

CHAPTER

10

Increasing Awareness for Sport Performance

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In a heated volleyball match between conference rivals, the defensive specialist becomes increasingly worried about the outcome of the game. She shanks a ball and a few points later serves the ball five feet out of bounds. As her game spirals out of control, her coach yells, “Relax!” but she cannot figure out how to begin to relax in such a high-stakes moment with the game on the line. This athlete is experiencing classic symptoms of choking (Baumeister, 1984) and unfortunately lacks the awareness of how to bring herself back to the present moment.

The underlying basis of psychological interventions for performance enhancement involves teaching athletes the importance of being aware when they are not in control. To build awareness, athletes should first identify their own ideal performance state (see Chapter 9) so they can contrast that state with the present one. Thus, **awareness** is the first step to gaining control of any pressure situation. The athlete must “check in” and determine if his or her arousal level, emotional state, thought processes, and focus are where they need to be and, if not, adjust them to give the best opportunity for success. For example, the athlete must be aware of an arousal level that is too low or too high and adjust

it as needed to reach the optimal level of arousal for performance. Then the athlete must attend to the appropriate task-relevant performance cues that will fine-tune or lock in his or her concentration. For example, a softball player will get only two or three great pitches to hit in a game. The player must be fully focused on each pitch so that when the right pitch comes, she is in her ideal performance state and ready to make solid contact. If the athlete is not focused on each pitch, she may be focused on irrelevant cues, focused thoughts outside of her control, or become anxious if her thoughts are too internal, as supported by Moran’s (2009) concentration principles.

Lack of awareness in athletes is almost always the result of excessive concern with achieving the end result. For example, a baseball player in a pressure situation may focus on the end result of getting a hit. Awareness and control are part of the process of skill execution—specifically, execution in the present moment. Anxiety lies in the end result. Thus, the field-goal kicker in football must focus on the key components of kicking, such as wind, ground conditions, the opponents’ alignment, getting proper distance, and his target. At this point the athlete is totally focused on

the key components of the task at hand and is ready to react spontaneously to the situation with controlled intensity. This type of appropriate focus of attention is essential to maximize performance.

The athlete's challenge is to focus on basic skills even when his or her physiology may increase significantly. The situation can seem to speed up or become out of control because of the perceived threat. The athlete does not need to make a major change; instead, he or she should become aware of his or her own ideal performance state and *routine behaviors* they are already using to achieve this state. Athletes often perform many of the techniques we talk about in sport psychology instinctively. Awareness of these instinctive routines provides athletes with something to focus on to regain control and empowers them to take responsibility for their physical and mental games. Sport psychology consultants have contributed to enhancing performance by providing a structure or consistent framework for the various mental skills athletes often have developed and practiced haphazardly.

The purpose of this chapter is to discuss the importance of awareness in reaching peak performance in sport. A model of performance resilience, The Rs, will be discussed to give athletes a process and vocabulary to assess their performance in the moment and to have a plan to adjust if needed. Awareness, an essential step in self-regulation, will be discussed in relation to skill development and the management of performance stress and other psychological factors. The final section will discuss specific methods athletes can use to develop heightened awareness.

The Importance of Awareness in Athletics

Peak performance is about compensating and adjusting. While the flow state often is desired, athletes are *in the zone* only 10 to 20 percent of the time. So why are athletes so concerned with feeling just right and surprised when they are not? Lou Pinella, a veteran professional baseball manager, claimed, "A player must

learn to feel comfortable being uncomfortable." Since that is the case, we tell athletes, "So what, deal with it!" Though to enhance their ability to feel comfortable being uncomfortable, it is important they practice dealing with adversity and recognize that they have "something to go to" (i.e., mental skills) to get them refocused. As athletes work on this ability to deal with adversity in practice, it only increases their confidence to know they do not have to feel great to perform well.

A helpful structure for athletes to develop is a seven-step process, developed by Ken Ravizza and colleagues, called *The Rs* (Ravizza & Hanson, 1994; Ravizza & Osborne, 1991; Statler & Tilman, 2010; Tilman, Ravizza, & Statler, 2011):

- Responsibility
- Recognize
- Release
- Regroup
- Refocus
- Ready
- Respond

This structure clarifies for athletes that there is a relationship between the various thoughts and behaviors they use to maximize performance and their performance outcome, particularly during times of adversity. When they begin to understand that they have control over their own reactions, attitudes, and behaviors no matter what the situation presents, they begin to take responsibility for their performance, which is the first step in truly becoming aware. Figure 10-1 is a visual of the Rs cycle and will be referred to throughout the chapter.

