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The Functions and Methods of Mental Training on Competitive Sports

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Abstract

Mental training is the major training method of the competitive sports and the main factor of athletes' skill and tactics level. By combining the psychological factor with the current competitive sports characteristics, this paper presents the function of mental training forward athletes, and how to improve the comprehensive psychological quality by using mental training.

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1. The definition of mental training

Mental training refers to the process training with targets and plans to influence athletes' mental process and personality, adjusting and controlling their own sports behavior by adopts special ways to promote psychological state [1]. Previous athletic training only notice the body training, while ignoring the mental training. Since 1960s, athletic sports developing quickly in the world, and the competition is intensifying, difficulties to be victorious increased, athletes under unprecedented psychological stress and psychological factors become important segment to get excellent achievements. National coaches and athletes also gradually realize the importance of psychological factors in the game, and step into the breach from psychology. Compared with other countries, mental training in China start is later, still at the initial stage.

2. The Function Of Mental Training To Competitive Sports

Today, with the high level athletic sports developing, the one of characteristics is the gap of athletes technique, tactics, physical fitness, etc shrinking day by day. The role of psychological factor become more prominent to decide result of game. The psychological factors or psychological quality, not only completely inherited, but also acquired from the interaction results of environmental and genetic. This is training bases to improve athletes' mental plasticity. The positive role of mental training for athletes and sports games, which is mainly manifested in the following aspects:

2.1 Be helpful for appeasing anxiety and tension of athletes

With the ruthlessness and unpredictability of competitive sports, the athletes' mental state would be convoluted, it will never be the quiet life again. The stress and anxiety must affect match result adversely, result to technology action develop wrong, cannot show due standard. Such as basketball shooting, shooting and gymnastic, athletes without...
psychological quality are difficult to show due level in the competition. Through targeted psychological training to athletes, their mental control ability will improve gradually, eliminate or reduce tension, enhance their confidence. Practice proves the stronger mental control ability, the stronger adaptability of competition. It will promote to develop due level, and sometimes can overachieving.

2.2 Be helpful for strengthen volition quality of athlete

Chairman Mao emphasize the action of “strong wills” in Sports Research. He notes that: “Sports, the goal is show great brave. This is where the major effect of physical education lies. The essential point of physical education is courage, and the goal of courage, such as bravery, fearlessness, intrepidity, and perseverance, belongs to the realm of determination.” It shows human intrepid will in sports. Today more fierce in the competitive sports, more mental support will be required. Therefore, to strengthen the athletes’ mental training in sports games, contributing to cultivate their bravery sports moral quality, strengthen their ability to face all kinds of difficulties, such as game defying strong, not to be afraid drop behind and various unfavorable factors, overcome limit of physiological and psychological with the protest, etc. An outstanding athlete growth must follow volition and character cultivation.

2.3 Be helpful for cultivate the ability of athletes' mental collaborative

So-called psychological collaborative refers to the team members know the trends and intention between each other, complete defined tasks by undertake by their connivance action [2]. In collective project of sports tests, each player have their own task, absolutely allow any action without collaborative to show their self-centered. Technical and tactical coordination in sports game, inevitable rely on psychological collaborative of players. Such as attack and defense in basketball game, the football shooting. Collaborative is the psychological characteristic thought athlete interchange ideas, meanwhile it also reflects the team cohesion, which displayed the identity, belongings and sense of power. Players rely on the exchanging by body language and facial expressions, it require long-term tacit cooperation. Therefore to strengthen athletes' mental training and guidance in sports training, will be helpful to cultivate tacit level, promote understanding strategic intention between teammates.

2.4 Be helpful for eliminate athletes’ fatigue

Competitive sports requires athletes in the long tense match and training, leading to physical and mental fatigue inevitably, especially the psychological fatigue. If not handle properly, it will cause athletes boring competition and training, feel tired and boycott game. If intensify dredge and guidance to athletes’ mental, especially mental relaxation training, among sports training, not only promote to restore psychological fatigue, but also physical fatigue. Make athletes fill with passion in competition and training, committed himself to the task body and soul. This is a kind of excess resume methods of psychological load.

3. The most popular Mental Training Methods

3.1 Relax training method

Relax training is using some certain hints language to focus attention and adjust breath, so that muscles can relax and you can regulate the central nervous excitability. There’re lots of methods for relax training, like imagery relax training, progressive relax training, autogenic or self-training, three-relaxation method, biofeedback relaxation training and so on.

