Development, Implementation, and Evaluation of an Athlete-Informed Mental Skills Training Program for Elite Youth Tennis Players

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1   **Abstract**

2   Informed by athletes' psychological needs, the current qualitative study developed, implemented,

3   and evaluated a 15-month mental skills training (MST) program for elite youth athletes. The

4   MST was divided into three phases that included a nine-month pre-intervention, a two-month

5   intervention, and a four-month evaluation phase. The intervention consisted of three interactive

6   workshops which were delivered to 11 competitive British youth tennis players (aged 8 to 15

7   years) and their coach (age = 34). The intervention was informed by data that was collected

8   throughout a nine-month pre-intervention phase including longitudinal observations, field notes,

9   and semi-structured interviews. The intervention was evaluated over a four-month period

10   through observations, field notes, athlete-workshop data, and a semi-structured interview with

11   the coach. Results reinforced the value of the longitudinal pre-intervention phase by highlighting

12   that the establishment of rapport between the researcher and athletes enhanced the

13   meaningfulness and content of the MST program. Additionally, an increase in athletes' use and

14   regulation of PSCs was identified as a result of athletes' improved understanding of

15   psychological skills (i.e., self-talk, imagery, performance routines) and characteristics (i.e.,

16   focus, emotional control) (PSCs). Finally, the MST program fostered a shared subject specific

17   language between athletes and their coach, enhancing the openness and frequency with which

18   PSCs were talked about. Practical guidelines for future sport psychology interventions with

19   youth athletes and their coaches are provided.

20   **Lay Summary:** A 15-month mental skills training program was conducted with youth tennis

21   players to enhance their ability to regulate their focus and emotional control. Practical guidelines

22   for future interventions with youth athletes and their coaches are provided.

23   **Keywords:** talent development; youth sport; psychological skills training; qualitative methods.

24   Development, Implementation, and Evaluation of an Athlete-Informed Mental Skills Training

25   Program for Elite Youth Tennis Players

26   A plethora of research has attested to the important role of mental skills training (MST)

27 for elite athletic performance (Gould & Maynard, 2009; Hardy et al., 2017). Despite pleas from

28 Vealey (1988) and Côté, Lidor, and Hackfort (2009) about the value and importance of MST

29 with youth athletes, the majority of MST research has focused on elite adult athletes. This is

30 unfortunate since well-developed psychological skills (i.e., athletes' ability to use learned

31 methods to regulate their psychological characteristics) and characteristics (i.e., trait-like

32 dispositions which, despite being relatively stable, can be regulated through the use of

33 psychological skills) can enhance young athletes' likelihood of fulfilling their athletic and

34 personal potential (Dohme, Backhouse, Piggott, & Morgan, 2017; MacNamara, Button, &

35 Collins, 2010). For example, young athletes face many challenges and stressors throughout

36 adolescence such as coping with losses, injuries, balancing sport, school, and their social life, as

37 well as selection and deselection from teams (Larsen, Alfermann, & Christensen, 2012). Experts

38 have suggested that youth athletes with well-developed psychological skills and characteristics

39 (PSCs) are better placed to negotiate these challenges and stressors (Henriksen, Stambulova, &

40 Roessler, 2010), and potentially avoid early drop out or burnout (Gould & Carson, 2008).

41   Recently, a growing number of studies have started to investigate the effects of MST on

42 elite youth athletes (e.g., Fortes et al., 2018; Fournier, Calmels, Durand-Bush, & Salmela, 2005;

43 Ong & Griva, 2017; Sharp, Woodcock, Holland, Cumming, & Duda, 2013). For example,

44 Fournier et al. (2005) evaluated the effects of a 10-month MST program on the performance of

45 10 nationally ranked youth female gymnasts ($M_{age} = 12$). The MST program consisted of 25 half

46 hour sessions that targeted the development of relaxation, self-talk, goal-setting, focusing, and

47 visualization skills. The results indicated that athletes' performance on the vault, bars, beam, and

48 floor improved throughout the MST program. In addition to performance improvements, MST

49 with elite youth athletes can also enhance athletes' knowledge of and ability to use psychological

50 skills. For instance, Sharp et al. (2013) conducted a MST program with 21 Scottish elite male

51 rugby players (M_{age} = 15). The program consisted of nine one-hour sessions that were delivered

52 over a six-month period and taught players psychological skills such as goal setting, self-talk,

53 arousal control, imagery, and pre-competition routines. Focus groups with the athletes and four

54 coaches suggested that the MST program increased athletes' knowledge of psychological skills,

55 aided team cohesion, and increased athletes' openness, honesty, and self-regulation. Collectively,

56 these empirical studies indicate that MST programs can enhance youth athletes' performance and

57 psychological development, although some limitations in the research exist.

58   For instance, few studies exist that were informed by athletes' psychological needs rather

59 than the content of sport psychology literature. Experts such as Henriksen, Larsen, Storm, and

60 Ryom (2014) have suggested that youth athletes and their immediate others (e.g., parents or

61 coaches) should be consulted prior to developing and implementing MST programs to fully

62 grasp athletes' specific psychological needs. Second, qualitative research methods have rarely

63 been used to evaluate MST programs in youth sport. Although quantitative research methods

64 have revealed that MST programs can positively affect youth athletes' performances, qualitative

65 research strategies could further our understanding of youth athletes' experiences and

66 perceptions of MST programs by offering insight into what, how, and why athletes learned

67 (Sparkes & Smith, 2014). Third, sport participation has long been understood as a means for

68 youth and adolescents to develop fundamental psychosocial characteristics such as self-

69 confidence, interpersonal competencies, and emotional control (Côté, Bruner, Erickson,

70 Strachan, & Fraser-Thomas, 2010; Pierce, Kendellen, Camiré, & Gould, 2018), yet most MST

71 programs have been focused on the improvement and measurement of youth athletes' athletic

performance. Future MST programs should aim to facilitate both youth athletes' athletic as well

as psychosocial development. Finally, some authors offered limited insight into the content of

their MST programs for youth sport athletes resulting in a lack of clear description of the content

of these types of programs (Visek, Harris, & Blom, 2009). To gain insight into guiding principles

for youth athlete MST programs, it is necessary to examine the reflective accounts of sport

psychology practitioners who have shared their experiences working with youth athletes (e.g.,

Foster, Maynard, Butt, & Hays, 2016; Howells, 2017). For instance, after interviewing 12

experienced sport psychology practitioners from the United Kingdom, Foster et al. (2016) found

that practitioners employed various strategies to adapt their consultation practices to the needs of

youth sport participants, including the use of role-modelling and comparative narratives. Along

the same line, Howells (2017) offered recommendations following consultation sessions with a

nine-year-old gymnast over a 24-week period, including (1) simplifying complex information,

(2) making MST fun by including enthusiasm and patience and avoiding dry and factual

information, (3) individualizing content by considering athletes' unique characteristics, and (4)

offering relevant practical examples, as well as appropriate content and delivery mediums such

as technological aids. These recommendations are important to consider as experts suggested

that youth athletes constitute a distinct challenge for sport psychology practitioners due to their

level of cognitive development (Gould & Nalepa, 2016; Kipp, 2018). More precisely, McCarthy,

Jones, Harwood, and Olivier (2010) concluded that younger athletes between the ages of 10-15

held different understandings of PSCs compared to more mature athletes.