The Rs provide a framework for athletes and coaches to establish control and take responsibility for performance. Using the Rs as a framework (see Figure 10-1), athletes can work through any situation by choosing to focus on the right aspects of their performance. At the center of the figure is **Responsibility**, where athletes start by taking accountability for their actions. Responsibility

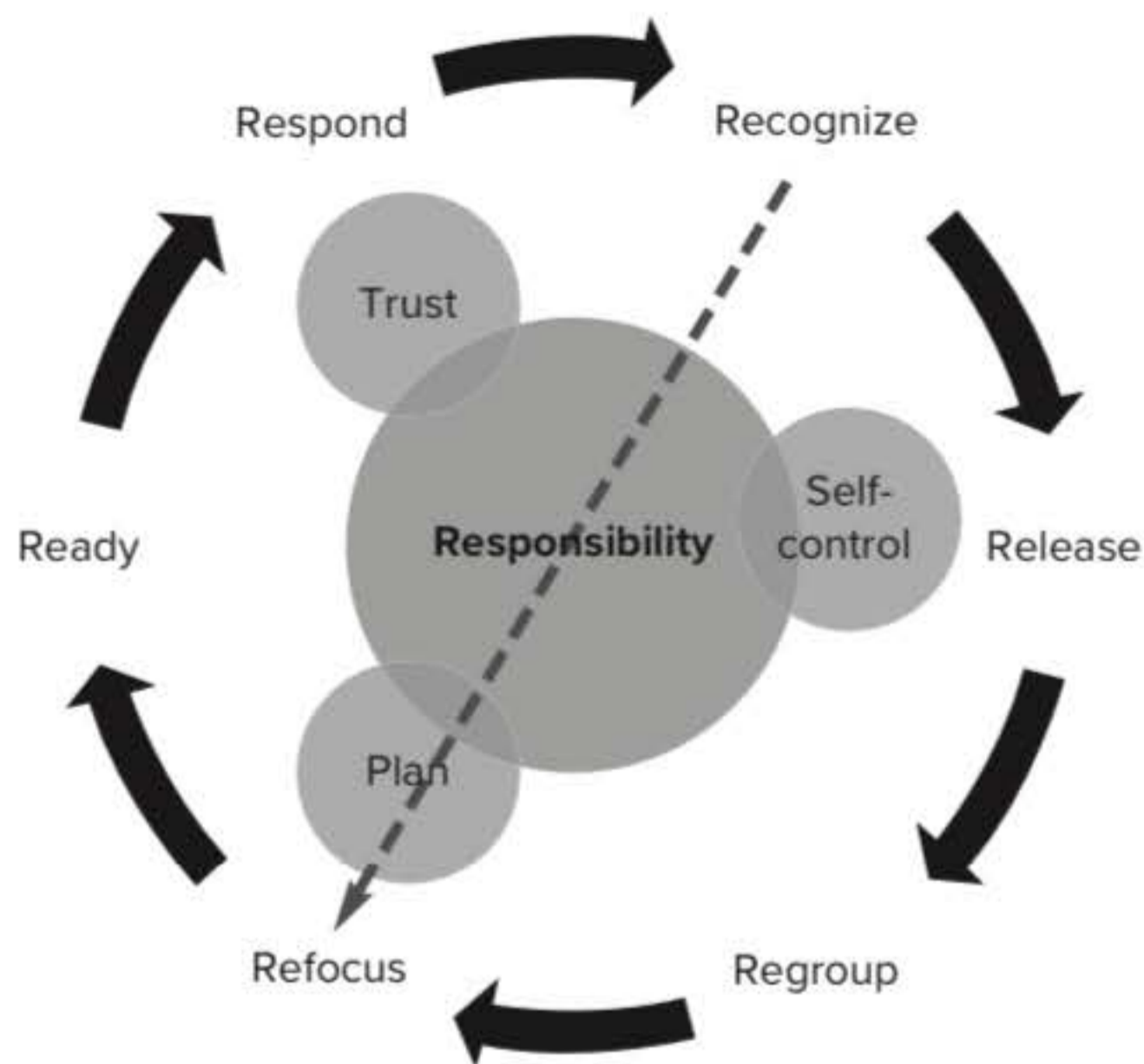


Figure 10-1 The R's

is central to the process because the athlete must understand that distractions and mistakes are inevitable, but by being proactive and controlling oneself, performance control can also be achieved. Self-control encompasses the next three Rs, where it is up to the athlete to get their body and mind back under control. It begins with **Recognize** the internal and external factors that affect performance (e.g., the stressors and distractions); **Release** anything disrupting optimal performance using a purposeful physical or mental mechanism to “let it go”; and then **Regroup** by adjusting composure and regaining a centered balance.

