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The Communicative and Psychological Causal Dynamics Leading to Athletic Sub-Performance Relative to Previously Successful Athletes

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Chapter 1

INTRODUCTION

As more dollars are pumped into the sports industry, there is an increased interest in learning how to optimize athletic performance using psychological tactics. Many studies have been conducted to examine what types of methods successful athletes employ, as well as constructing experiments to examine athletes under different motivational circumstances. Many studies indicate that there is a direct correlation between goal setting and achievement, but the specificity to which goal setting tactics work best are now being examined. Studies indicate that flexible goal setting is superior to rigid goal setting in that flexible goal setting "makes it easier for performers to maintain motivation in the face of setbacks and plateaus in performance" (Getz and Rainey, 2001, p. 36).

Along these same lines, studies have also looked into the use of multiple motivational factors in goal setting, primarily in setting mastery and competitive goals simultaneously. After some research, many researchers believe mastery goals are more effective than competitive goals. "Researchers in the sport achievement area have continually demonstrated that a focus on mastery goals promoted the most effective motivational patterns conducive to long-term achievement" (Steinberg, Singer & Murphey, 2000, p. 408). Therefore the recommendation among the scholarly community has been to promote mastery

goal setting over competitive goal setting (Steinberg, Singer, & Murphey, 2000). Conversely, a study conducted by Steinberg, Singer, & Murphey (2000) suggests that setting multiple goals, specifically mastery and competitive goals, simultaneously increase performance achievement.

Other motivational tactics being examined are the impact of repeating motivational phrases as well as having athletes focus on "actions that are consistent with optimum performance" (Donohue, Barnhart, Covassin, Carpin, & Korb, 2001, p. 19). This article suggests that athletes perform better after mental preparations involving "optimal arousal and extreme confidence" (Donohue, Barnhart, Covassin, Carpin, & Korb, 2001, p. 19). Further, Jackson and Roberts (1992), as cited in (Donohue, Barnhart, Covassin, Carpin, & Korb, 2001, p. 19) emphasize that the athletes' "focus should be directed towards tasks involved in performance as the time of competition draws near."

Goals

Research has shown that "goal setting can significantly enhance performance in industrial and organizational settings" (Getz and Rainey, 2001, p. 31). Research has also proven that "goal setting can improve performance for exercise and sport tasks, and that different types of goals affect performance differently" (Getz and Rainey, 2001, p. 31). Locke, Shaw, Saari, & Latham (1981), as cited in (Getz and Rainey, 2001, p. 32), add that specific, difficult goals do improve performance in contrast to general, easy goals. Furthermore, "It is possible that a series of flexible short-term goals, goals that are reset after

each trial or event, might be more effective because performers would not feel that they were falling irretrievably behind when they failed to reach a subgoal" (Getz and Rainey, 2001, p. 32).

Kirschenbaum, Humphrey, & Mallet (1981); Manderlink & Harackiewicz (1984) as cited in (Getz and Rainey, 2001, p. 36) have said that short-term goals that are too tough may lead performers to give up on the goal. "It may be that the more forgiving flexible short-term goal strategy is superior to the rigid short term strategy because it makes it easier for performers to maintain motivation (Getz and Rainey, 2001, p. 36). (Getz and Rainey, 2001, p. 36) add that coaches and athletes who incorporate goal setting to help in improving motor performance "should adjust performance goals on a trial by trial basis."

Mental Preparation

"Implementing mental preparation techniques immediately before sporting activities ("psyching-up") has long been espoused by coaches to get athletes emotionally ready for their upcoming events" (Weinberg, Jackson, & Seaboune, 1985) as cited in (Donohue, Barnhart, Covassin, Carpin, & Korb, 2001, p. 19). This can be seen in a study by Could, Eklund, & Jackson (1992). "Olympic wrestlers have reported that their best performances have occurred subsequent to mental preparation plans involving clear tactical strategies, focusing on the upcoming match, optimum arousal, and extreme confidence" (Could, Eklund, & Jackson, 1992) as cited in (Donohue, Barnhart, Covassin, Carpin, & Korb, 2001, p.19). Also, seen in a study by Cohn (1991) cited in (Donohue, Barnhart,

Covassin, Carpin, & Korb, 2001, p. 19) "golfers have reported a high degree of self-confidence during their peak performance." Jackson and Roberts (1992) as cited in (Donohue, Barnhart, Covassin, Carpin, & Korb, 2001, p. 19) think that "confidence building strategies should be implemented with athletes at the time of competition."

"Studies have indicated that mental preparation procedures have demonstrated efficacy in athletic performance" (Donohue, Barnhart, Covassin, Carpin, & Korb, 2001, p. 20). Ming and Martin (1996) as cited in (Donohue, Barnhart, Covassin, Carpin, & Korb, 2001, p. 20) suggest "public (out-loud) self-talk may be more efficacious than private self-talk in influencing overt behavior." "Unfortunately, athletes may be reluctant to employ mental preparation statements out-loud due to negative perceptions of what others might think, and it is sometimes difficult, or inappropriate, to use public self-statements in many sport situations" (Donohue, Barnhart, Covassin, Carpin, & Korb, 2001, p. 20-21). Also, (Donohue et al., 2001, p. 21) states that "private self-statements are also associated with disadvantages, as effective use of these self-statements require training and concentration, and their use is difficult to monitor."

Training and concentration are emphasized thoroughly in track and field and can be seen by the results of Donohue et al., (2001). "Three mental preparatory methods were systemically developed to enhance cross country performance in competitive runners. Results of the initial investigation of these interventions suggest motivational statements, and instructions to focus on performing actions that are perceived to be most associated with optimum

performance" (Donohue et al., 2001, p. 24). "These results have strong implications in the adoption of mental preparation strategies in applied settings, as cross country runners (and potentially other athletes) may be capable of choosing their most effective mental preparation strategy after they have had a chance to sample the interventions in the context of the sporting event" (Donohue et al., 2001, p.25).

This study will focus on athletes, the positive and negative mental behavior that they employ, and its effect on their performance. In researching this topic there have been many examples of athletes who have risen to athletic success or succumbed to athletic failure. This study will differentiate between achievement and failure and the influential factors that are attributed to both. This study will concentrate on goal setting, motivational tactics and most importantly mental training.

Research Question

What are the communicative and psychological causal dynamics leading to athletic sub-performance relative to previously successful athletes?

Subsidiary Questions

In addition to analyzing athletic sub-performance relative to previously successful athletes, this study will also look at the following questions:

1.) Do sport psychologists help the psyche of an athlete?

2.) Can Zen have a powerful impact on sports?

3.) Can athletes obtain better results by setting goals?

4.) How do athletes develop the mindset to avoid mental collapses?

5.) Is there a correlation between positive thinking and success in sports?

6.) Why do certain professional athletes deal with adversity differently than others?

7.) What steps are taken by athletes to overcome mental hurdles?

Purpose of the Study

In participating in and observing collegiate baseball at Seton Hall University, one encounters and witnesses players reach certain levels of success more often than others even though many players share strikingly similar physical tools. The same thing can be said about professional athletes. The question that remains is, if so many athletes are similar physically, what sets them apart mentally?

For instance, Larry Bird, chosen as one of the greatest fifty basketball players of all time, used to be questioned on his physical ability. He struggled with his foot speed and runs flat-footed. He has an adequate build for a power forward in the NBA but the NBA is full with so many faster, more athletic forwards

who have greater physical tools than Bird. Why, then, has he been considered "the best" in comparison to these stronger counterparts (Dorfman & Kuehl, 1989, p.125)?

"Practice and hard work," said former Celtics coach K.C. Jones. "I have been around basketball for a long time...but I have yet to find anyone who has Larry's determination...He is a student of the game and a perfectionist." Bird also attributes his success to mental training. Bird credits his mental training as a powerful tool in registering opponents' moves, which helps when defending them. Overall, Bird's passion to continually get better is directed towards his mental tenacity and is the determining factor between his mind-set and his competition (Dorfman & Kuehl, 1989, p. 125).

Larry Bird is an example of an athlete who knows his limits but who is very efficient in his preparation. This efficiency in his mental makeup will make up for whatever his natural physical abilities lack. Dorfman & Kuehl (1989, p. 127) add, "what our genes do for us is one matter. What are actions do for us is another. Once again, any athlete has the choice to be exceptional-or ordinary-in his actions."