Taken together, youth athletes are now perceived as a growing and special client base for

sport psychology practitioners (Henriksen et al., 2014). Despite this, a paucity of empirical

research exists that examines the effects of MST programs on youth athletes' understanding of

psychological concepts, as well as their ability to use psychological skills to regulate or enhance

96 their performance and personal development. Moreover, MST programs are not commonly

97 informed by athletes' needs and are evaluated through quantitative research methods. As such,

98 the purpose of this study was twofold. First, the study aimed to develop and implement a MST

99 program for elite youth athletes that was informed by athletes' psychological needs. Second, the

100 study aimed to evaluate the MST program by investigating if, how, and what mental skills

101 athletes learned through qualitative research methods.

Methods

103 The study was underpinned by critical realism, a philosophical paradigm that allows for

104 the in-depth exploration of social phenomena, and the epistemology of reduction, a cyclical

105 research process that aims to bring researchers as close as possible to the reality of the studied

106 phenomena (Pawson & Tilley, 1997). Action research is one method used within critical realism

107 that reflects the nature of reduction. It has been defined as "a form of collective self-reflective

108 enquiry undertaken by participants in social situations in order to improve the rationality and

109 justice of their own social or educational practices, as well as their understanding of these

110 practices and the situations in which these practices are carried out" (Kemmis & McTaggart,

111 1988, pp. 5-6). Subsequently, a 15-month action research study that included the development,

112 implementation, and evaluation of three MST workshops for competitive youth tennis players

113 and their coach took place. Action research purports an in-depth familiarization with an

114 environment before any action is taken (McNiff, 2013). This action is often planned through a

115 collaborative effort of several individuals and includes the identification of a problem, planning

116 of action steps to solve (or clarify) the problem, implementation of these steps, and evaluation of

117 the intervention (McNiff, 2013). The interactive nature of the process enables individuals to

118 learn from each other, which facilitates the understanding of complex situations from several

119 perspectives (McNiff, 2013). The current 15-month action research study was divided into three

120   phases (a nine-month pre-intervention, a two-month intervention, and a four-month evaluation

121   phase) that involve a cycle of planning, acting, monitoring, reflecting, and evaluating (Evans,

122   Hardy, & Fleming, 2000).

123   **Participants**

124   One private English tennis club that specifically focused on the athletic development of

125   young tennis players was chosen for this longitudinal study (Sparkes & Smith, 2014). In total,

126   170 (120 male and 50 female) athletes, ranging from 3-15 years of age, trained regularly in the

127   tennis club. From these 170 athletes, 11 British male players were classified as elite because of

128   their ranking in the top 15 of their respective age groups in the country. According to guidelines

129   from the Lawn Tennis Association, the 11 players were divided into two age-specific

130   performance groups (A1 = ages 8-11; A2 = ages 12-15). The groups included two sets of

131   brothers. Of these four athletes, one was part of group A1 and three were in group A2. At the

132   time of the study, players engaged in approximately nine hours of structured training each week

133   at the club. None of the athletes had been exposed to a formal MST program prior to the current

134   workshops.

135   The head coach of these athletes played an important role in the MST intervention. The

136   coach was a 34-year-old British male with 18 years of coaching experience, who held a Lawn

137   Tennis Association (LTA) Level 3 coaching qualification. He started to play tennis at the age of

138   three, went through an extensive talent development process himself, and represented his county

139   from the age of 10 to 18. He started to coach full-time at the club after completing an

140   undergraduate degree in Town and Country Planning at an English university. Apart from

141   participating in a four-hour workshop called "Coaching Kids for Self-Belief" that was offered by

142   the LTA as part of coaches' continuous personal development, the coach had no previous

143   experience of formal sport psychology education.

144   To help inform the intervention, 15 parents (P$_{1-15}$, M$_{age}$ = 48, SD = 6.16) were also part of

145   the study. Apart from three instances in which only one parent per athlete participated, both

146   mother and father of each athlete were included in the study. In total, this sample consisted of

147   seven fathers and eight mothers. All parents were British except for two who were Polish.

Procedure

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149   Ethical approval was granted by the university's ethics committee. Following this, the

150   coach of the tennis club was contacted since he agreed to serve as the gatekeeper for this study.

151   Consequently, the coach informed the athletes and their parents about the purpose of the study.

152   Eleven athletes collected an information and consent form package from the coach that included

153   parent and athlete information sheets, as well as parent consent and athlete assent forms. All

154   eleven athletes returned the signed consent and assent forms, and were subsequently included in

155   the intervention.

Data Collection

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157   Given that qualitative research is a subjective process in which researchers bring their

158   own history, assumptions, values, and perspectives, it is important to offer a brief description of

159   the main researcher's background and experiences, as well as the role and experiences of the co-

160   authors (Braun & Clarke, 2013). The lead researcher was born and raised in Germany and had

161   extensive tennis experience, competing nationally from the age of four to 20 and being a

162   qualified Level 3 tennis coach. She was confident applying sport psychology principles to the

163   sport of tennis given her experiences as a player and coach, postgraduate studies in sport

164   psychology, and leadership of international coach and athlete education programs that were

165   informed and evaluated through qualitative research methods. These experiences enhanced her

166   ability to communicate technically with the coach, athletes, and parents, and to develop a MST

167   program that offered relevant examples and sport specific MST drills. In addition, each data

168   collection phase was supported by three co-authors, all of whom have extensive experience

169   working in youth sport settings. Specifically, the first co-author is a Certified Mental

170   Performance Consultant with the Canadian Sport Psychology Association and a Certified Youth

171   Sport Coach within the Coaching Association of Canada. The second co-author is a Certified

172   Level 3 Basketball Coach and renowned coach educator, and the third co-author is a Chartered

173   Sport and Exercise Psychologist with the British Psychological Society and Health and Care

174   Professions Council.

175   **Pre-Intervention Phase (9 months).** In line with action research protocols (McNiff,

176   2013), the objective of the pre-intervention phase was to develop an in-depth understanding of

177   players' psychological needs through a collaborative and reflective effort of athletes' parents,

178   coach, and the researcher. This process sought to inform the development and implementation of

179   an intervention that would address athletes' psychological needs.