Once an athlete is in the present moment, he or she can check back in on their plan by **Refocusing** and possibly adjusting the plan to the situation. The refocus should be positive, process-oriented, and couched in the present moment (3 Ps), thus giving the athlete task-relevant cues on which to focus. Being **Ready** is a commitment during which the athlete takes a centered breath and focuses on the plan. Athletes may need a physical signal from themselves to know they are all set, for example, stepping into a ready position.

Finally, athletes can trust their training, the plan, and themselves and just **Respond**. Hopefully,

athletes are now focused, present, and feeling back under control after working through the steps of the Rs. If everything comes together, athletes might find themselves in a flow-like state (with their A game), but more often athletes are battling with less than their best (B or C game) (Ravizza & Hanson, 2016). The key is that athletes trust what they have that day, rather than trying extra hard to make things perfect. The Rs are a tool by which athletes take control of the situation and let go of the things outside of their control. The Rs can be a continuous cycle the athlete moves through or a single step he or she checks into if they are feeling good. For example, a distance runner may get passed by a competitor, but recognizes it is not in her plan to chase down the competitor and settles back into trusting her own race plan.

Athletes must recognize their strengths and weaknesses so they can maximize their strengths and improve on their weaknesses. A good way for a player to develop more awareness in this area is to have players write a scouting report on themselves. What is the opponent saying about them? Also, have them write about what they would like the opponent to say about them. Julie Wilhout, Loyola Marymount's women's basketball coach, uses this technique to help the players increase their awareness of where they need to direct their attention. Another practical way to remind players to have a mission for practice is to have them establish a routine. For example, when you put on your shoes, set an offensive goal as you lace up your right cleat and a defensive goal as you lace up the left one, and when you take your shoes off, evaluate how you did. The reality is that each day we either take a step toward our goal, remain the same, or take a step back. Always remember, failure can be a step forward if you learn from it.

Awareness as It Relates to Skill Development

Athletes must learn the difference between merely performing skills and experiencing skills. The difference between just going through the motions

and really experiencing the skills hinges on the awareness involved. Feldenkrais (1972), a movement specialist, offers the following analogy:

A man without awareness is like a carriage whose passengers are the desires, with the muscles for horses, while the carriage itself is the skeleton. Awareness is the sleeping coachman. As long as the coachman remains asleep the carriage will be dragged aimlessly here and there. Each passenger seeks a different destination and the horses pull different ways. But when the coachman is wide awake and holds the reins the horses will pull and bring every passenger to his proper destination. (p. 54)

Like the coachman, athletes must gain control of muscles, emotions, and thoughts and integrate them into a smooth performance. When athletes are aware and focused on the sport experience, they exert more control over the situation. They recognize when their balance is off, when too much tension is present in certain muscle groups, or when thoughts have become self-defeating. Aware athletes are more attuned to subtle fluctuations in the flow of the contest and can adjust that much sooner. Aware athletes can conserve vital energy by exerting no more than the needed intensity.

Learning the Basics

Awareness requires that athletes totally focus their attention on the task. This ability must be developed in practice. Coaches want their athletes to be intense and totally involved in practice because focus aids in creating quality practice time. Many coaches also realize the importance of mental training for performance, but the challenge is to find time for it. For this reason, it is important to incorporate awareness training with the physical skills that are already being performed in practice. For example, coaches and sport psychology consultants should encourage athletes to develop concentration as they stretch before practice by feeling the stretch and breathing into it.