Objectives

The intention of this study will be to understand the impact, positively or negatively, that the mental game has on sports. The author will concentrate on two objectives. The first objective will be determining what makes previously

successful athletes fail and how it is psychologically related. The second objective will be to examine the mindset of successful athletes and illustrate the mastery that is needed to obtain mental stability.

Definition of Terms

1.) Imagery: mental images; the products of imagination

2.) Zen: a Japanese sect of Mahayana Buddhism that aims at enlightenment by direct intuition through meditation

3.) Short-Term Goal: a goal occurring over or involving a relatively short period of time

4.) Long-Term Goal: a goal occurring or involving a relatively long period of time

5.) Visualization: formation of mental visual images; the act or process of interpreting in visual terms of putting into visible form

6.) Trial and Error: a finding out of the best way to reach a desired result or a correct solution by trying out one or more ways or means and by noting and eliminating errors or causes of failure

7.) Mind-set: a mental inclination, tendency or habit; a fixed state of mind

8.) Imagery: a process by which sensory experiences are stored in memory and internally recalled and performed in the absence of external stimuli

Limitations

A factor that restitutes limitations to this study is the lack of information of athletes rendering to mental weaknesses. Some athletes are too egotistical to think that they have problems with the mental aspect of sports and blame their failures on physical problems. Athletes who lack confidence are affected negatively mentally and make excuses to why they are not performing up to their level. "The greatest obstacle on the road to confidence is fear. Fear of embarrassment from 'o-fers' and errors; fear of humiliation from booing fans and lost games; fear of a father's wrath or a manager's displeasure. Fear of not making the team- or the big leagues. Basically, fear of failure" (Dorfman & Kuehl 1989, p. 91).

Another factor that remits relevance to this study is that this study concentrated strictly on professional and division one athletes. High school, division two, division three, junior college, NAIA or intramural athletes were not included in this study. Due to lack of information at these respective levels, the author could not gather enough credible sources to prove significant data centered on this study.

Chapter II

A REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE: THE BREAKDOWN OF AN ATHLETES PSYCHE

Background

The Review of the literature for this study consisted of the cause and effect dynamic of an athlete's mindset in their playing environment. Several athletes were highlighted and studies have shown that there are various factors that attribute to a player's demise. The objective of this chapter is to show what goes wrong mentally and how these athletes cope with their failings. This chapter also reiterates that these failings occur after repeated success has been shown.

The review of the literature states that mental discipline, attitude, confidence, learning, preparation, visualization, concentration, and relaxation are all attributed to an athlete's performance and their positive frame of mind. (Dorfman & Kuehl, 1989 p. xi) add that "mind games can be positive or negative. They can help a player to be a winner or they can cause him to be a loser. They directly and certainly affect his performance." The review of the literature will let the author look into two individual players psyches, Rick Ankiel and Mark Wohlers, and explore the psychological demons behind these two proven professional baseball players. The review of the literature will also look into the

psychology aspect of mental training to suggest methods in overcoming their mental breakdowns.

"I believe Chuck (Knoublauch) will get through this, just like I did" says (Steve) Sax. "But, to be honest, you never know. There are guys like me, then there are guys like Mark Wohlers who never got over the misery. I hope Chuck is like me." These lines exemplify an athlete who overcame mental trauma in major league baseball. However, as seen in the review of the literature, some athletes are not as fortunate. Some might even have a throwing disease associated with their name.

Kirk Robinson, a columnist for the baseballpage.com, (http://www.thebaseballpage.com) explores one of the first successful pitchers to experience mental demons and looks at what went wrong "in his head." "For one thing, Steve Blass was a control pitcher. That's right: he worked batters the same way Catfish Hunter and Tommy John did, the same way Tom Glavine does now. He was a pattern pitcher that: 1) knew how to mix speeds, 2) knew the hitters and their weaknesses, and 3) could stand on the mound and hit a doorknob with his fastball." He was a winner. At the end of his 1972 season, his career record was outstanding. His win-loss record was 100-67, for a .598 percentage that would put him among the top 75 pitchers of all time. He walked 508 batters during this span and struck out 867 batters. He was an all-star pitcher with a career ERA of 3.25and also faired well in pressure situations.

"In 1972, if you had to choose any pitcher in the world to start one big game, Steve Blass would have been on your short list" (Robinson,

http://thebaseballpage.com). That year, Blass pitched 33 and 3/3 innings in four postseason starts, averaging more than 8 innings per game, and only allowing five earned runs. "But now he's a disease-Blass-fatal, fearful and ugly" (Robinson, http://thebaseballpage.com).

Robinson (http://www.thebaseballpage.com) continues that Steve Blass's career was practically over in 1973. "He hit batters, he walked people, he threw pitchers around hitters, bouncing pitches and terrifying mascots. Occasionally he would pitch well, but never for more than an inning or two. He was wild in games, but could manage to look pretty good in warm-ups. He kept his spirits up. He worked hard, but no matter how hard he worked, it didn't get any better. He pitched every day. He saw every expert in the world, listened to oddball advice of all kinds, was prodded and poked by every doctor he could find, and his arm was determined to be fine. But no matter what he did, Steve Blass could not throw strikes in a game. His record for '73 was terrible: 3-9, 9.81 ERA, with 84 walks to only 27 strikeouts. In 1974, Blass went to the minors, where things went worse, if possible. Then he took a break from baseball, saw optometrists, talked to a psychologist. He tried anything to get back an ability he had earned, to work at the job he loved. His one major league start of 1974 was a nightmare: five innings pitched, 7 walks, 5 hits, two home runs. And then his career was over. A disease was born."

Robinson (http://www.thebaseballpage.com) also states that "If you've ever pitched a baseball, from a mound, in a competitive game, then you know that sooner or later there comes a time when you simply can't throw another

effective pitch. It happens every time you take the mound. Some part of you becomes exhausted, but you never know which one...it could be the legs, the elbow, some tiny fragments of tendon, some elaborate bit of hinge in the hip...something wears out, and pitching is impossible. For a little while the body can find ways to compensate, but eventually compensation is impossible."

Robinson (http://www.thebaseballpage.com) concludes that "everyone loses ability. When we casually dismiss this fact, or intentionally ignore it, what we are trying to get away from is our mortality and fragility. By calling Steve Blass's difficulties a "disease," we've obscured his accomplishments, and we've intentionally ignored a basic fact: bodies are fragile, life is complicated. We've taken success for granted instead of remembering that it is fleeting, mysterious, and to be admired."

Steve Blass has had the unlucky fortune of having a disease named after him. No one will know for sure what exactly went wrong with this promising pitcher but it does not look like it was a physical problem. Currently, anytime a player has a problem throwing a baseball outside of injury, they are connected to Blass's name. The list started with pitchers but also contains players of all positions.

Victims of "Steve Blass Disease"

- **Joe Cowley**- Cowley allowed 21 and walked 17 batters which attributed to 20 earned runs in only 11 2/3 innings after throwing a no-hitter the previous year (Donovan, http://www. CNNSI.com).
- Joe **Sparma**- Marlins Broadcaster Dave Van Horne witnessed Sparma, a pitcher with a lot of potential, breakdown over the course of a week in 1970 (http://www.Dataintelihealth.com). "Sparma was a terrific college quarterback who could thread the needle. Came up with the Detroit Tigers. At the tail end of his career he ended up in Montreal," Van Horne said. "We're at Shea Stadium in New York, and all of a sudden he walked the bases full. This came out of nowhere. The only out he got in the inning, he sailed a pitch over (catcher) John Bateman's head. It hit the Plexiglas at the gates behind home plate and caromed back to Bateman and he tagged the runner out" (Van Horne, http://www.Dataintelihealth.com). The Expos then went to Los Angeles a few days later and Van Horne remembers seeing Expos coach Calvin McLish take Sparma in front of the dugout behind first base at Dodger Stadium (http://www.Dataintelihealth.com). "I remember it like it was yesterday. They stood 45 feet apart and Sparma couldn't play catch with Calvin. It was virtually the end of his career. He died a few years later (1986) of a heart attack" (Van Horne, http://www.Dataintelihealth.com)
- **Clint Courtney**- J.W. Porter was a backup catcher with the Washington Senators when he witnessed the temporary collapse of teammate Clint

Courtney (http://www.Dataintelihealth.com) Courtney was an All-Star catcher who was the AL rookie of the year in 1952. Porter said, "Courtney just forgot how to throw the ball to the pitcher. He could throw the ball to first. He could throw the ball to second. He could throw the ball to third, but he couldn't throw it to the pitcher" (http://www.Dataintelihealth.com) "We would both put on equipment at the beginning of the game. But when the first runner of the game got on, I was in the game. If the first pitch was a ball and he received it. He would fire it to the third baseman who would return it to the pitcher because if he tried to throw it back to the pitcher it would wind up in centerfield" (http://www.Dataintelihealth.com).

