal condition showed a stronger relationship between collective efficacy and performance compared to the other conditions. No other hypotheses were supported, including those examining differences in collective efficacy between experimental conditions. The authors concluded that when groups
focus attention on effective group processes, rather than task outcomes, they are able to regulate their behavior and interpret feedback more effectively.


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**Putting the ‘We’ in Sport Psychology**

This review provides sport psychology researchers and practitioners a reference to studying groups using social identity and self-categorization theories, as this approach has long been used in social psychology. The authors first identify the foundations of social identity theory and self-categorization theory. Social identity, which tries to understand intergroup relations, suggests that when individuals define themselves as part of a group (ingroup) they tend to compare their group favorably to others groups to maintain self-esteem. Three key elements affect social identification and, consequently, group behavior: the perceived stability of the ingroup’s position relative to other groups, the legitimacy of the ingroup’s position relative to other groups, and the perceived permeability of group boundaries (i.e., how easy it is to move between groups). Self-categorization theory extends social identity theory by including examination of the self, contributing 3 insights: 1) social identity allows group behavior to occur; 2) the self reflects a process in which people see themselves as either sharing a category (or group) with others or not; and 3) shared social identity is the basis for mutual social influence. The authors provide four key lessons for sport psychology in relation rooted in social identity. The first is that social identity is the basis for sports group behavior. That is, in some situations, a person’s self-definition and related behaviors are based on their shared group membership with other ingroup members (e.g., a member of a sport team) – the group becomes a part of their self. The second lesson is that social identity is the basis for sports group formation and development. The authors argue that all sporting activity is in some sense structured by group membership. In fact, self-categorization theory would suggest that satisfaction, attraction to the group, and perceptions of similarity result from social identities, not just lead to social identification. The third lesson is that social identity is the basis for sports group support and stress appraisal. Both primary and secondary appraisals of stress are influenced by social identity processes. For example, we are more likely to help those from an ingroup. The last lesson is that social identity is the basis for sports group leadership. According to the social identity approach, leadership is not a characteristic internal to an individual, but instead occurs when a leader exemplifies the group’s social identity. The authors conclude that, since sport is almost never solely an individual pursuit, but rather it involves the group, the social identity framework, has much to contribute to sport psychology.


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**Do Unfair Interruptions Help or Hurt Sport Performance?**

According to equity theory, unfairness should reduce commitment and effort and, in turn, performance. However, specific situations and task difficulty may complicate these relationships. The authors tested whether unfair task interruptions affected performance in both easy and difficult tasks. In Study 1, authors collected data on all regular-season NBA free throw attempts from 2005-2009. Of interest were free throws that occurred after a clear path foul (i.e., following an unfair foul). After controlling for other types of free throws and free throw accuracy, results showed that players were more likely to make a free throw after a clear path foul compared to regular free throws. Study 2 examined a similar phenomenon with NHL penalty shots compared to shootout situations from 2005-2012. Penalty shots and shootouts involve the same action by an offensive player, but the penalty shot occurs after a perceived unfair interference. After controlling for players’ average goals per game and average shots allowed by the goalie, results showed that players were more likely to make during a penalty shot compared to a shootout. Study 3 used an experimental design with undergraduates. In the control group, each participant competed in a golf putting task against a study confederate for a small prize. Players took turns putting, and after each shot, the non-putting player would measure the distance of the ball from the hole. In the experimental condition, the confederate “accidentally” knocked the participant’s ball away from the hole while measuring, and the experimenter told the participant to “re-do” the shot (i.e., an unfair interference). After controlling for golf experience, results showed that participants’ shots after the unfair interference were significantly closer to the hole compared to uninterrupted shots. Studies 1–3 showed that performance on a relatively simple, rehearsed task improved after an unfair interruption, possibly because anger and arousal increased, thus increasing focus. Study 4 included anger and frustration as mediators and also examined a difficult cognitive task instead of an easy task. Undergraduates participated in a cognitively taxing computer task. The control group completed the task uninterrupted. In the intervention group the computer froze partway through...