With a collegiate field hockey team, we did a simple passing drill to focus on awareness. Players

had to track right, pass through a gate 10 or 20 yards away where their teammate had to receive the ball smoothly, then track right, and pass it back through the gate. They had to complete 20 passes in a row. If a player missed one gate or did not receive a pass correctly, they had to start over. From a mental standpoint, the drill exposed the team's ability to focus and refocus while under pressure. These are basic field hockey skills, but there is a difference when they are done with awareness. If the player's attention is on other aspects of the day, such as a party coming up or an argument with a friend, consistency in the focused passing drill will be impossible. This type of drill has two major advantages for the coach. First, visible objective performance demonstrates whether or not the athlete is concentrating. More important, awareness training is incorporated into the practice of basic skills. This sophisticated approach to basic skills allows coaches to make the most of practice time by integrating mental or awareness skills training with basic physical fundamentals.

During one practice, the Cal State Fullerton baseball team engaged in a focused bat and catch drill for 90 minutes because they had not been hitting exact locations consistently. This emphasis on basics was crucial because the players realized the coach was serious about executing the basics. The difference between performing the basics and focusing on the basics lies in the players' awareness. Athletes must learn to concentrate when the pressure is on, and the focal points for concentration become the task-relevant cues. Augie Garrido, former Cal State Fullerton baseball coach, gave the following example:

We are really working on having the players clear their minds. Yesterday one player was given a bunt signal and he proceeded to pop out. His next time at the plate he was in a bunting situation and tried to bunt but missed. So I called him over and said, "You've tried two times and failed, and you are about to fail again because you still have the other two times on your mind. Give yourself the best chance to be successful by seeing the ball and

bunting the ball. You can do that. Stay right with the ingredients of bunting. You've done it a hundred times, but you have to get the other times off your mind." The player proceeded to lay down a perfect bunt. (1982)

When athletes practice physical skills and mental skills together, their confidence increases because they are ready and experienced in the subtle skill of concentration.

Awareness can also be useful in understanding progress and making technical adjustments. For example, a baseball pitcher is given the feedback that he needs to raise his arm on a fastball release. Using a pre-established gradation system of execution, the player understands the number 5 is given for the ideal release distance, and a 1 is given for a side arm release. After each pitch the player is asked to assign a numerical value from 1 to 5 to the arm location. It is essential that the athlete reflects the position of his arm, and the coach can help him increase his awareness to do so.

Playing the Edge of Peak Performance

To reach their full sport potential, athletes in every sport must learn to play the performance edge. For example, they must learn to control that delicate balance between power and grace. This type of control necessitates that athletes be aware. They must monitor their performance to recognize when it is at its peak. In athletic training, athletes frequently push too hard or do not push hard enough. At such times the athletes need to relate to their movement experience with the precision of a surgeon so that they can make needed adjustments. For example, runners constantly monitor their body for subtle messages so that they can make adjustments to reach that edge of peak performance.

One awareness technique we use with runners is the blindfold run. A blindfolded runner and a partner run a specified distance together, with the partner providing physical support and removing any dangers. The blindfold alters the runner's perspective, as the runner is now totally focused on the

present moment. The new perspective suspends the athlete's usual thoughts and distractions, and about five minutes into the run, the athlete experiences running in a more aware fashion.

Coaches and sport psychology consultants are encouraged to discuss with their athletes this idea of playing the edge so that each athlete can begin to understand and identify where that edge is for him or her. Figure 10-2 and the chapter appendix suggest ways of keeping records of the mental aspects of performance.

It is also important to recognize incremental improvements. As athletes gain more awareness, they make more accurate adjustments in their performance. This ability to refine the subtle intricacies of performance is a critical skill as athletes strive for maximum performance. With enhanced awareness, athletes improve self-control and experience a feeling of growing success. Even if the outcome is not perfect, players develop a more positive attitude about the skill and will keep their motivation level where it needs to be. Within the Rs model, a player would move directly from recognize to refocus, where they check in, get ready, and just play.