"This went on for about 10 days and of course I'm hoping it'd go on forever so I can play more, Porter said. And on the 12th day he came to the ballpark and it was all over. It went away as fast as it came" (http://www.Dataintelihealth.com)

- **Mackey Sasser**- Sasser switched positions from catcher to the outfield after having problems throwing the ball back to the pitcher. After the move to the outfield, his career was over and he was forced to prematurely retire (Donovan, http://www.CNNSI.com).
- **Steve Gasser**- Gasser was a top Twins prospect who struck out 225 in the Midwest League in 1986. The following year he pitched with Randy Johnson in the Class AA All-Star Game (http://www.Data.intelihealth.com). "I was called up to Triple A. I won my first game. I'm thinking I'm going to get called up," said Gasser, 33. "And that's when the nightmare hit. I started pressing and everybody and their mother was telling me what I was doing wrong."

Gasser attributes his breakdown to his second start in Triple A. "I threw a pitch and it sailed on me and my arm kind of went numb. I walked five batters in five innings, which for me was a lot. I thought it was tendinitis and it just snowballed from there."

Gasser was told to go a sports psychologist, something he thought was not necessary (http://www.Data.intelihealth.com). "I was sitting there thinking, 'OK, I'm trying to take this seriously.' And the guy's talking about relaxing and being calm. That wasn't going to work for me." The Twins traded Gasser to the Mets, thinking that this change would help Gasser's development. Unfortunately for Gasser it did not and the once phenom called the next Nolan Ryan was out of baseball (http://www.Data.intel.health.com).

- **Dale Murphy**- Murphy moved to the outfield after experiencing problems as a catcher early into his career (Donovan, http://wwwCNNSI.com). Murphy was not affected by the move to the outfield and regained his confidence. Murphy had a Hall of Fame career and became one of the leading homerun hitters of all time.
- **Mike Ivie**- "Ivie was a 1 overall draft pick but had to switch to first base after six games his first season...He later attributed this to "a deep fear of failure" (Donovan, http://www.CNNSI.com).
- Steve Sax- Sax had an extremely difficult time throwing the ball to first base (Sax was a second baseman). Fortunately he discovered his throwing motion and experienced success again after leaving the Dodgers (Donovan, http://www.CNNSI.com).

- **Chuck Knoblauch**- He has had problems at second base throwing the ball to the first baseman so the Yankees had to move Knoblauch to the outfield (He has also recently been traded) (http://www.Donovan, CNNSI.com).
- Steve **Schneck**- Schneck was a Red Sox pitching prospect in the late 70's who led the Double-A Eastern League with a 2.15 ERA in 1978. After hitting a few batters throwing BP (*batting practice*) in spring training with the Red Sox he could no longer throw strikes" (Gammons, ESPN.go.com). "The last time I saw him, he was pitching in an extended spring game against Harvard and the fourth ball to the sixth straight batter that he walked hit a batter in the on-deck circle," said Gammons. He only was victorious two more times the rest of his major league career (Gammons,http://www. ESPN.go.com).
- **Bobby Sprowl**- Sprowl was a Red Sox pitching prospect who had been put out to pitch against the Yankees in the Boston Masscare series in September, 1978 and by the next spring he was erratic throwing batting practice. Sprowl had problems throwing pitches in the batting cage and when his coach, Don Zimmer, put him in to pitch a 'B' game in Daytona Beach, he almost threw a pitch into the press box" (Gammons, http://www.ESPN.go.com).
- **Ken Tatum**- In 1969, Tatum was the American League's top reliever for the Angels, and held the same status in 1970 when he hit Paul Blair with a pitch in the jaw. Tatum could never regain the control to pitch inside again and Blair was never the same hitter (Gammons, http://www.ESPN.go.com). "Whenever I tried," Tatum said years later, "I couldn't get my arm to do it" (Gammons, http://www.ESPN.go.com).

- **Max Von McDaniel-** "In 1957, Von McDaniel signed with the Cardinals for a $50,000 bonus on the strength of his smooth, seemingly effortless delivery, his exploding fastball and his sharp curveball. He was described by all who met him as a sensitive, intelligent and religious youth. The Cardinals brought him directly from high school to the major leagues, where he won his first four games. McDaniel pitched 19 consecutive scoreless innings, including a one-hitter, a two-hitter and a perfect game for six innings. He finished the year at 7-5 with a 3.22 ERA and with the exception of two disastrous innings in 1958, during which he walked seven batters never pitched again in the major leagues. McDaniel's sudden failure had nothing to do with physical injury. What happened to him is the stuff of Greek tragedy. Despite his blinding talent, there was something in his nature that fated him to fail for reasons neither he nor anyone else has ever been able to explain" (Jordan, 2001, p. 2-3).
- **Sam Militello-** "Sam Militello would show us videotapes of him striking out Jose Canseco, Mark McGwire and Carney Lansford. He had a mean slider. Nastiest stuff you've ever seen," said Marlins first baseman Kevin Millar, who played with the right-hander in the minors (http://www.Data.intelihealth.com). Millar also said, "but I never got to see that. The only Sam Militello I saw was in the Florida State League in '95. We had to set up bean-bag dummies as hitters so he could throw in the bullpen" (http://www.Data.intelhealth.com). Militello was a top prospect in 1992, winning his first two starts with the New York Yankees. He career looked bright when he injured his rotator cuff the

following year later. Militello lost his ability to throw strikes after his shoulder was repaired. By 1996, after attempting to play with the Marlins, he was done with baseball, "another victim of a psychological demon whose powers have ruined careers and wrecked lives" (http://www.Data.intelihealth.com).

- **Kevin Saucier**- Saucier was a pitcher who never recovered even though his ERA was only a 3.32 ERA" (Donovan, http://www.CNNSI.com).
- **Johnny Rabb**- Rabb was a catching prospect with the Giants who lost his focus in the early 1980's. It was such a nightmare that one season shortstop Johnnie LeMaster stood in short centerfield between innings when Rabb threw to second baseman Joe Morgan ending warm-ups. It turned out that LeMaster caught more balls than Joe Morgan because of Rabb's consistency throwing the ball over Morgan's head"

  (Leary, http://www.Dataintelihealth.com).
- **Steve Rogers**- "When the brain has negative activity during a motor-skill - it can be hate, anger, doubt - it impedes the electrical impulses throwing a baseball requires," said retired pitcher Steve Rogers, who is now a special assistant for the Major League Baseball Players Association (http://www.Dataintelihealth.com).

In the beginning of his career, Rogers started a season by allowing up to three runs in the first inning of almost every game he started. Once the first inning was over, Rogers would be fine. "I was pressing to make that first pitch of the game," Rogers said (http://www.Dataintelihealth.com). Rogers would throw eight pitches in the bullpen after the national anthem which would take place as a

"stimulating inning." This method helped saved Rogers career. Rogers added, "I felt like I'd already pitched the first inning. Then I was ready to start the game" (http://www.Dataintelihealth.com). Rogers said that he has talked about the "phenomenon" with every sports psychologists since having problems with his control. Rogers added that "a player is going through his motor skills and in that fraction of a second, through his mind, in his mind at light speed is 'Don't screw it up.' That negative thought is enough to alter the action" (Rogers, http://www.Datainteliheaith.com).

The Rick Ankiel Case

Dave Duncan, the St. Louis Cardinals pitching coach, infers that "Ankiel's rapid ascent to the big leagues left him without the know-how to adjust to adversity on the fly." Tom Verducci, a highly regarded sports writer from Sports Illustrated, (2001, p. 3) encompasses the phenom that Ankiel once was and highlights Ankiel and the potential that he has shown. (Ankiel's 52-starts through the minor leagues- 25-9 record before coming up to the majors, and his five starts and four relief appearances late in the 1999 season.) Then came his October troubles in which Ankiel walked 11 batters and threw nine wild pitches in only four innings, including five in one inning (nobody in 110 years had done that). The Cardinals however only sent him home with their standard conditioning program and did not emphasize their concern in Ankiel's breakdown. (Verducci, 2001) St. Louis allowed Ankiel to spend the winter recovering with

his agent, Scott Boras, "who quickly fostered a nurturing environment around Ankiel" (Verducci, 2001).