180   To achieve these objectives qualitative research methods were employed as these enable

181   researchers to understand individuals' lived experiences from several perspectives through

182   observations and sustained dialogues (i.e., member reflection; Smith & McGannon, 2018), thus

183   providing rich and holistic insights into athletes' experiences, needs, and interests (Braun &

184   Clarke, 2013). Subsequently, the first author spent Wednesday and Thursday afternoons in the

185   researched environment for a period of nine months prior to the commencement of the MST

186   program. During this time, she engaged in two observation approaches, namely 'participant-as-

187   observer' and 'observer-as-participant' (Sparkes & Smith, 2014). For the first four months of the

188   pre-intervention phase, the researcher adapted the role of a participant-as-observer to immerse

189   herself in the researched environment and forge authentic relationships with participants. While

190   being a participant-as-observer, the researcher got actively involved in the researched

191   environment by taking on the role of a hitting partner or player of the group. According to

192   Sparkes and Smith (2014), the "advantage of this type of observation is the ease with which the

193   researcher-participant relationships can be forged" (p. 101). Despite this, the method limited the

194   researcher's ability to take detailed field notes, make fully conscious observations, and engage

195   participants in sustained dialogues. As a result, she adopted an observer-as-participant approach

196   for the final five months of the pre-intervention phase. During this time, the researcher's active

197   involvement in the training sessions was minimal; allowing her to ask questions, probe

198   participants' thinking, take detailed field notes, and move around the research environment more

199   freely, while still being accepted as part of the group (Sparkes & Smith, 2014). Additionally, this

200   approach allowed the researcher to engage participants in reflective conversations that clarified

201   or expanded upon already collected data (Carr & Kemmis, 1988; Smith & McGannon, 2018).

202   During the pre-intervention phase, the researcher spent a total of 172.5 hours in the researched

203   club and 13 hours at two athlete tournaments. In total, 87 pages of field notes were collected.

204   To enrich the observational data that was to inform the athlete MST program, data were

205   also collected through semi-structured interviews with all 15 parents and the coach during the

206   final five months of the pre-intervention phase[1]. All interviews were audio recorded and

207   transcribed, lasted approximately 70 minutes, and ranged from 53 to 109 minutes. Although the

208   parents and coach's interview guides differed slightly, both consisted of open-ended questions

209   that required parents and the coach to elaborate on their (a) understanding of sport psychology

210   (e.g., How would you describe sport psychology?), (b) approach to PSCs development (e.g., Do

211   you engage in any specific behaviours to develop your child(ren)/athletes mentally?), and (c)

212   challenges of youth athletes' psychological development (e.g., Have you ever experienced

213   challenges when trying to develop your child(ren)/athlete mentally?). In total, 485 pages of

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[1] Interview guides are available upon request by contacting the corresponding author at LDohme@cariffmet.ac.uk.

214   interview transcripts were collected and stored using the computer software NVivo10. Along

215   with the observational data, this information provided a foundation upon which the content of

216   MST program could be developed.

217   **Intervention Phase (2 months).** The objective of the intervention phase was to enhance

218   athletes' psychological characteristics identified as improvement worthy during the pre-

219   intervention phase. To do so, athletes were provided with a MST program that was guided by a

220   cognitive-behavioural consultancy approach (cf. Mace, 1990). This approach helped teach

221   athletes that their thoughts and feelings positively and negatively affected their performance, and

222   that these emotions and thoughts could be challenged, intervened, and controlled using

223   psychological skills, such as pre-performance routines and positive self-talk.

224   During the MST program, athletes engaged in various tasks that offered insight into their

225   understanding of psychological concepts. To explore this understanding and facilitate the

226   evaluation of the program through data collection, the workshops were video recorded and

227   program workbooks photocopied after the completion of the intervention phase. In addition,

228   anonymous feedback from the athletes about the MST program was collected on post-it notes

229   after every workshop. On these notes, athletes outlined what they liked and disliked about the

230   workshop and described something they had learned and then implemented during the on-court

231   activities. The feedback was used to enhance forthcoming workshops.

232   **Evaluation Phase (4 months).** The objective of the evaluation phase was to identify if,

233   what, and how athletes learned during the intervention phase. Several data sources were used to

234   achieve this objective including athlete-workshop data, observations, field notes, and a semi-

235   structured interview with the coach. More specifically, the first author spent an additional 40

236   hours over a four-month period in the researched environment following the workshops to

237   monitor, reflect, and evaluate the effects of the intervention (Evans et al., 2000). During this

238 time, she adapted an observer-as-participant approach, whereby her active involvement in the

239 training sessions was minimal. This allowed the researcher to make detailed observations and

240 engage athletes, parents, and the coach frequently in informal, yet sometimes critical reflections

241 about the effects of the intervention (Sparkes & Smith, 2014). In total, 34 pages of field notes

242 were collected. In addition, a 60-minute semi-structured interview was conducted with the coach

243 that aimed to elicit information about athletes' learning and the coach's perception of the

244 workshops. Questions such as "What was your general impression of the workshops?", "Why do

245 you feel that the workshops were appropriate for the athletes?", "What do you think athletes

246 learned from the workshops?", "What elements of the workshops do you think helped the

247 athletes to learn these things?", and "Have you noticed a change in athletes' behaviours?", were

248 asked. Follow-up probes allowed the researcher to gain a detailed understanding of the coach's

249 answers (e.g., "Can you give me an example of this?" or "What does this look like in practice?").

250 In total, 12 pages of interview transcripts were collected and stored using the computer software

251 NVivo10.

252 **Data Analysis**

253 　　　Inductive thematic analysis was used to analyse all data sets, which included the field

254 notes from participant observations, athlete-workshop data, and semi-structured interviews

255 (Braun & Clarke, 2013). Thematic analysis allows for the synthesis and organization of large

256 amounts of data that explores psychological and social phenomena (Braun & Clarke, 2013). In

257 addition, it offers rich descriptions of the data collected by identifying, analysing, interpreting,

258 and reporting common patterns or themes that emerge from the data (Sparkes & Smith, 2014).