Awareness in Managing Performance Stress

To move consistently toward peak performance, each athlete must know and be aware of his or her own experience of optimal performance. Athletes must learn to control the excitement of the sport situation so their energy can be channeled into the performance, or to reorganize when the arousal level is too low and activate it as needed. To gain this control, athletes must learn how competitive stress affects individual performance (see Chapter 12). The first step goes back to the Rs and **recognizing** one's arousal level and then to either **release** if something is not going well or **refocus** if everything is on track. The athlete must recognize which situations or stressors tend to negatively affect his or her performance. Knowledge of stressful areas allows for the development of a strategy to prepare and cope effectively with them. For example, playing in front

PERFORMANCE FEEDBACK SHEET

Name _____

Opponent _____

1. What were your stressors for today's game?
2. How did you experience the stress (thoughts, actions, body)?
3. How was your level of arousal for today's game? What were your feelings at these various points?
 - a. Bus ride to game: _____
 - b. Warm-up on field, court, etc.: _____
 - c. Just before the game: _____
 - d. During the game: _____
4. What techniques did you use to manage the stress and how effective were you in controlling it?
5. How was your self-talk? (Describe.)
6. What did you learn from today's game that will help you in your next game?
7. What mental training techniques were most effective for you?
8. Briefly describe one play or segment of the game that you enjoyed.
9. How would you rate your play? _____
10. Briefly describe how you felt about today's game.

0	5	10
Terrible	OK	Great
11. Anything you want to say?

Figure 10-2 Sample performance feedback sheet

of a crowd or in the presence of scouts is stressful; thus, the athlete can mentally prepare to deal with the situation to avoid surprise. The athlete has time to get support from teammates and the coaching staff and to develop his or her own strategy, such as making a fist and releasing it, throwing some grass down, or wiping his hand down his leg.

Once the athlete understands the stressors, the next step is to be aware of the way that stress is experienced since the manifestations of stress vary greatly among individuals. For example, "As the pressure mounts, my shoulders and neck tighten, my thoughts jump around, and I tend to get jittery." Changes in breathing are another bodily cue that often signals too much stress. Athletes should be sensitive to how their breathing responds to stress. For example, do they start to breathe more rapidly and shallowly? Do they hold their breath? Do they have difficulty breathing? These manifestations of stress may be perceived as problems, but they can be used as signals to provide feedback to the athlete as to whether the arousal level is appropriate. The athlete gains this personal knowledge by reflecting on previous performances and essentially using sport experiences like a biofeedback machine. Release the physical tension by taking a deep breath, tensing and releasing various muscles, or shrugging one's shoulders.

To help athletes understand the concept of self-monitoring as a way to increase awareness, the coach or sport psychology consultant can use the analogy of a traffic signal light (Ravizza & Hanson, 1994; Tilman et al., 2011). Sport performance is similar to driving a car. Most of the time that we are driving, we are not thinking about the mechanics or technical aspects of driving. When we come to a signal light, we must be aware of the light or check in; if it is green, we continue. Similarly, when athletes are playing well, there is no need to think about it, but they must check in for that split second. When we are driving and the light is yellow, we have to observe the intersection in more detail to determine whether it is safe to continue, as well as check our

rearview mirror for a police officer. When the light is red, we must stop.

Using this analogy, the athlete must be aware of his or her signal lights and recognize the situations that shift activation level, self-talk, breathing patterns, and ability to focus. Thus, if the athlete can be aware of when he or she is shifting from a green light to a yellow light and it is recognized early, it can be turned around more easily. When the signal light is not recognized until it is red, it is much more difficult to get it turned around. The signal light analogy can be an incredibly useful tool to

- Indicate the way an athlete experiences the situation
- Monitor potential stressors
- Aid in the development of a contingency plan to cope effectively with stressors
- Build confidence in the ability to handle adverse situations
- Provide a vocabulary for coaches, athletes, and sport psychology consultants to discuss situational awareness
- Allow athletes to "check in" during practice and performances and make necessary adjustments

Figure 10-3 is an illustration of the signal light that includes examples for a softball player to help her recognize what her green, yellow, and red lights are. Working through the softball player example, when she lets it happen and just thinks, "see ball, hit ball," she is in the green light. After a strikeout, however, she may be headed to a yellow light. If she carries her mistake into the field for defense and yells at a teammate for missing a tough fly ball, she is rapidly approaching a red light.