Verducci (2001) states that even though Ankiel appeared unruffled, Boras says, "he saw a young man infected by doubt about his performance, a young man who didn't have the tool kit to repair his psyche. He's going through a growth cycle, Boras says, mentally and physically."

Verducci (2001) suggests that Ankiel's sessions that Boras arranged with Harvey Dorfman, a sports psychologist on Boras's staff, was to help Ankiel concentrate on the mound. "When Ankiel watched a tape of game one in which he started against the Braves in the 2001 National League playoffs, he discovered that he would look away from his catcher, Carlos Hernandez, during his delivery. Dorfman helped him develop routines to help him maintain his focus on the catcher's target throughout his delivery" (Verducci, 2001).

Verducci (2001) also notes that there is also conflict with his father Richard that could be associated to Ankiel's mental woes. Verducci (2001) discusses the senior Ankiel and his trouble with the law. Richard Ankiel has been arrested over 14 times in 25 years, starting before his son was born. Richard's arrests vary from "burglary of a conveyance to aggravated assault to carrying a concealed weapon." The senior Ankiel was convicted at least six times. in September 1999, not too long after Ankiel reached the big leagues, "Richard was named in federal charges of conspiracy to distribute marijuana and cocaine. in March of last year he was sentenced to 70 months in a federal penitentiary" (Verducci, 2001, p. 4-5).

Dykhuizen (http://www.Wral.com) suspects that the demons from his past are associated to the psychological problems that he is feeling on the mound. Dykhuizen (http://www.Wral.com) wonders if one fact relates to the other. (The history of Ankiel's father's involvement in drugs and continually being in and out of jail.) Ankiel was not aware of this fact until he was a late teen. It must certainly be mentally challenging to recover completely after discovering that your father is constantly in and out of jail. It also must be tough for Ankiel to accept because Ankiel's father has been given many chances to turn around his life. This issue with his father could definitely be a strong possibility that is causing his troubles on the mind.

"There are some deep issues with his dad," Boras says. "When you grow up like that, it causes you to take an approach to things that's not as open, like having a very hidden life. To be open and free, that's what we all want for Rick" (Verducci, 2001, p. 5).

Jordan (2001) suspects that what happened to Rick Ankiel has also ruined other major league pitchers throughout the years, players such as Steve Blass of the Pittsburgh Pirates in the 1970's and Mark Wohlers of the Atlanta Braves in the 1990's. "They had a lot in common: binding young talent, sudden success, thoughtful and intelligence natures. They were all nice guys, humble men, who somehow never trusted their success. It came too quickly. They didn't deserve it. What if they lost it (Jordan, 2001, p. 3)?"

Psychological tactics for Rick Ankiel

Dr. Patrick J. Cohn (http://www.Peaksports.com) suggests that "when a player fits the perfectionism genre like (Rick Ankiel), you have to give yourself permission to make mistakes." Cohn adds, "Perfectionists think that anything less than a flawless performance is a failure. You have to accept that you are human and you will make mistakes just like everyone else. Sometimes it helps to give yourself permission to make mistakes. You're not perfect and even the best athletes make mistakes." Ankiel would have had better success following this formula after his struggles instead of thinking it was not normal to fail.

Donovan (http://www.CNNSI.com) adds that "one of the keys to a speedy recovery from such ailments is getting to troubled players early enough, before the bad habits and faulty ways of thinking are ingrained. If an athlete tries to work his way through it, or the team does not recognize the player's struggles early enough, it becomes harder to work through the problem."

Donovan (http://www.CNNSI.com) continues that, "Ankiel may have the tougher time working through his problems because, unlike Knoblauch, he has nowhere to hide. The Yankees can move Knoblauch to left, where the skills set is different and one or two throws a game may not affect a game. On the mound, though, one or two bad throws can make the difference between a win and a lose."

Dr. Jack Llewellyn, a sports psychologist who has been a consultant to the Atlanta Braves since 1991 and has been helping athletes for more than 25 years says that "if he's strong, young and healthy, and he's thrown well in the past, then

he can get past it. But anybody who thinks he can get rid of it and not think about it again probably is kidding himself" (Donovan, http://www.CNNSI.com).

The Mark Wohlers Case

O'Keeffe (1999) points out that in 1999, Mark Wohlers was also a victim among athletes who are unable to perform after experiencing success when indeed they should be at the height of their careers. O'Keefe (1999) infers that "with some players, performance has been affected by physical maladies; others lose their focus or their mental edge. Understandably, a resulting loss of confidence plays a significant role in their declines- further evidenced by the fragile nature of success in sports" (O'Keefe, 1999, p. 1).

After Mark Wohlers returned from the disabled list for 21 days in 1998, he had a lot on his mind besides the stresses of pitching in the major leagues. O'Keefe (1999) attributes Wohler's troubles to issues outside of pitching. "I know Mark was worried about being able to see his daughter because of the divorce," former Braves teammate Tom Glavine says. "His mom being sick (stroke) also had to affect him. How could it not?" Wohlers responded softly: "I don't want to use that as an excuse, but I took some of it on the field with me." (Wohlers lost his pitching form after an outstanding stint with the Atlanta Braves in which he saved 97 games from 1995-1997.)

Wohlers was given another opportunity to pitch after he was traded to the Cincinnati Reds in 1998. Wohlers made adjustments mechanically hoping his

mental flaws would leave him for good. He would test his new mechanics for the Reds' Class AAA team (O'Keefe, 1999, p.4).

Grant Jackson, Indianapolis' pitching coach, was there for Wohler's comeback in which Wohlers threw 31 pitches, 22 that were balls and four which wild pitches. Wohlers walked five and allowed four runs. "I don't think Mark believes in himself," says Jackson. "In the two days we were together, he followed me everywhere, like a child follows his parent. The child follows because he has no confidence. He's clinging, Jackson added" (O'Keefe, 1999, p.4).

O'Keefe (1999, p. 4) makes the point that "Wohlers remained on the Reds' disabled list battling an "anxiety disorder." The team insisted his arm was sound and Don Gullett, the Reds' pitching coach even placed a dummy in the right batter's box in Cincinnati's bullpen. The idea is to enable Wohlers to throw inside without fear."

Psychological tactics for Mark Wohlers

Dr. Patrick J. Cohn (http://www.Peaksports.com) suspects that "athletes, as in Wohlers case, who recognize psychological distress, such as fear and anxiety about injury will have a better time staying focused instead of thinking of negative thoughts." Cohn also believes that, "The sooner you can recognize signs of distress, the faster you can react to the person. Many athletes disguise anxiety, fear, frustration, and denial when under stress. Similarly, athletes may only show subtle signs that they are in distress. Asking the right questions about

the athlete's feelings and thoughts is key to understanding the dynamics of the injury and its effect on the person."

Chapter III

THE MENTAL GAME OF SPORTS

"He learned that he was, indeed, responsible for his own thoughts because he could choose what he thought about. He didn't have to think about matters he didn't want to talk about" (Dorfman & Kuehl, 1989, p. 70-71). This quote was in reference to hall of fame pitcher Steve Carlton, known for his excellent mental training and self-discipline. However, not many athletes are able to acquire this trait. What does it take for an athlete to control their mind frame and focus on the playing field? This chapter will explore the learning aspect of mental training and emphasize the importance of mental discipline.

The Six Steps Needed to Develop Effective Learning Habits (Dorfman & Kuehl, 1989)

1. **Never be satisfied with your knowledge, performance** (Dorfman & Kuehl, 1989, p.110)

(Dorfman & Kuehl, 1989, p. 111) declare that "the need to learn and improve is always present, but players who become comfortable and satisfied will seldom recognize the many ways and opportunities to do so. Obviously, those who are immediately aware of that need are far ahead of those who take years to make the discovery – or who never make it at all." Some players have the tendency to get too content with their ability and are not eager to improve in their

overall performance. It is the players who are constantly working on their flaws that take their game to the next level.

2. **Think and talk the solution, not the problem** (Dorfman & Kuehl, 1989, p. 111)

"Of course, we must recognize our mistakes and learn from them. But too many people dwell on them, get bogged down in them – and find themselves overcome by them. They never do get their heads turned in the right direction, where the correction can be found" (Dorfman & Kuehl, 1989, p.112). Once players find their flaws, they should try to correct them and learn from this experience. Too many players get too scientific and therefore have a difficult time of eliminating negative thoughts.