Common training methods include:

3.1.1 Imagery relaxation training

This approach is always to make you image a relaxed environment. It means imaging yourself in a very relaxed environment, just like lying on the ground or bed and closing your eyes with arms on both sides of the body and not crossing legs. At the same time you should let yourself feel very comfortable and relaxed. Through imaging some scenes, let you stay in the environment then you will forget the torn, and to be relaxed.

3.1.2 Progressive relaxation training

Progressive relaxation training is invented by American scholar E.Jacobson in 1920s, which was modified and improved constantly in clinical application. This method requires that you should tighten some muscles and feel this kind of nervous. Comparing with the condition of relaxation, you could relax gradually. When you do the progressive
relaxation training, you’d better sit or lie in a quiet place. And you should close your eyes and feel the tension and relaxation of your muscles. Then you will be relaxed from the comparing.

3.2 Biofeedback relaxation training

Biofeedback (or physiological reaction) is that do the body of biology information about psychological physiological processes using electronic instrument and show them by visual or hearing (namely information feedback). Train people to control their bodies’ physical activity consciously through the study on this information. It means using the abilities of central nervous system to control the autonomic nervous system or regulate the exercise behaviors which are hard to control before.

In 1970s, the biofeedback relaxation training begins to use in competitive sports to help the athletes to master the fine movements, to adjust the pace of action, to correct the wrong position and to promote the recovery of athletes after muscle damage. In addition, the research and application have achieved a good result which using the method of biofeedback combined with relaxation to increase the strain in competition. And it is widely used in recently years. It highlights the advantages of overcoming the blindness of training, accelerating the relaxation process and enhancing the effects of relaxation training.

3.3 Systematic desensitization training method

This training method is always used in special anxiety and phobia. It is based on the principle of mutual inhibition which is raised by Wolpe. Wolpe believe that neurosis habit is an incompatible response with the anxiety when stimulated by anxiety stimulus, like relaxation, sexuality and confidence. And then the connection between stimulation and anxiety must be weakened. It could help athletes to solve their emotional problems like pre-match anxiety using the systematic desensitization techniques in competitive sports. Systematic desensitization training is the combination of the full muscle relaxation and the scene of causing anxiety or fear. So the body’s relaxation will inhibit anxiety or fear. The usual method makes the practitioners relax the body first, and then to approach a kind of stimulation that can cause faint anxiety or fear mood. Because of the inhibitory action of this relaxation, the practitioners can endure to experience this weak anxiety or fear. Practice time by time, this kind of weak intensity stimulation will lose ‘action’. And then practitioners won't feel anxiety or fear with it appears, namely desensitization. Then take some stronger anxious and fearful emotional stimuli. After such repeated adoption, practitioners no longer to experience anxiety or fear emotional reactions or make the bad emotional reaction intensity decreased. Desensitization training is an indispensable training course for those athletes who are lack of rich experience in big games or have poor psychological quality.

3.4 Simulation Training Method

Simulation Training is a special method on mental training in competitive sports. Domestic and foreign research shows that the more close to actual combat, the more ideal training effect is. It is a general method on many combat sports programs that imitating the opponents’ playing style and temperament performance who come from domestic and overseas. At the moment the mainly simulates scenes are different game point of the simulation, the referee’s perception, the influence by climate condition, the audience’s influence, the jet lag simulation and the geographic environment simulation. Simulation is actually a kind of adaptation. Through the different simulation of the matches, athletes can adapt the environment of the game ahead of time. It is a essential training to take away the athlete’s pressure and adapt the atmosphere of the big match. The biggest issue of the simulation is that it’s not heavy enough to the mental pressure for athletes, and in their view the simulation and the real competition is not the same. This requires that the athletes and coaches should adjust their mental states or competitive states. And they should be immersed in simulating training. At the present stage, this is a new feature that foreign athletes attend the formal games instead of the usual training.

4. Conclusion

Because of the difference and particularity of sports, the psychological training of every event is different. Through psychological training does not have a uniform standard, there are kinds of methods that can be selected. Every sporting event should do some experimental training according to the different event’s feature and athlete’s character.
Now, psychological training is not ripe enough compared with other countries in China. Especially in the group events, our athletes show poor psychological and always make disorder plays. This also reflects the gap between other countries in sporting mental training. At this stage, we need a long-term and systemic plan on strengthening the athletes’ psychological diathesis. We also should consider the integrated factors. Trainers and athletes should have a good cooperation together. And then we will achieve significant results.

References