The athlete's consistent focus on his or her thoughts, feelings, and use of appropriate interventions allows him or her to maintain an optimal performance state despite distractions and adversity. Interventions may include relaxation and activation techniques, concentration methods, thought control,

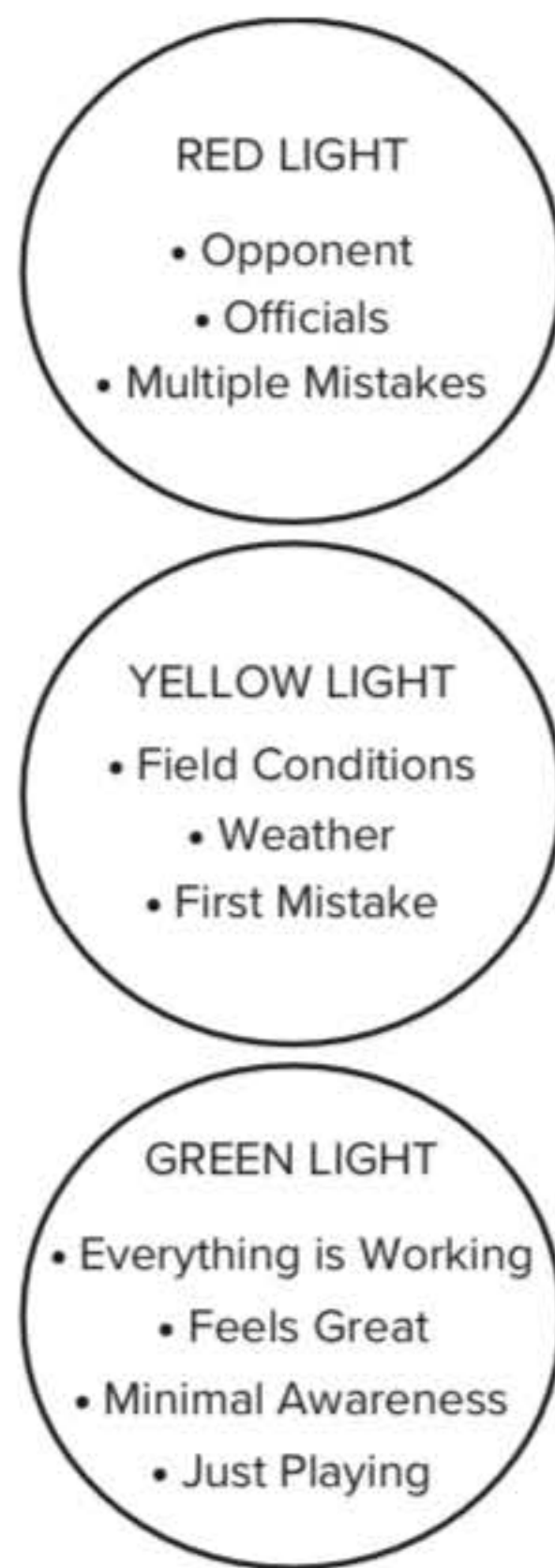


Figure 10-3 Signal light activity

and use of imagery (see Chapters 12 to 15 for specific techniques). There are also situations when the athlete must recognize that it is time just to flow with the experience and let it happen (Ravizza, 1984; Ravizza & Osborne, 1991).

Techniques for Developing Awareness

Many techniques are available to increase awareness. Athletes can utilize The Rs as a process to both develop awareness and improve their performance. For example, a basketball player can work through The Rs after missing his first free-throw shot by taking responsibility for being distracted by the hard foul. The athlete should recognize he is upset with missing the shot, release it by bouncing the ball, and then regroup by taking a centered breath. He refocuses on his plan (elbow up and follow through),

steps into his stance, and trusts his shot. Swish—he hits the next shot.

Mindfulness is another tool for athletes to develop both for practice and competition. Mindfulness is about purposely bringing your attention to the present moment in a nonjudgmental way (Kabat-Zinn, 2003). Through mindfulness practice, one can recenter their focus and balance their emotions (Baltzell, 2016), find a quiet stillness and attentiveness (Grossman & Van Dam, 2011), and develop a greater sense of personal presence (Zizzi, 2017). Mindfulness helps athletes be more aware of where they need to be in order to perform their best. A fencer needs to use their breath to remain calm and focused during a match. (See Chapter 16 for an in-depth discussion of mindfulness.)

Another valuable technique is keeping a sport journal. The sport journal provides a structured method to reflect on sport performances and to capitalize on the wealth of experiential knowledge gained from the performance. The journal guidelines in the appendix ask questions about stressors; manifestations of stress; and feelings associated with performance, concentration, and skill execution. After teams play a game, they can discuss what the members have learned so that, with the coach, they can establish new goals or modify earlier ones. Similarly, feedback sheets, as discussed earlier (see Figure 10-2), allow athletes to process the subjective information gained and bring closure to the last performance so they can begin to focus on the next performance. Shifting focus to the next performance is particularly helpful in tournament play when the athletes have to perform many times during a short period, because it is critical to bringing closure, or letting go of one performance before beginning another.