3. **Keep the emotions under control** (Dorfman & Kuehl, 1989, p. 113)

(Dorfman & Kuehl, 1989, p. 113) suggest that "when emotions are strong, it's difficult to understand, learn, and retain. After mistakes or errors, emotions add pressure, rather than reduce it. And people have a tendency to revert to their "old ways" (the ways that lead to mistakes) when under pressure. They usually don't intend to do so – or realize they are doing so." Players tend to go back to their old habits under pressure instead of focusing and remaining positive.

4. **Have an open mind** (Dorfman & Kuehl, 1989, p.113)

(Dorfman & Kuehl, 1989, p. 113) assert that "a closed mind is a door closed on the opportunity for improvement. While people recognize this truth, they often do not clearly see another truth: that they themselves have shut the

door– and locked it behind them." Players will not realize their true potential until they erase any sense of doubt. Once they have a clear mind, they will obtain focus and have a better chance for success.

5. **Use failures to Learn** (Dorfman & Kuehl, 1989, p.113)

(Dorfman & Kuehl, 1989, p. 113) express that "the great players experiment and change. They know that all improvement comes from change. They are willing to risk and tolerate temporary failure to gain long-term success. They find better ways and continue to stretch toward their limits."

(Dorfman & Kuehl, 1989, p. 116) support the notion that "trial and error is one of the most common ways to learn. Trial and error is, essentially, trial and failure. Failure tells us that we have to do something different or differently. John Wooden, the legendary teacher and basketball coach at UCLA, said, Failure is not failure, unless it's failure to change" (Dorfman & Kuehl, 1989, p. 116).

Players get too concerned about failing instead of using it as a learning experience. In baseball, if you hit .300 you are considered a potential Hall of Famer. In doing so, you have also failed seven out of ten times. Players who learn from their seven unsuccessful attempts will have a better chance of improving the next time they bat. Players who get discouraged from their seven unsuccessful attempts leave little room for improvement and ultimately lose their confidence.

6. **Be persistent** (Dorfman & Kuehl, 1989, p.117)

"Even the most conscientious learners are usually impatient with the time it takes to learn. Baseball players seem to be particularly impatient. They think they should "be getting it faster." Their intention to be good learners can be cancelled out by this attitude. When they don't learn something quickly and easily, they have a tendency to move on to something else" (Dorfman & Kuehl, 1989, p. 117). The best players never give up and always remain confident. After some players quit, the persistent players will stay focused and not lose their concentration. The persistent players will be patient until they find an approach that is successful.

Preparation

Preparation methods are the defining factor in separating the good players from the great players. Gmelch (vol. 9, p. 209) examined the physical training a ballplayer practices in before the game which includes running, throwing, stretching, batting practice, and fielding ground and fly balls. He found that what is not seen are preparations of the mind. He also found that starting pitchers usually begin training for their next start the day after their last outing." "The next morning in the shower you start thinking about your next opponent, who their key hitters are and how you're going to pitch to them" said the Giants' Russ Ortiz. Many pitchers will follow their next opponent in the box scores and on ESPN's nightly highlights, and if the games are broadcast they'll try to watch."

"I go over their stats mainly to look at home runs so I know who the major power hitters are and I look at stolen bases so I know who can run," said the White Sox's Brian Keyser. It's a gradual progression of concentration up to the day I pitch." Preparations are also very extensive on the day that major league pitchers have to perform.

Pregame

In (Gmelch, vol. 9, p. 209), Orel Hershiser described his pregame routine: "I get up around nine or ten, after I've had eight hours sleep. I have a light breakfast then I always eat pasta and chicken around two or two-thirty for a seven o'clock game...At three o'clock or so I will do some light stretching before I take batting practice. After batting practice I go back in the locker room and lounge around and watch some scouting tapes or read the scouting report (on the opposing hitters). An hour and a half before the game I get my massage and then I go through my stretching with the therapist. That takes me to about forty minutes before the game. For the next twenty minutes I stretch on my own. I go over the scouting report one more time and then talk with the catcher on a one-on-one basis. I kind of reboot the computer in my brain to try to clear everything out, and let things come naturally. Then twenty minutes before the game I am down in the bullpen, starting to throw and going through my warm-up process. I listen for the National Anthem, because once it starts I really gear it up to game speed and thinking about hitters. The National Anthem is the trigger that tells me

that I only have about fifteen or twenty more pitches before I need to go take the mound, or go to the dugout."

Imagery

Gould and Damarjan as cited in (Raalte and Brewer, 1996, p. 27) suggest that "it is important to understand that imagery involves the use of all the senses. Although imagery is often associated with visualization, it can and should include senses other than sight. This is especially true in sports where the feel of the movement is so important." Murphy and Jowdy (1992) as cited in (Raalte and Brewer, 1996, p. 27) add, "with an appropriate training program, imagery can increase self-awareness, facilitate skill acquisition and maintenance, build self-confidence, control emotions, relieve pain, regulate arousal, and enhance preparation strategies.

Vealey and Greenleaf as cited in (Williams, 2001, p. 264) state that imagery can be a very useful tool in helping athletes direct their attention on the important aspects of future competition. Vealey and Greenleaf as cited in (Williams, 2001, p. 264) looked at professional golfer Bob Ford. "Professional golfer Bob Ford is known for his remarkable ability to clear his mind for competition. Ford uses imagery to focus before a competitive round by imagining that he is on an elevator as he walks to the first tee. When he reaches the first tee, he visualizes the elevator doors opening and sees himself walking out onto a new floor. While on the floor, he thinks only of golf. All of his other problems and life demands are left on the other floors of the building, and he can catch the elevator back to those floors after his round."

Terry Orlick (1986) as cited in (Williams, 2001, p. 264) agrees that "athletes develop focus plans for competition that are practiced via imagery before using them in competitive events. Athletes should evaluate themselves and the specific demands of their sport to develop focus plans for competition. These plans outline where attention should be focused at different times during competition. By practicing focus plans repeatedly using imagery, athletes will be more likely to carry out the plans successfully."

Mental Discipline

(Dorfman & Kuehl, 1989, p.179) attest that "mental discipline is the ability to sustain effective and consistent concentration on task - specific to what's required within the given situation (i.e. seeing the target/throwing the pitch). This is accomplished through controlled attention to relevant information and cues, followed by appropriately controlled behavior."

(Dorfman & Kuehl, 1989, p. 81) conclude that "mental games are won through being aware of what our goal is, knowing what it takes to achieve it in a given context, and dedicating ourselves to that end. To have the skill for such specific and directed concentration is to have mental discipline and control. The more consistent we are, the more mental games we are winning- and have already won."

Zen

Mental games are also won by having a clear mind and that could also be attributed to the practice of zen. The power of the mind and the ability to obtain

focus is seen in the teachings of zen. There are not too many athletes that are active in zen but for those who practice this form of meditation, there are significant advantages in doing so.

Jackson & Delehanty (1995) attribute their mind-set and focus to the practice of zen and its influence "on clearing the mind." "Everything is based on mind, is led by mind, is fashioned by mind. If you speak and act with a polluted mind, suffering will follow you, as the wheels of an oxcart follow the footsteps of the ox...If you speak and act with a pure mind, happiness will follow you, as a shadow clings to a form" Jackson and Delehanty, 1995, p.48).

(Jackson and Delehanty, 1995, p.48) note that "the point of Zen practice is to make you aware of the thoughts that run your life and diminish their power over you. One of the fundamental tools for doing that is a form of sitting mediation known as zazen. When thoughts come up, the idea is not to blot them out or to analyze them, but simply to note them as they arise, and to experience, as fully as possible, the sensations in the body. Over time your thoughts calm down, first for a few seconds, then much longer, and you experience moments of just being without your mind getting in the way.

If you are concentrated on your breathing, you will forget yourself, and if you forget yourself you will be concentrated on your breathing." Phil Jackson, player and coach in the NBA, elaborates by adding that "as a basketball player, this made a lot of sense to me. I knew from experience that I was far more effective when my mind was clear and I wasn't playing with an agenda of some kind, like scoring a certain number of points or showing up one of my opponents.

The more skilled I became at watching my thoughts in zazen practice, the more focused I became as a player. I also developed an intimate knowledge of my mental processes on the basketball court" (Jackson and Delehanty, 1995, p. 50).