259 Drawing on Braun and Clarke's (2013) thematic analysis guidelines, a six-step data analysis

260 process was applied. This included (1) familiarization with the data; (2) generating initial codes;

261 (3) searching for and identifying themes; (4) reviewing themes; (5) defining and naming themes;

262 and (6) writing the report. More specifically, the first author began the data analysis process by

263 listening to and reading the data until she felt truly immersed in it. After familiarization with the

264 data was established, the researcher started to organize the data extracts into segments that

265 encompassed the same or similar pieces of information. A code was then assigned to each

266 segment. The third and fourth phase of the thematic analysis process were conducted

267 simultaneously. First, the researcher set out to identify themes across the established codes. The

268 themes were reviewed through peer reflection and critical friends (Smith & McGannon, 2018).

269 More insight into this process is given in the "Quality Standards" section. Phases five and six of

270 the thematic analysis are outlined in the results section.

271 **Quality Standards**

272   Several methods were implemented to help ensure the rigor, authenticity, and

273 trustworthiness of the data collection and analysis process. First, to facilitate an in-depth

274 familiarization with the researched context, the first author embedded herself into the

275 environment for a total of 15 months (Smith & Sparkes, 2014). This allowed for authentic,

276 trusting relationships between the participants and herself to be forged. Second, the prolonged

277 immersion allowed for sustained dialogue with the participants. During this process 'member

278 reflection' was engaged in, which led to additional data being collected and other data being

279 discussed (Smith & McGannon, 2018). For instance, the researcher would frequently engage

280 participants in informal conversations to explore and clarify the interpretation of findings to

281 guard against any biases unduly influencing this process. According to Smith and McGannon

282 (2018), this process produces rigorous qualitative research as it facilitates a robust and

283 intellectually enriched understanding through the generation of additional insight. Third, rich

284 data sets were collected through a variation of data collection methods (i.e., observations, field

285 notes, and interviews) and participants (i.e., parents, athletes, and coaches) (Sparkes & Smith,

286   2014). Finally, the researcher was immersed in a vibrant and interdisciplinary research

287   community consisting of academics working in disciplines such as coaching, youth sport

288   development, and sport psychology. Consequently, the researcher was surrounded by a host of

289   'critical friends', affording her the opportunity to critically discuss and reflect upon her findings,

290   potential biases, and research processes on a weekly basis (Smith & McGannon, 2018).

291   **Results**

292   A 15-month action research study was conducted that included a pre-intervention (i.e.,

293   identification of a problem and planning of action steps to solve the problem), intervention (i.e.,

294   implementation of action steps), and evaluation (i.e., evaluation of the intervention) phase. This

295   section begins by offering insight into the themes that emerged from the nine-month pre-

296   intervention phase, including how these informed the content of the two-month intervention

297   phase. This is followed by a brief overview of the intervention's content. The section concludes

298   by presenting the themes that emanated from the four-month evaluation phase. Pseudonyms are

299   used throughout the results to ensure participants' anonymity. To identify participants, athletes

300   aged 8-11 are marked as A1s, athletes aged 12-15 as A2s, and parents with the letter P.

301   **Pre-Intervention Phase: Building Rapport and Identifying Athletes' Psychological Needs**

302   Action researchers seek to develop an in-depth understanding of an environment before

303   manipulating and adjusting some of its key features in order to bring about positive change

304   (McNiff, 2013). To allow for an in-depth understanding to be developed, it is important that

305   researchers establish an authentic relationship with their participants. This section begins by

306   offering insight into the rapport building process, before presenting athletes' psychological needs

307   identified through a collaboration with athletes, their parents, and the coach. The section is

308   framed using the themes that emerged from the data analysis of the pre-intervention phase:

309   *building rapport* and *athletes' psychological needs – focus and emotional control.* Each theme is

310   presented below and quotes and field notes used to illustrate participants' experiences.

311   **Building rapport.** It was important that the first author established an authentic

312   relationship with participants to gain an understanding of athletes' psychological needs. As the

313   following field notes outline, it took several months to establish the desired rapport with athletes:

314   On my first day, the coach introduced me to the athletes as 'a former high level

315   tennis player, who still plays good tennis, and has a bunch of coaching

316   experience. She also does sport psychology, which makes her like a helper for our

317   minds. This means that she can perhaps help us to improve your performances,

318   wherefore she will assist me with our training for a while. Be nice to her'.

319   Nevertheless, the athletes commonly come in and shout 'Hi coach', chat to him

320   about all sorts, and eventually go 'Thanks coach, bye', while I am stood right next

321   to him, with a big smile on my face, still getting no recognition. When the coach

322   tells the athletes to chat to me, they sit as far as possible away from me and go

323   bright red. Will they ever "be nice to me"? *(Field note 10-06-2015)*

324   Finally! Today I am feeling very accepted by the group. The players are starting

325   to talk to me in a relaxed manner, make jokes (occasionally on my cost), offer

326   more than one word answers, sit with me without the coach having to tell them to

327   do so, and even shouted 'Thanks [researchers name], see you tomorrow' after

328   today's session. They are finally starting to accept me! *(Field note 16-09-2015)*

329   Only after athletes' initial shyness was overcome, was the researcher able to get to know

330   the athletes through increasingly authentic conversations and observations:

331   The athletes are really opening up to me now. I am learning something new about

332   them each day, such as what they do in their free time, who their friends are, why

333   they are playing tennis, what is going on in school, etc. *(Field note 08-10-2015)*

334   In addition to spending considerable time in participants' environment by attending

335 training sessions, competitions, and social events, it is believed that the researcher's background,

336 personality, educational and immersive research approach enhanced her acceptance among the

337 athletes and coach. For instance, being able to hit with the athletes and talk about her past

338 experiences as well as current tennis events, was reported to have fostered an authentic

339 relationship between the athletes and researcher:

340   The boys talk a lot about you. They are very impressed by your background. You

341   played competitively, coached in America and played for the University's first

342   team. All stuff my boys are dreaming of doing. You are good role model and

343   inspire them. (Stephen, P8)

344 Finally, the coach reported a strong liking of the researcher's immersive and educational

345 approach:

346   I know you haven't really started to properly teach us stuff yet, but you have

347   helped me a lot already over the past three months. You are really good at

348   teaching people stuff without them really noticing. You are not patronising or

349   telling me what to do. So far, I have never once felt undermined by you. You do it

350   really subtle and step by step. You make suggestions but you don't tell me. You

351   put ideas in my head and I then think I have come up with these ideas myself. It's

352   really good, especially for big egos like mine. You did not come in being like 'I

353   know so much and you don't', not at all. You are very personal and friendly. I am

354   excited for the rest of our time together.