With the athlete's permission, coaches and sport psychology consultants can read these journals and feedback sheets, using the information as a foundation for better understanding the athlete and what behavior or intervention might best facilitate performance and personal growth. Athletes often

perceive writing feelings in a journal or on a feedback sheet as less threatening than verbal discussions. Such writing often forges an understanding that promotes discussion.

Some coaches and sport psychology consultants have helped athletes glean information regarding ideal psychological states for peak performance by having them fill out psychological questionnaires just before beginning a performance. Ideally, this should be done prior to a number of competitions, enabling a comparison between performance and scores on the questionnaires. The intention is to find what psychological state(s) typically occurred when athletes performed at their best. The Competitive State Anxiety Inventory-2 (CSAI-2; Martens, Vealey, & Burton, 1990) is one example of an appropriate questionnaire for this purpose. The CSAI-2 assesses the athlete's current cognitive anxiety, somatic anxiety, and self-confidence. We know from the research discussed in Chapter 12 that each of these psychological states may be relevant to performance. See some of the questionnaires discussed in other chapters for additional examples of potentially appropriate instruments. It should be noted that not all sport psychology consultants find these questionnaires useful. It is critical that the consultant discuss the results with the athletes to determine whether the information obtained is accurate for that athlete.

Imagery is another skill athletes can use to gain awareness of their ideal performance state. This technique is particularly effective to develop through practice if the athletes are in the off-season, out with an injury, or not getting much playing time during competition. Imagery can be used to relive previous excellent performance, with particular attention given to identifying what feelings, arousal level, thoughts, muscle tension, attentional focus, and so forth might have occurred. There is also merit in imaging previous bad performances and experiencing shifting to a successful performance in order to contrast their psychological state with what appears to be a more optimal state. Monitoring relevant physiological systems,

such as heart rate, is another tool for gaining awareness regarding ideal performance states. Monitoring should be done before a number of critical competitions and then compared with subsequent performance to determine an athlete's optimal level of arousal.

Group discussion is another method that coaches and sport psychology consultants can use to increase athlete awareness. Coaches should provide their athletes with an opportunity to discuss a performance by encouraging but not requiring them to do so. Sport psychology consultants should do the same thing after practicing mental training techniques. Coaches and sport psychology consultants also can foster this form of communication through one-on-one discussions. Coaches and sport psychology practitioners should share their perspective or expertise but also encourage the athletes to talk about the experience by asking questions about arousal and confidence levels, stressors, and manifestations. Every team is capable of this type of team-building interaction, but such dialogue is frequently difficult to facilitate at first. As the athletes become much more aware of the needs of their teammates, team cohesion and a mental game vocabulary will be more likely to result. In turn, athletes gain new insights into their own sport performances. For example, if teammates understand that one athlete responds to stress by withdrawing to mentally prepare for performance, they will not think there is something wrong with the athlete who is quiet.

A good time to begin group discussions is after a positive experience because the feelings are non-threatening. For example, after a great practice, the coach can ask the athletes to discuss what made the practice so good. How was it different from a non-productive practice session?

Regarding specific methods of increasing awareness, it is important that practitioners do what they are comfortable with. However, it is strongly suggested that coaches and sport psychology consultants slowly integrate the various methods discussed in this chapter.

Summary

Developing awareness is a critical element of peak performance because it provides athletes with the experiential knowledge to gain control of the performance. Awareness is the first step in raising self-control in sport participation. Initially, athletes need to become aware of their ideal performance state. Next, athletes need to recognize when they are no longer at that ideal state. As athletes develop awareness skills, they will recognize earlier when they are not focused or aroused appropriately. This early recognition aids athletes in gaining control and refocusing on the present task. Athletes with a range of interventions can use them to get their mental-emotional and physical states to approximate what they have found leads to peak performance. The Rs process, mindfulness, journal keeping, performance feedback sheets, assessing precompetitive performance states through psychological questionnaires and physiological monitoring, using imagery to relive past performances, and group discussions are all effective techniques for developing awareness. Depending on the athlete's preferences and the circumstances, certain techniques may be more effective than others at any given moment.