Overall, zen could have a positive effect on an athlete and his/ her mental preparation. However, there is a lot of dedication and commitment that has to be shown by the athlete in order to make zen effective. Zen has proven to be a worthwhile experience for those athletes who practice its teachings and is clearly an illustration of how powerful the mind is.

Chapter IV

A SURVEY FINDING THE CORRELATION BETWEEN THE MIND AND ATHLETIC PERFORMANCE

Description of Survey

The survey contained ten statements that were examined using a scale of five possible options. They were based on a scale which stated that: SA- the participant of the survey strongly agreed with the statement, A- the participant of the survey agreed with the statement, N- the participant of the survey was neutral with the statement, D- the participant of the survey disagreed with the statement and SD- the participant of the survey strongly disagreed with the statement. In reviewing the ten statements of the survey, each statement was associated with the mental impact that is affiliated with the actual performance in athletics. The author's goal was to determine how big of an impact the mind has in preparation and focus and how it is interrelated with performance. There were also a few lines for additional ideas and insights that were encouraged for qualitative feedback.

Sample

The intention of the survey was to differentiate between athlete and non-athlete responses regarding the psyche and its affect on performance. Information was collected on this subject from 70 recipients. The goal was to examine the varying responses and draw comparisons with the contemporary literature regarding mental preparation and breakdown among athletes. The findings were further analyzed to determine if there existed any relevant patterns between athletes and non-athletes. Thirty- five athletes filled out a survey who were currently Division One athletes (highest athletic collegiate level) at Seton Hall University. Thirty- five students also filled out a survey who were non-athletes. From the data collected, the author's objective was to find any link between the two parties- varsity athlete or non-varsity athlete. The author examined the similarities in thinking between both groups while determining where the greatest contrasts were. Additional commentary provided by the respondents were also examined to support the thesis statement.

Purpose of the Study

The goal of this survey was to determine if there was a significant differentiation among athletes versus non-athletes with regards to their opinions on the psyche's effect on performance. Is the mental game as important as the physical game in sports? The author wanted to examine the issue from the perspective of an individual who is currently performing in athletics as compared

to an individual who is a non-athlete. The author wanted to see if the information presented in the literature correlated with the results of the survey.

Analyzing the Survey

The author collected surveys from 70 individuals, 35 whom were athletes and 35 whom were non-athletes. Each of the individuals answered all 10 of the statements that were in the survey. The chart that was used to gather the quantitative results was broken down by dividing the 70 surveys by 100 and the 35 surveys from both respective parties by 100. That number is worth a certain percentage which is then used to multiply the total amount of responses by each question by that percentage.

Statement 1: I think that the mental game is as important as the physical game in athletics.

In reviewing this statement, 29 of the varsity athletes or 84 percent strongly agreed that the mental game is just as important if not more important than the physical game in athletics. The remaining six varsity athletes or 16 percent agreed with the statement that the mental game is as important as the physical game in sports. There were no respondents who were neutral, disagreed or strongly disagreed with this statement.

In reviewing this statement from the non-varsity side, there wasn't a huge contrast in numbers or opinions. Twenty-eight of the non-varsity athletes or 81

percent strongly agreed that the mental game is as important as the physical game in athletics. Seven non-athletes or nineteen percent also agreed with the statement that the mental game is just as important as the physical game in sports. There were also no respondents who were neutral, disagreed or strongly agreed with this statement.

In combining the statistics from the varsity athletes and non-varsity athletes, the final tally was 82.5 percent who strongly agreed that the mental game is as important as the physical game in athletics. The final 17.5 percent agreed that the mental game is as important as the physical game in sports.

Statement 2: Sport psychologists can be helpful in correcting mental flaws among athletes.

For this statement 16 varsity athletes or 46 percent strongly agreed that sport psychologists could be helpful in correcting mental flaws among athletes. These varsity athletes also mentioned feeling a sense of ease in receiving positive feedback from sport psychologists, who helped erase any self-doubts they might have had. Nineteen varsity athletes or 54 percent agreed that sport psychologists could be beneficial in helping correct mental flaws among athletes. In talking to varsity athletes, one point that a sport psychologist directly makes is to picture yourself having success from a past experience and to carry that thought to the actual playing field.

Nine non-varsity athletes or 26 percent strongly agreed that sport psychologists could be helpful in correcting mental flaws among athletes.

Seventeen non-varsity athletes or 48 percent agreed that sport psychologists could be beneficial in correcting mental flaws among athletes. While there is a strong response from both athletes and non-athletes there was some skepticism seen by nine non-varsity athletes. Eight non-varsity athletes or 20 percent remained neutral that sport psychologists can be helpful in correcting mental flaws among athletes. One non-athlete or 2 percent disagreed that sport psychologists can be beneficial in correcting mental flaws among athletes.

In combining both statistics from athletes and non-athletes, the author gathered a strong response that sport psychologists can be helpful in correcting mental flaws among athletes. There was a total combination of 28.5 percent of athletes and non-athletes who strongly agreed that sport psychologists can make a positive difference. There was a total of 51 percent that agreed that sport psychologists could be helpful in correcting mental flaws among athletes. Overall, there was a total of 20 percent taken from athletes and non-athletes that remain neutral on this issue, all coming from the non-athlete side. Also coming from the non-athlete side was the combined total of 1 percent that did not think sport psychologists have any bearing on the correction of mental flaws among athletes.

Statement 3: Athletes become too immersed with the stresses of stardom and put too much pressure on themselves.

In evaluating this statement, 14 varsity athletes or 40 percent strongly agreed that athletes do become too immersed with the stresses of stardom and

put too much pressure on themselves. This can also be seen here at Seton Hall where a varsity athlete can be given a one-year scholarship that is not guaranteed for renewal if they are not productive on the playing field. Fourteen varsity athletes or 40 percent also agreed with this statement that the stress level of trying to be a star is excessive, and that they do put too much pressure on themselves. Frequently at Seton Hall, players who excelled in high school, put pressure on themselves to continue that trend at the college level. Seven varsity athletes or 20 percent were neutral on the position of athletes putting too much pressure on themselves and becoming too involved with the stresses of stardom.

On the opposite end, six non-varsity athletes or 17 percent strongly agreed that athletes become too immersed with the stresses of stardom and put too much pressure on themselves. Seventeen non-varsity athletes or 49 percent agreed that athletes do put too much pressure on themselves while becoming too immersed with the stresses of stardom. Seven non-varsity athletes or 20 percent were neutral on the issue of stardom and the pressures that come along with it. Five non-varsity athletes or 14 percent disagreed that athletes become too immersed with the stresses of stardom and feel that athletes do not put too much pressure on themselves.

Overall, the numbers in statement three state that 28.5 percent of varsity athletes and non-varsity athletes strongly agreed that athletes become too immersed with the stresses of stardom and do indeed put too much pressure on themselves. There was also 44.5 percent of athletes and non-athletes who agreed that athletes worry too much about stardom and put too much stress on

themselves. There was a combined total of 20 percent that were neutral on the issue of stardom and the associated pressures on athletes. Finally, there was 7 percent of athletes and non-athletes who disagreed that athletes put too much pressure on themselves and worry about being a star, all coming from the non-athlete side.

Statement 4: Mental imagery skills play a major role in helping athletes concentrate and perform better.

In tabulating the results for statement four, 26 varsity athletes or 75 percent strongly agreed that mental imagery skills have a big impact in helping athletes concentrate and perform better. This statement can somewhat be related to question two because mental imagery skills are one of the tools that sport psychologists use as can be seen by the high percentages of strongly agreeing in both respective statements by the athletes. Nine varsity athletes or 25 percent agreed that mental imagery skills play a major role in helping athletes concentrate and perform better. All 35 athletes either strongly agreed or agreed with statement four which shows that Division One athletics place strong emphasis on utilizing mental techniques to enhance their focus.

In analyzing statement four from a non-athlete's perspective, 13 individuals or 37 percent strongly agreed that mental imagery skills have a strong impact in helping athletes concentrate and perform better. Fifteen non-athletes or 44 percent also agreed with statement four that mental imagery skills help athletes focus and perform better. Seven non-athletes or 19 percent are neutral

on the issue and aren't quite sure if mental imagery skills have an effect in helping athletes concentrate and perform better.

In combining both athletes and non-athletes, 56 percent strongly agreed that mental imagery skills play a major role in helping athletes concentrate and perform better. There was also a figure of 34.5 percent by both athletes and non-athletes who agreed that mental imagery skills have an impact in helping athletes focus and perform better. The 9.5 percent that remain neutral on the issue were all non-athletes, and remain skeptical as to whether or not mental imagery plays a significant role in helping athletes concentrate and perform better.