355   In sum, these findings outline that the researcher's personality and background perhaps

356   accelerated the establishment of rapport between herself, the athletes, and coach.

357   **Athletes' psychological needs – focus and emotional control.** Interview data revealed

358   that parents and the coach were aware of the important role PSCs played during youth athletes'

359   development. John (P_5) explained: "I think to fulfil your potential in any given field of life, but

360   particularly in sport, you need to manage the mental process as well as the physical ones." The

361   coach reinforced this point: "They all hit well at the top level, it comes down to having the

362   mental capacity to succeed." Together, participants deemed a host of PSCs as fundamental for

363   athletes' positive development: "It is stuff like motivation, hard-work, being confident and

364   focused, bouncing back from failure, staying positive by having positive imagery and self-talk."

365   (Leanne, P_{15}). Nevertheless, a combination of observational data and interviews revealed that

366   athletes struggled in particular with their focus and emotional control: "Staying focused is a real

367   problem for him. Sometimes he is ahead 4-1 and then gives it away because he is not with it."

368   (Michael, P_{10}). Similarly, Jeremy (P_{12}) reported: "He loses it sometimes, gets angry, throws his

369   racket. Can't control his emotions. He loses matches because of that, even if he is the better

370   player." Observations and informal conversations with the athletes aligned with these reports:

371   Freddie (A1) is really not with it today. He is sitting on his racket, not offering

372   balls to his opponents, chatting to his buddy Tom (A1) who is playing on another

373   court, and making easy mistakes. He appears bored; when this happens his focus

374   always vanishes. *(Field note, 18-11-2015)*

375   Andy (A2) played incredible today. He was 5:2 up against the player regarded

376   the best of the group. He served for the win, but double faulted twice. He got so

377   worked up about it that he lost the set 5:7. He marched over to my bench and

378   said: "I ALWAYS do this! I am playing out of this world, then, instead of

379   concentrating on the next point, I start thinking about winning and completely

380   lose focus. Then I make stupid mistakes and get so angry with myself that

381   nothing works anymore." *(Field note 03-12-2015)*

382 Mark (P_7) and Jessica (P_6) explained that the loss of focus and emotional control was

383 significantly influenced by their children's perceptions of success and failure:

384   There are often tears after or even during a match when my son is about to lose.

385   Even if he is playing really well. Then he loses his focus, gets upset. He doesn't

386   seem to understand that it is not always about winning. (Mark, P_7)

387   I caught Tom lying about who he had beaten at tennis. We had a big discussion

388   about it. Turns out that he thought that if he wins I would love him more. I just

389   said 'For goodness sake, I love you if you lose everything! [participant cries] All I

390   want is for you to be happy. I could not love you any more or less.' He really did

391   for a while think that it mattered to me if he won. (Jessica, P_6)

392   Despite the loss of focus and emotional control being a common issue, parents and the

393 coach felt ill equipped to help athletes regulate these psychological characteristics:

394   After repeatedly shouting 'focus focus' at the athletes, the coach turned around

395   to me and said 'All I really do is tell them to focus. But if I just tell them to

396   focus, it is very hollow, nothing much behind what I am actually saying. The

397   information I am giving to them should be deeper. I am not actually telling them

398   how to focus or refocus. I should be giving them strategies that help them to do

399   it. But I just don't know these.' *(Field note, 25-11-2015)*

400 Parents experienced similar feelings, as evidenced by the following quotes:

401   I'm hoping to go away from this [interview] with a better understanding of how

402   to better coach my 8-year-old son with the stress and strain of playing tennis. So

403   far I have found it very stressful and he has found it stressful. I would like to help

404   him control his emotions, but I don't feel like I can. I don't feel like I have

405   enough knowledge to really help him through that time. (John, P_5)

406   My son is prone to looking at all the things that have gone wrong rather than

407   concentrating on the things that have gone well. I have talked to him about it.

408   Said that it is not good and that he should stay positive instead. But that's all I

409   can really do. Talk to him about it. I can't teach him strategies that would make it

410   easier. I don't know them. I can just share my experience with him. (Maria, P_9)

411 It is possible that the cause of these feelings was a perceived lack of education and training that

412 taught parents how to support athletes' psychological development. Along the same line, the

413 coach explained: "Coach education workshops don't really teach you how to teach kids to

414 control their emotions. They touch on it, maybe talk about it, but don't show you how to do it.

415 And the parents, they don't get any education on this kind of stuff." Participants therefore

416 believed that it was the responsibility of "someone more qualified" (Kaitlin, P_{11}) to develop

417 athletes' PSCs.

418   Taking all information into consideration, a MST program was designed to strengthen

419 athletes' focus and emotional control. All of the athletes were exposed to the same workshops

420 despite their age differences. During the workshops, younger athletes were 'buddied' with older

421 athletes to support each other's learning.

422 **Intervention Phase: A Mental Skills Training Program for Youth Tennis Players**

423   The MST program consisted of three interactive classroom and on-court workshops.

424 These were delivered at three different time points over a two-month period to all 11 athletes and

425 their coach. A deliberate decision was made to deliver the workshops to all athletes at the same

426 time despite their age differences. First, athletes frequently trained together as their tennis skills

427 were similar. Second, none of the athletes had a prior understanding of sport psychology. Finally,

428 the positive interrelationship between the groups was used to avoid potential insecurities about

429 spelling and grammar in the younger athletes. To do so a "buddy system" was established in

430 which younger athletes were paired with older athletes to provide support during the workshops

431 if needed. Each workshop was divided into 1.5 hours of classroom-based education (see Table 1

432 for a detailed overview), a 30-minute lunch break, and 2 hours of on-court tennis specific mental

433 skills drills. The first two classroom sessions consisted of the first author educating the athletes

434 and their coach about the psychological characteristics focus and emotional control. In addition,

435 athletes' knowledge of psychological skills that regulate or facilitate athletes' ability to focus and

436 control their emotions (i.e., self-talk, imagery, and performance routines) was strengthened. The

437 final classroom session addressed athletes' perceptions of success and failure and offered athletes

438 an additional opportunity to reflect upon and practice their psychological skills self-talk and

439 performance routines. Complex psychological topics were explained through the use of pictures,

440 stories, videos, and terminology athletes were familiar with. For instance, images of spotlight

441 beams were used to explain the difference between internal and external focus. Moreover, clips

442 of athletes' favourite tennis players or films, such as "Kicking and Screaming", were shown to

443 outline good and bad examples of maintaining and regaining focus. Athletes were actively

444 engaged in individual or group tasks such as discussions, workbook tasks, or case-study

445 activities after every 5-10 minutes of content delivery. For example, one of the workbook tasks

446 required athletes to identify factors that commonly distracted them, as well as those that helped

447 them regain or maintain focus. These strategies were shared and discussed with the group and

448 practiced after lunch, when the coach and first author engaged athletes in tennis specific mental

449 skills drills that were informed by Lauer, Gould, Lubbers, and Kovacs' (2010) handbook. The

450 researcher used this book to identify drills that tested athletes' ability to focus and control their

451 emotions and aligned with the psychological skills that had been taught prior to the on-court

452 sessions.