Study Questions

1. Why is it important that athletes be aware of their ideal performance state?
2. What is the difference between merely performing skills and experiencing skills?
3. Why is it important to incorporate awareness training with the physical skills that are already being performed in practice?
4. Give an example of focused practice.
5. What is meant by playing on the edge? What techniques can help an athlete become aware of this skill?
6. What is mindfulness, and how can mindfulness be integrated into your practice and competition?
7. How can a sport journal and performance feedback sheets be used to increase awareness? Describe what might be included in a journal and feedback sheets.
8. How can psychological questionnaires and physiological monitoring be used to increase awareness of ideal performance states?
9. When might imagery and group discussion be used to increase awareness?
10. What are The Rs? How does awareness fit into the model?

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Guidelines for Keeping a Sport Journal

The sport journal is a tool to help you further develop your mental skills for sport performance. The first step in gaining self-control is to develop an awareness of your sport performance so that you can recognize when you are pulled out of the most appropriate mental state for you. The journal provides you with an opportunity to record the different intervention strategies that you experiment with to regain control. The long-range goal is to develop various techniques that you can implement in stressful situations to perform to your potential.

The journal also can be a place to record your feelings and the personal knowledge that you are gaining about yourself, how you handle adversity, the game, and how you work with others.

The journal also can serve as a place where you can be creative and express yourself through writing, drawing, or technology. A physical journal may provide a needed change from technology, or you may find it easier to create your journal within your laptop, tablet, or phone. You do not have to make an entry every day, but date the entries you do make, as the journal is an informal record of your thoughts and experiences as you train for high-level performance. There is a lot to learn from your pursuit of excellence—this journal will give you something to reflect on after your journey is completed.

If you choose to have someone read your journal, please feel free to delete any parts that you think are too personal to share. The intention of someone who is reviewing your writing should be to guide you and make *suggestions* that may facilitate your self-exploration in reaching your goals.

If you are wondering where to start, give the following prompts and descriptions some thought:

1. *Peak Performance.* What does it feel like when you play or practice at your best? Describe some of your most enjoyable experiences playing your sport. What have you learned from these moments when you are fully functioning?
2. *Stressors.* Outside the sport: write down your thoughts about various events outside your sport that are distracting to you—for example, parents, boyfriends/girlfriends, peers, job hassles, financial issues, community (hometown expectations). Within your sport: do the same for distractions on the field, such as importance of contest, location, and spectators.
3. *Coaching Staff.* What do you need from your coaches? What can you give them in order to reach your goals? What can you do to make your relationship with your coaches more productive?
4. *Teammates.* What do you want from your teammates? What can you give them? How do you relate to and work with your teammates? Write about your relationship with other teammates. Any unfinished business?
5. *Confidence.* Currently how confident are you with regard to achieving your goals? What can you do differently to feel more confident? What can you ask of yourself, your coach, or your teammates?

6. *Manifestations of Your Stress.* How do you experience stress leading up to and during performance? Assess your thoughts and physiological and behavioral reactions. What did you do to intervene and keep in balance?
7. *Awareness and Concentration.* What changes do you observe in your performance when you are aware? What concentration methods are you experimenting with? What are your focal points for various skills?
8. *Relaxation Training.* How are your relaxation skills developing? Are there any parts of your body that are more difficult than others to relax? What method is best for you? How are you able to relate this to your play? How quickly can you relax?
9. *Thought Control.* How is your self-talk affecting your performance? Write out some of your negative self-talk and make it positive.
10. *Centering/Concentration Skills.* What are you doing to concentrate appropriately before the contest and during the contest? What has been successful? Unsuccessful? Describe your preperformance routine.
11. *Imagery.* How would you rate your imagery skills? Do you see a TV screen-type image, or is it more of a feeling image? How clear are your images? Can you control the speed and tempo of your images?
12. *Controlling Your Activation Level.* What are you doing to control your activation level? What are you doing to increase activation and intensity? What are you experimenting with to reduce activation levels? What is working for you and what is not working?
13. *Pressure Situations.* How are you handling pressure situations? What are you doing differently? What are you doing to learn to cope more effectively?
14. *Quality Practice Time.* What do you do to mentally prepare for practice? How do you keep your personal difficulties from affecting your play? What are you doing to take charge? What works for you and what hasn't worked?
15. *Anything Else You Want to Address.*