Statement 5: Athletes have a hard time letting go of mistakes and therefore lose control of their mindset.

For this statement, nine athletes or 26 percent strongly agreed that athletes have a difficult time of letting go of their mistakes and as a result lose control of their mindset. Sixteen athletes or 45 percent of varsity athletes also agreed with statement four and that athletes hold on to their mistakes instead of forgetting about them and refocusing. Nine athletes or 26 percent remained neutral that athletes have a hard time letting go of their mistakes and lose control of their mindset. One varsity athlete or 3 percent disagreed that athletes have a difficult time recovering from a mistake and believes that it is easy to move on and regain control of their mindset after a mistake is committed.

Seven non-athletes or 20 percent strongly agreed that athletes have a hard time letting go of their mistakes and therefore lose control of their mindset. Sixteen non-athletes or 46 percent agreed with the statement. Three non-athletes or 9 percent remain neutral on statement five. Nine non-athletes compared to one varsity athlete disagreed that athletes have a hard time letting go of their mistakes and believe that this does not have a negative effect on an athlete's mindset.

Overall, the numbers in statement five indicate that 23 percent of both athletes and non-athletes strongly agreed that athletes have a hard time letting go of their mistakes and therefore lose control of their focus and mindset. There were also 45.5 percent of athletes and non-athletes who agreed with the statement. The remaining 17.5 percent of athletes interviewed felt neutral about the statement, and only three non-athletes remained neutral about this statement. There was also 14 percent of athletes and non-athletes who disagreed with statement five.

Statement 6: The power of positive thinking can influence an athlete's performance and help avoid mental collapses.

In reviewing this statement, there were 20 athletes or 58 percent who strongly agreed that the power of positive thinking could help an athlete's performance and help avoid mental collapses. There were also 15 athletes or 42 percent who agreed with the statement.

In analyzing the non-athletes responses their responses mirrored the athletes. There were 20 non-athletes or 58 percent who strongly agreed that the power of positive thinking could influence an athlete's performance and help avoid mental collapses. Again, there were 15 non-athletes or42 percent who agreed with the statement. The numbers were a perfect match in comparing both parties on statement six.

Statement 7: Athletes who fear failure will not take the risks needed for optimum performance.

For this statement, there was 55 percent or 19 athletes who strongly agreed that athletes who fear failure will not take the risks needed for optimum performance. There was also 37 percent or 13 athletes who agreed that athletes who think negative thoughts will not take the risks needed to achieve optimum performance. Five percent or 2 athletes remained neutral on the issue. There was 3 percent or only one athlete who disagreed with the statement.

In reviewing the non-athletes' responses regarding this statement, this was the first time that non-athletes had at least one vote for each option (strongly agree to strongly disagree) listed in this survey. There were eight non-athletes or 23 percent who strongly agreed that athletes who fear failure will not take the risks needed for optimum performance. Twenty non-athletes or 58 percent of non-athletes agreed with the statement. Three non-athletes or 8 percent remained neutral. Three non-athletes or 8 percent disagreed that athletes who fear failure will not take the risks needed for top performance and believe that

they would take the risks needed even if faced with failure. There was one non-athlete or 3 percent who strongly disagreed with the statement.

In combining athletes and non-athletes there was a total of 39 percent who strongly agreed that athletes who fear failure would not take the risks needed for top performance. There was 47.5 percent of athletes and non-athletes who agreed that athletes who fear failure would not take the risks needed for optimum performance. There was also 6.5 percent of athletes and non-athletes who remained neutral on statement seven. There was 5.5 percent of both sides who disagreed with the statement. Finally, there was 1.5 percent of athletes and non-athletes who strongly disagreed with statement seven.

Statement 8: Athletes who experience success too quickly do not want to face the pressure of the expectations of their success.

This was the first statement from the athlete side that had at least one option voted for ranging from all five-selection choices. There was only one athlete or 3 percent who strongly agreed that athletes who experience success too quickly do not want to face the pressure of the expectations of their success. There were 18 athletes or 52 percent who agreed that athletes who have success too quickly would not want to face the pressure of the expectations from their success. Eight athletes or 23 percent were neutral on whether or not statement eight was accurate on assessing success and the expectations that come along with it. There was six athletes or 17 percent who disagreed with the statement that athletes who experience success too quickly do not want to face

the pressure of the expectations of their success. There were also two athletes or 5 percent who strongly disagreed with statement eight and believe that athletes who experience success do not think about the pressures that come along with the territory.

On the other side of the spectrum, there was five non-athletes or 14 percent who strongly agreed that athletes who experience success too quickly do not want to face the pressure of the expectations of their success. Fourteen non-athletes or 40 percent agreed that athletes who experience success right away do not want to feel the pressure and stresses of the expectations because of their proven success. There was seven non-athletes or 20 percent who remained neutral on statement eight. There was eight non-athletes or 23 percent who disagreed with the statement that athletes who experience success too quickly do not want to face the pressure of the expectations of their success. There was only one non-athlete or 3 percent who strongly disagreed that athletes who experience success too quickly do not want to face the pressure of the expectations of their success.

In evaluating both sides of statement eight there was 8.5 percent of both sides who strongly agreed that athletes who experience success too quickly do not want to face the pressure of the expectations of their success. There was also 46 percent of athletes and non-athletes who agreed that athletes who experience success very quickly do not want to face the stress and pressures of the expectations from their success. There was a combined 21.5 percent who remained neutral with statement eight. There was also 20 percent of athletes

and non-athletes who disagreed that athletes who experience success too quickly do not want to face the pressure of the expectations of their success. Finally, there was 4 percent of athletes and non-athletes who strongly disagreed with statement eight that athletes who experience success too quickly do not want to face the pressure of the expectations of the success.

Statement 9: Athletes who have experienced adversity find it very difficult to overcome it once it does happen.

In tabulating the results for statement nine, four athletes or 12 percent strongly agreed that athletes who have not experienced adversity do indeed find it very difficult to overcome once it does happen. There were also 24 athletes or 67 percent who did agree that athletes who have not experienced some kind of adversity find it very hard to bounce back when it happens. Four athletes or 12 percent remained neutral to statement nine. There were also two athletes or 6 percent who disagreed with statement nine. One athlete or 3 percent strongly disagreed with statement nine and believed that athletes have an easy time in overcoming adversity even when dealt with for the first time.

From a non-athlete standpoint, there were four individuals or 11 percent who strongly agreed that athletes who have not faced adversity find it extremely difficult to overcome once it does happen. Twenty-one non-athletes or 61 percent agreed with statement nine. There were four non-athletes or 11 percent who remained neutral with statement nine. Six non-athletes or 17 percent

disagreed with statement nine and believe that athletes don't have a problem overcoming adversity once it does happen.

In combining both sides, there was a total of 11.5 percent who strongly agreed that athletes who have not experienced adversity find it very difficult to overcome once it does happen. There was also 64 percent of athletes and non-athletes who agreed that athletes who have not experienced adversity find it extremely difficult to overcome when it does happen. There was 11.5 percent of athletes and non-athletes who remained neutral on the issue of battling adversity. There was also 11.5 percent of athletes and non-athletes who disagreed that athletes who have not been faced with adversity have a hard time overcoming it once it does happen. There was 1.5 percent of both sides who strongly disagreed with statement nine and believe that adversity is easy to overcome even when athletes have not dealt with it.

Statement 10: Personal turmoil can have a grueling effect on an athlete's performance.

In analyzing statement ten, there were 12 athletes or 34 percent who strongly agreed that personal troubles could have a diminishing effect on an athlete's performance. There were also 18 athletes or 51 percent who agreed that personal turmoil could have a grueling effect on an athlete's performance. Three athletes or 9 percent of athletes remained neutral on the connection between personal turmoil and performance. There were two athletes or 6

percent who strongly disagreed that personal turmoil is directly affected with performance.

On the non-athlete side, there were 19 individuals or 55 percent who strongly agreed that personal troubles could have a demanding effect on an athlete's performance. There were also 12 non-athletes or 35 percent who agreed that personal turmoil is connected to an athlete's performance. There were two non-athletes or 5 percent who remained neutral with statement ten. There were also two non-athletes or 5 percent of non-athletes who disagreed that personal troubles and performance are related.