453 **Evaluation Phase: What and How Did Athletes Learn?**

454   This section presents what and how athletes learned about the PSCs targeted in the MST

455 program. Data was collected through a semi-structured interview with the coach and post-

456 intervention observations that were conducted over a four-month period and included informal

457 chats with athletes, their parents, and the coach. The section is framed using the themes that

458 emerged from the data analysis of the evaluation phase. In relation to what athletes learned, these

459 themes are: an *enhanced understanding of psychological skills and characteristics*, an *increased*

460 *use of psychological skills,* and the development of *a shared subject specific language*. In terms

461 of how athletes learned, information can be found in the theme called *the importance of the pre-*

462 *intervention phase.* All four themes are explained below and data illustrated for each theme.

463   **An enhanced understanding of psychological skills and characteristics.** Athletes

464 reported that the program enhanced their understanding of focus and emotional control. More

465 specifically, they explained that prior to the MST program they were unaware that they could

466 control their emotions and focus:

467   I knew that getting angry during games wasn't good. My coach and parents tell

468   me all the time to 'stop getting in a mood'. I tried, but it never really worked. I

469   didn't really feel like I could control it. But your talks showed me that I can

470   control it, I just need to practice your tips and eventually I will get it. (Josh, A2,

471   *Field note 12-05-2016*)

472 Additionally, Nick (A2) explained:

473   I have always talked to myself during games and sometimes training, but I never

474   knew that others do that too and that bad self-talk is bad for my focus. Because

475   when I get angry and use bad self-talk, I don't focus on my tennis, I focus on the

476   things that make me angry. *(Field note 12-05-2016)*

477 Similarly, Dave (A2) stated:

478   I have been doing a serve routine my whole life. My coach and dad told me to do

479   it. But I didn't know that it was **that** important, that it helps me to focus so that I

480   get more serves in. *(Field note 12-05-2016)*

481 Athletes further reinforced this point by reporting that, prior to the workshops, they did not

482 know that the behaviours they so frequently engaged in, such as self-talk or imagery, "were

483 psychological things" (Gary, A2, *Field note 27-04-2016*) that influenced their focus and

484 emotional control. A cause for this lack of understanding could be that athletes' immediate

485 others, such as their coach and parents, also possessed a limited understanding of psychological

486 skills. The coach explained:

487   Until you arrived I didn't think that it [(pre-) performance routine] was a

488   psychological skill. I did it to help them [the athletes] improve their technique

489   because I noticed that they rushed. So performance routines were technically

490   based in my eyes, now I realize that they actually help the athletes to focus.

491   Athletes' newly gained understanding about PSCs appeared to enhance their ability and

492 willingness to regulate their psychological characteristics more consistently:

493   I noticed that athletes engage much more frequently in their serve routines now.

494   When asking Andy (A2) why this was the case, he replied 'After your talks, I

495   realized that the serve routine really helps me to focus and block everything else

496   out before I serve. So now, I just focus on the ball and my dribbling. Nothing else.

497   It makes a real difference to my serve. *(Field note 25-05-2016)*

498   **An increased use of psychological skills.** Athletes' use of psychological skills increased

499 as a result of athletes' enhanced understanding of PSCs. Tom (A1) stated: "I now know that I can

500 control my mind with some of the tricks we learned, like talking to myself positively. I now try

501 to say good things in my head rather than bad things that upset me" (*Field note 11-05-2016*).

502 Similarly, Andy (A2) explained:

503   Instead of doing my serve routine sometimes, I now do it all the time. I now know

504   why I should be doing it and that it is important for the consistency of my serve. I

505   was told to do it before and have seen world-ranked players do it too, so it was

506   just something I did without really thinking about it. Now I know that it makes me

507   better, so I want to do it more often. (*Field note 25-05-2016*)

508 Athletes increased use of psychological skills was also noticed by the coach:

509   It is like they [the athletes] are transformed. Before the workshops, especially

510   with the younger ones, I had to walk around and say 'remember your serve

511   routines, remember your serve routines'. I had to remind them all the time. And

512   now, every single one of them is doing it every single time!

513 In addition, parents reported that athletes transferred their use of psychological skills from

514 training into tournament situations, Stephen (P$_8$) reported:

515   Freddie (A1), my younger one, he is definitely a bit more focused when we go to

516   tournaments now. He double-faults less. I think it's because he finally engages in

517   his serve routine consistently. I have been telling him for years, but I think it took

518   the workshops for him to understand why I want him to do it. And my older one,

519   less jabbering, much more fist pumps and positive chat. He still has a long way to

520   go, but I can see him getting there. His attitude is better.

521   **The development of a shared subject specific language.** Finally, it was observed and

522   reported that the MST program facilitated a shared subject specific language between the athletes

523   and their coach. This helped the individuals to communicate more effectively with each other:

524   Another good thing is that you have created a shared language between us. You

525   helped to expand my vocabulary, but also the one of the athletes. I used to tell the

526   kids before they went off to play points to work hard, because I knew they

527   understood what I meant with that. But I never gave more detailed information.

528   Now I don't just tell them to work hard, but also to focus, use their routines, and

529   shut off their negative self-talk. It makes a massive difference. (Coach)

530   Moreover, athletes reported to talk more openly about psychological skills since engaging in the

531   program. Andy (A2) explained: "I sometimes struggle to stay positive, so I asked Dave (A2)

532   what he tells himself because he is always so positive. That helped me to make my negative

533   thoughts more positive" (*Field note 09-06-2016*). The increased communication about

534   psychological skills was also noticed in the younger athletes as this field note exemplifies:

535   The athletes practiced doubles today. After Will (A1) double faulted for the

536   second time, his doubles partner Freddie (A1) turned around from the net and said

537   'Come on Will, try to use your imagery before you serve again. That will help

538   you to get it in. I do it all the time.' *(Field note 19-05-2016)*

539   Taken together, the findings suggest that the MST program triggered several positive

540   outcomes for the youth athletes, including an enhanced understanding and use of PSCs, as well

541   as a shared subject specific language. In addition, athletes reported enjoying the MST program

542   despite smaller issues, such as a dislike for having to handwrite information into the program

543   workbooks. Additional qualitative data was collected to identify how these positive outcomes

544   were able to be elicited. The results are presented in the following section.

545 **The importance of the pre-intervention phase.** Participants consistently outlined that

546 the pre-intervention phase allowed for the establishment of rapport and, subsequently,

547 meaningful content and delivery mediums. More specifically, investing the time to get to know

548 athletes and their coach prior to the commencement of the MST program was perceived as a

549 fundamental asset of the program's success. The coach reflected: "Wasn't it funny how quiet and

550 red the boys went when you first started here and now they won't shut up and ask a million times

551 where you are when you are not here." After overcoming athletes' initial shyness, the researcher

552 was able to get to know the athletes and develop a foundation that would inform the MST

553 program. The coach stated: "It really paid off that you stuck with us for so long, you are like part

554 of the team now, and that's why we liked listening to you and why the boys got as involved [in

555 the program] as they did."

556 In addition, listening to and observing the athletes, their coach and parents over a

557 prolonged period of time allowed the researcher to develop meaningful content and delivery

558 mediums. In particular, the researcher was able to learn about athletes' interests, such as their

559 favourite players, and explore their understanding of sport psychology:

560 My biggest worry was you have Jordan who is 8 years old and Andy who is 15,

561 and would Jordan even ever know what all these words are? But the way you

562 explained it, they could all do it and relate to it, cos you used examples from when

563 you were here with us. (Coach)

564 Piper (P$_1$), the mother of the youngest athlete, agreed with this contention:

565 From what he said, I got the impression that he could relate to what you were

566 saying because he has felt it. Those issues you discussed, he had experienced

567 them and hadn't quite known how to deal with them, so what he could do was

568   thinking 'Oh yeah, I have been there'. Which is good, cos that made him realize

569   that such feelings are normal and showed him that you can manage them.

570 In addition to being able to relate to the program, athletes stated that "the workshops were really

571 good fun. I liked all the photos and the videos you showed us of our favourite players" (Tom,

572 A1, *Field note 10-02-2016*).

573   Finally, the coach and athletes perceived that the workshops were "pitched at the right

574 level" (coach), because "you used words we knew, and taught us about stuff we were already

575 doing, but actually explained them" (Andy, A2, *Field note 10-02-2016*). Together, it appears

576 that the time spent in the researched environment prior to the intervention allowed the

577 researcher to learn and adapt to athletes' jargon and build upon already existing knowledge and

578 behaviours.

579   **Discussion**

580   The purpose of the present study was to develop, implement, and evaluate a MST

581 program for elite youth tennis players that was informed by athletes' psychological needs and

582 personal interests. Results indicated that the program successfully taught athletes about focus and

583 emotional control, as well as psychological skills that helped athletes to regulate these

584 characteristics. Consequently, the findings correspond to previous MST programs for youth

585 athletes that also found the benefits of equipping youth athletes with PSCs to deal with the

586 challenges and stressors of elite sport (e.g., Fortes et al., 2018; Sharp et al., 2013). Nevertheless,

587 the steps taken to develop, implement, and evaluate the current MST program were unique and

588 extend the literature in several ways.

589   The current MST program was informed by critical realism and action research

590 principles, placing significant importance on the researcher's prolonged immersion in the

591 intervention setting to allow for an enriched assessment of athletes' needs and interests, the

592   development of rapport, and an in-depth understanding of the environment in which athletes

593   were embedded (McNiff, 2013; Pawson & Tilley, 1997). Although action research is widely

594   used in education- and health-related fields (e.g., Campbell & Filimon, 2018; Lenthall et al.,

595   2018) and experts have outlined the value of researchers' prolonged immersion in intervention

596   settings (e.g., Henriksen et al., 2014; Visek et al., 2009), research investigating youth athletes'

597   psychological development has been much slower to implement its guiding principles. A

598   common reason for the lack of researchers' prolonged immersion appears to be the limited time

599   they are afforded in these settings prior to the implementation of MST programs (Harwood &

600   Steptoe, 2013). Experts suggested that this may be due to the stigma that sport psychology

601   services can "quick fix" athletes' problems (MacNamara & Collins, 2013; Pain & Harwood,

602   2004). This is unfortunate since many researchers have advocated that youth athletes'

603   psychological development should be personalized, proactive, and embedded systematically into

604   athletes' everyday practices (e.g., Côté et al., 2010; MacNamara et al., 2010). To follow these

605   guidelines, it is essential that researchers establish an in-depth familiarization with athletes'

606   personalities, habits, needs, and interests, as well as the setting in which the MST program is to

607   take place (e.g., Gardner & Moore, 2005; Henriksen et al., 2014). In line with these objectives,

608   the lead researcher of the current study spent nine months in the researched youth sport setting

609   prior to the creation of the MST program. Spending this significant amount of time at the tennis

610   club allowed the researcher to establish rapport with all participants to a degree that she was

611   considered part of the environment. In addition to the considerable time spent at the club, it is

612   believed that the researcher's personality, background, and educational approach accelerated the

613   rapport building process. For instance, it was reported that the researcher's hands-on

614   involvement in training sessions fostered athletes' acceptance of her and that her understanding

615   of competitive youth tennis enhanced the relevance of examples used during the MST program.