In combining both athletes and non-athletes, there was a total of 44.5 percent who strongly agreed that personal turmoil could have a grueling effect on an athlete's performance. There was also 43 percent of both sides who agreed that personal troubles can have a major impact on performance. Seven percent of athletes and non-athletes remained neutral on statement ten. There was 2.5 percent of both sides who disagreed that personal turmoil and performance are linked together. Finally, there was 3 percent of athletes and non-athletes who strongly disagreed that personal troubles and an athlete's performance are related.

Conclusion

Both athletes and non-athletes participated in this survey. All of the athletes who took part were Division One athletes from Seton Hall University. All of the non-athletes who participated were Seton Hall students. These students

were fans and intramural players in the intramural program that is offered at Seton Hall. There were even some students who disliked sports representing the non-athlete.

In combining both sides, there was at least a 54 percent return from all 70 individuals who strongly agreed or agreed on the ten statements from the survey. Nine out of the ten statements received at least a 68 percent return from all 70 individuals who strongly agreed or agreed on the ten statements from the survey. The only exception was question eight which received a return of 54.5 percent. Overall, all 70 individuals who took part in the survey had a strong emphasis on the mental aspect in athletics and how important it is in achieving success.

Chapter V

SUMMARY

"The most important part of a great ballplayer's body is above his shoulders." The author has found that Ty Cobb's statement back in the 1920's is as relevant today as it was over eighty years ago; it symbolizes the significant impact that the mind has on an athlete's performance (http://cbshealthwatch.medscape.com).

Professional athletes face the stresses of million dollar contracts and the pressure that comes along with these contracts to perform at a high level. Many athletes find it very difficult being in the spotlight and have trouble balancing the physical and mental aspects of professional sports. Mental toughness is a phrase that is common in sports today and describes the psychology that is necessary for an athlete to succeed on a consistent basis.

Sports psychology has had a strong impact on athletics, and more athletes are turning to sport psychologists to improve their mindset and ultimately their game. The biggest challenge for athletes who have lost their focus, is the ability to regain their mental makeup and perform at the level at which they once competed. The author highlighted several athletes who have lost their "mental toughness" and have never been able to regain it. However, there have been athletes who have had problems from the mental side of sports but who have worked through their mental demons to become the players they once were.

In doing this research, it was found that goal setting is a major factor in differentiating between successful athletes and non-successful athletes. Goal setting has a major impact in helping athletes who are struggling mentally recover from their troubles. Goal setting has also restored confidence among athletes and helped improve overall performance.

The author attributes one of the causal dynamics leading to athletic sub-performance relative to previously successful athletes to improper goal setting methods. These guidelines could also be beneficial to the many athletes who have suffered though "Steve Blass Disease" like cases. These general guidelines reiterate the importance of goal-setting.

- "**Positive Statement: Express your goals positively**: To execute this technique perfectly is a much better goal than don't make this stupid mistake" (http://www.mindtools.com). An athlete with a positive frame of mind will have the confidence to succeed.
- "**Be Precise**: If you set a precise goal, putting in dates, times and amounts so that achievement can be measured, then you know the exact goal to be achieved, and can take complete satisfaction from having completely achieved it" (http://www.mindtools.com). If you are not specific about short term and long term goals, you will not exceed the expectations that you have set for yourself.
- "**Set Priorities**: Where you have several goals, give each a priority. This helps you to avoid feeling overwhelmed by too many goals, and helps to direct your attention to the most important ones"

(http://www.mindtools.com). Too many goals may bring unnecessary pressure so prioritizing your goals will help you stay focused.

- **"Write goals down to avoid confusion and give them more force"** (http://www.mindtools.com). Writing goals down and repeating them verbally on a daily basis has also had a positive effect in achieving short term and long term goals.
- **"Keep Operational Goals Small**: Keep the goals you are working towards immediately (i.e. in this session) small and achievable. If a goal is too large, then it can seem that you are not making progress towards it. Keeping goals small and incremental gives more opportunities for reward. Today's goals should be derived from larger goals" (http://www.mindtools.com). Smaller goals have a greater chance of occurring more frequently which will improve confidence and increase an athlete's chance for success.

It has also been determined that many athletes have the physical talent to overcome any mental flaws they have, but only to a certain extent. Once these athletes come to a certain point, they must develop a strong mindset to improve their overall performance. If these athletes have problems reaching this next level, they have the possibility of developing bad habits that eventually could result in negative performance.

Certain athletes have the physical ability to overcome any mental flaws they may have. These athletes are gifted and have the physical prowess to

achieve anything they deem possible. Many athletes though have to rely on their mental ability to help them surpass any physical barriers they may face.

The author has also found that sport psychologists play an important role in evaluating athletes and any mental demons they are trying to overcome. However, not too many athletes are receptive when referred to a sport psychologist. Ultimately an athlete has to choose what is more important to him or her. If an ego gets in the way of mental toughness and eventually success, then there is no hope for that athlete. If an athlete is willing to get help in order to be more specific with goal setting or focus, it will only improve that athlete's chance to succeed.

Conclusions and Recommendations

The results relating to goals and mental preparation provide significant insight for future research. Multiple goal mastery and mental focus "can complement each other and increase the incentive to achieve" (Steinberg, Singer, & Murphey, 2000, p. 415). "The current recommendation is for the promotion of mastery goals because it is assumed that this type of goal orientation better equips the sport participant to "motivationally cope" (mentally) with the traumas of the sport setting" (Steinberg, Singer, & Murphey, 2000, p. 415). However, "individuals who adopt a multiple goal orientation may be more likely to exhibit optimal achievement in a constantly changing sport environment" (Steinberg, Singer, & Murphey, 2000, p. 415).

"Future research should also examine the relative efficacy of flexible short-term goals for a variety of tasks and examine the importance of using regular feedback with those goals" (Getz and Rainey, 2001, p. 37). Getz and Rainey (2001) also suggest that another topic for future research could be testing the effectiveness of combining long-term and flexible short-term goals. "Some authors have already demonstrated that a combination of long and short-term goals can be effective" (Getz and Rainey, 2001, p. 37). Hence, "future studies should examine the relative effectiveness of long-term plus rigid short-term goals versus long-term plus flexible short-term goals for a variety of tasks, both with and without regular feedback with a focus on other motor skill activities" (Getz and Rainey, 2001, p. 37).

Many athletes have the ability to perform at the highest level possible but not many athletes reach their potential because of the effect that the mind has on their ability to perform. Those athletes who have the ability to monitor these thoughts, ultimately reach the highest level of their performance and are the most successful. Athletes may have limitations with their physical tools, but once unlocked, their minds' impact on performance is limitless.

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Appendix A

Survey

What are the causal dynamics leading to athletic sub-performance relative to previously successful athletes?

The purpose of this study is to determine what factors are influential in assessing the positive and negative mental behavior among certain athletes. In trying to answer the question above for completion of my thesis project in the Corporate and Public Communications program at Seton Hall University, it would be very appreciated if you would take five minutes out to complete this survey. All answers will help attribute to the validity of this topic and the availability of the results will be available upon your request.

General Information

Please feel free to answer all or none of the following questions.

Gender
Male Female

College _____

Division that college participated in
1 2 3 Junior College NAIA

Level of sports experience
High School College Intramural None of the Above

Sport _____

Thank you for your particpation.

Sports Psychology

Rate the following statements on your experiences with athletics either as a performer or non-performer. **SA-Strongly Agree A-Agree N-Neutral D-Disagree SD-Strongly Disagree**

1. I think that the mental game is as important as the physical game in athletics.
   S A A N D S D

2. Sport psychologists can be helpful in correcting mental flaws among athletes.
   S A A N D S D

3. Athletes become too immersed with the stresses of stardom and put too much pressure on themselves.
   S A A N D SD

4. Mental imagery skills play a major role in helping athletes concentrate and perform better.
   S A A N D S D

5. Athletes have a hard time letting go of mistakes and therefore lose control of their mindset.
   S A A N D S D

6. The power of positive thinking can influence an athlete's performance and help avoid mental collapses.
   S A A N D S D

7. Athletes who fear failure will not take the risks needed for optimum performance.
   S A A N D SD

8. Athletes who experience success too quickly do not want to face the pressure of the expectations of their success.
   SA A N D SD

9. Athletes who have not experienced adversity find it very difficult to overcome once it does happen.
   S A A N D SD

10. Personal turmoil can have a grueling effect on an athlete's performance.
    S A A N D SD

Additional ideas and insights _____