616   In addition to placing significant importance on the researcher's prolonged immersion in

617   the intervention setting, results showed that athletes' use and regulation of PSCs improved after

618   the MST program. For instance, athletes consistently engaged in serve routines and consciously

619   replaced their negative with positive self-talk following the MST. To understand athletes' change

620   in behaviour, it is possible to refer to Michie, Stralen, and West's (2011) COM-B model. The

621   model consists of four components, including behaviours, capability, opportunity, and

622   motivation, and recognizes that the latter three components shape individuals' intention to

623   engage in behaviours. Consequently, for behaviour change to occur, one or more of the three

624   components need to be manipulated. Specifically, the motivation to engage in a behaviour is said

625   to increase if individuals have the opportunity (i.e., factors that lie outside of individuals' control

626   that make the behaviour possible or prompt it) and capability (i.e., individuals' psychological and

627   physical capacity to engage in an activity, including having the necessary knowledge and skills)

628   to engage in the behaviour. This supports the interpretation of the current results, outlining that

629   youth athletes' motivation to use and regulate PSCs consistently can indeed increase as a cause

630   of athletes' enhanced understanding of PSCs. Although this finding is in line with various youth

631   sport development frameworks such as the Mastery Approach to Coaching (Smith & Smoll,

632   2002), Positive Youth Development in Sport (Côté, et al., 2010), and the Life Skills Promotion

633   Model (Gould & Carson, 2008), the COM-B Model has received little attention in the youth

634   athlete developmental literature. Based on the current findings, it appears that the theory can be

635   applied to the youth sport context and supports the notion that athletes should be offered explicit

636   opportunities, such as education, modelling, and training, to develop the necessary capabilities,

637   to be increasingly motivated and able to regulate their focus and emotions. While the present

638   study was not designed to measure athletes' capability to use PSCs or evaluate the opportunities

639   they are afforded to develop and practice PSCs before and after the MST program, it would be

640 interesting for future research to investigate the usefulness of behaviour change theories to

641 increase youth athletes' effective use of PSCs.

642   The COM-B model can also be used to explain parents and the coach's calls for more

643 accessible and appropriate educational opportunities designed to educate them about youth

644 athletes' effective psychological development. Specifically, participants reported that their

645 motivation and confidence to support youth athletes' psychological development would increase

646 if their capability to do so was fostered. While the present study was not designed to delve

647 deeper into the educational needs of parents and coaches, future research should aim to work

648 collaboratively with these individuals to ensure that the delivery of educational opportunities is

649 appropriately adapted to the ever-evolving needs of this audience (Gould, 2016). It is appreciated

650 that this idea does not come without challenges. Specifically, when looking at the provision of

651 educational opportunities from a broader or policy perspective, it is worth noting that a

652 discrepancy between regulations reinforced by some sport organizations and recommendations

653 made within the youth sport literature can exist (cf. Pankhurst, Collins, & MacNamara, 2012).

654 This might hinder or decelerate the appropriate education of athletes, parents, and coaches

655 (Gould, 2016). Subsequently, more efforts are required that foster a dedicated and mutually

656 beneficial collaboration between researchers, sport psychology practitioners, and sport

657 organizations that has the potential to enhance the likelihood of positive youth development in

658 the real world. To achieve such collaboration, researchers are encouraged to shift their focus

659 from sole knowledge acquisition to a combination of knowledge acquisition, transfer, and

660 dissemination (Gould, 2016).

661   Finally, after developing athletes and the coach's capability to use subject specific

662 terminology, participants reported feeling more confident to talk openly, frequently, and

663 explicitly about PSCs. Previous research by Richards, Collins, and Mascarenhas (2012) gleaned

664 similar results when exploring the complexity of decision-making in elite netball. Their findings

665 outlined that athletes' feelings of connectivity and relatedness increased after clarifying the

666 language that players and coaches used throughout training and competitions. Together, this is an

667 important lesson for future youth athlete and coach interventions, as it outlines the importance of

668 clarifying context specific vocabulary to facilitate effective communication with and between

669 participants. It would be premature to assume that the facilitation of a shared subject specific

670 language normalized the use of PSCs within the researched environment, yet future research

671 should explore this contention.

Limitations and Future Research Directions

673 Although the present study offered some practical results, limitations need to be

674 considered. First, the MST program was informed and evaluated solely through qualitative

675 research methods, which limits the generalizability of the results. In addition, no performance

676 data was collected that could provide further indication about the success of the intervention. To

677 benefit from the advantages of both qualitative and quantitative research methods, future

678 research should consider adopting a mixed method approach. Second, all participants took part in

679 a MST program that was informed by a nine-month pre-intervention phase. Therefore, it is not

680 possible to identify if similar results could have been achieved through a shorter or even longer

681 pre-intervention phase. Finally, while parents informed the current MST program, they did not

682 partake in the program to learn about PSCs themselves. To further the long-term positive effects

683 of youth athletes' MST programs, future interventions should aim to offer educational programs

684 to coaches and parents that complement athletes' MST programs (Henriksen et al., 2014).

Conclusion

686 The present study is among the first to implement a longitudinal action research study

687 that aimed to develop, implement, and evaluate a MST program informed by youth athletes'

688   needs and interests. Results outlined the benefits of researchers' prolonged immersion in the

689   intervention setting, allowing for the development of authentic relationships with athletes and

690   their supportive others prior to the development and implementation of a MST program. More

691   specifically, the results showed that athletes' regulation of the psychological characteristics of

692   focus and emotional control improved due to athletes' enhanced understanding of and ability to

693   use psychological skills, such as positive self-talk and serve routines. Overall, this supports the

694   notion that youth athletes should be offered explicit educational opportunities to develop the

695   necessary capabilities to regulate psychological characteristics early on in their development.

696   Practical guidelines for future sport psychology interventions with youth athletes and their

697   supportive others are provided with the ultimate goal of enhancing athletes' chances of fulfilling

698   their athletic and personal potential.

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Table 1

Classroom based Sport Psychology Education Program

Workshop Number & Name	Workshop Content	Min.
Workshop # 1: Improving your Focus	1. Introduction to focus 2. **Task 1:** Identify critical moments in tennis. **Task 2:** Identify the cues that one should focus on in these situations. **Task 3:** Identify reasons for losing focus. **Break** 3. Introduction to learning to achieve, maintain and gain back focus Teaching of psychological skills & tasks: • (Pre-) Performance Routine • Concentration Cues • Error Parking	10 25 5 5 25 10 10
Workshop # 2: Learning to control your emotions	1. Introduction to emotional control 2. **Task 1:** Is emotional control something that positively or negative impacts on our performance? **Task 2:** Identify your ideal set and level of emotion that makes your performance great. **Task 3:** Identify where your emotions come from. **Break** 3. Introduction to learning how to control your emotions Teaching of psychological skills & tasks: • Self-Talk • Imagery	10 25 5 5 25 20
Workshop # 3: What does success and failure mean to you?	1. Introduction to winning and losing 2. **Task 1:** What do the words success and failure mean to you? **Task 2:** Identify forms of success. **Break** 3. Introduction to learning how to accept mistakes and fear Teaching of psychological skills & tasks: • Self-Talk • Performance Routines 4. **Task 3:** Developing a philosophy of success for players at the Academy	10 10 10 5 5 15 15 30