

# The application of achievement goal theory in youth sport

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## Identifying the issue

William is a 13-year-old tennis player who is highly ranked in his age group at county level. His coach is eager for him to be selected for the national scheme that financially supports some of the leading junior players. Selection would mean a much-reduced financial burden on William's parents, more individual coaching, greater attention from national coaches at training camps, international experience abroad, private medical cover and access to sport science support. It would mean that William would receive the benefits of a very extensive performance programme. William's father, Eric, is very keen for this to happen, particularly considering the expenses that he currently incurs. Players are normally selected for the scheme on the basis of results and also potential, but most players in this age group tend to perceive that results are the determining criteria for selection.

William is clearly aware of the national scheme and many of his friends and rivals are supported by it. He desperately wants to be selected because he knows what it would mean to his father and coach, as well as understanding the opportunities that would be available to him. The national coaches know, however, that William has a chequered past in terms of his behaviour on court and his attitude towards competition. It is also common knowledge among the coaches that his father is a 'pressure parent' who sometimes exhibits extremely volatile behaviour at court-side. These opinions are based on a number of observations:

1. William has a tendency to start matches extremely nervously and is sometimes unable to consolidate a lead or to close out matches. This is often due to increases in unforced errors and changes in game style, as when aggressive play changes to 'pushing' the ball defensively at critical periods within the match.
2. William shows negative body language (head and shoulders drop), low anger management (likely to throw his racket), and lack of emotional control (self-criticism) on key points within a match.

3. William has a tendency to ‘pose’ and show off during easy matches where he knows that he is going to win, but which sometimes catches him out. By contrast, he also has a tendency to ‘throw in the towel’ and ‘tank’ matches when he is a set down and well down in the second set, for example giving up when 6–3, 4–1 down.
4. His consistent visual attention to his father, to whom he turns after every point as if to seek reinforcement or to check his reaction.
5. Eric will grimace at court-side when his son loses a point, and on one occasion he is reported to have driven home in disgust and left his son alone at the tournament without a lift home.
6. William’s lack of coach support at tournaments and the absence of someone qualified to help him to review his performances after winning or losing.

These observations present the selection panel of national coaches with a great deal of information. Although the national coaches believe William to be a technically gifted player with a sound physical fitness profile, his results are inconsistent. He struggles to beat higher-rated players and it is the player that he would expect to beat ‘on paper’ against whom he behaves badly. While William does not impress the coaches by his results, it is his potential for improving his mental skills that is the main focus of their concern. Our suggestions of possible solutions to William’s difficulties are based on achievement motivation and, in particular, achievement goals. The following section describes the basic principles of, and relevant research within, achievement goal theory, followed by a suggested practical solution for William.

## Achievement goals: introduction and background

The study of motivation has been a key area of interest to sport psychologists since the early 1990s. Much of the enthusiasm stems from the work of educational psychologists in the late 1970s and early 1980s, who proposed that motivation should be viewed more in terms of personal thoughts and perceptions rather than some innate quality. Specifically, Maehr and Nicholls (1980) argued that ‘success and failure are not concrete events. They are psychological states consequent on perception of reaching or not reaching goals’ (p. 228). Based on this reasoning, they defined three types of achievement motivation: ability-orientated motivation, task-orientated motivation and social approval-orientated motivation. Ability-orientated motivation is when ‘the goal of the behaviour is to maximize the subjective probability of attributing high ability to oneself’ (p. 237). This has been modified in sport psychology to refer to an ‘ego’ goal orientation where success is defined as the demonstration of superiority over others (Duda 1993).

According to Maehr and Nicholls (1980), in task-orientated motivation ‘the primary goal is to produce an adequate product or to solve a problem for its own sake rather than to demonstrate ability’ (p. 239). This reflects a ‘task’ goal orientation (Duda 1993). The third goal, social approval-orientated motivation, has been investigated less in sport

than the other two. This dimension of achievement motivation was defined by Maehr and Nicholls (1980) as 'conformity to norms or virtuous intent rather than superior talent' (pp. 241–242).

Nicholls (1989) has since argued that the two main goals, task and ego, are based on how people think about, or define, competence. Those who are ego-involved perceive ability as limiting the effects of effort on performance. They are keen to show their high capacity of ability often at the expense of effort. Indeed, having to try hard and exert effort to achieve a certain standard of performance can actually indicate low ability in the thinking of the ego-involved individual. Nicholls refers to those who are ego-involved as holding a 'more differentiated' view of ability in that ability and effort are clearly separate from each other. When a person is ego-involved, they judge their ability relative to others and have to demonstrate superior ability or outperform others to be satisfied. In contrast, those who are task-involved hold a 'less differentiated' conception of ability as they believe that ability equates to effort, and 'the harder you try, the more able you feel'. Those who are highly task-involved use cues such as levels of effort and task completion to assess their competence in an entirely self-reflective manner. A task-involved performer is satisfied if they perform to a level that reflects how they have mastered a task or made personal improvements.

A major tenet of achievement goal theory is that individuals will be *predisposed* to task and ego orientations as a result of socialization experiences in their sport and these orientations will subsequently influence whether an individual will adopt a task or ego goal in a specific situation. In addition, the prevailing motivational climate will also affect the adoption of achievement goals (Ntoumanis and Biddle 1999a). In short, the nature of the goal state (i.e. levels of task and ego-involvement) that is activated in a specific sport situation will be determined by individual preference (goal orientation) and situational cues (motivational climate) (see Figure 5.1). Little research has been conducted on goal states *per se*, while a great deal of literature is now available on goal orientations and motivational climate (Duda and Whitehead 1998; Ntoumanis and Biddle 1999a).

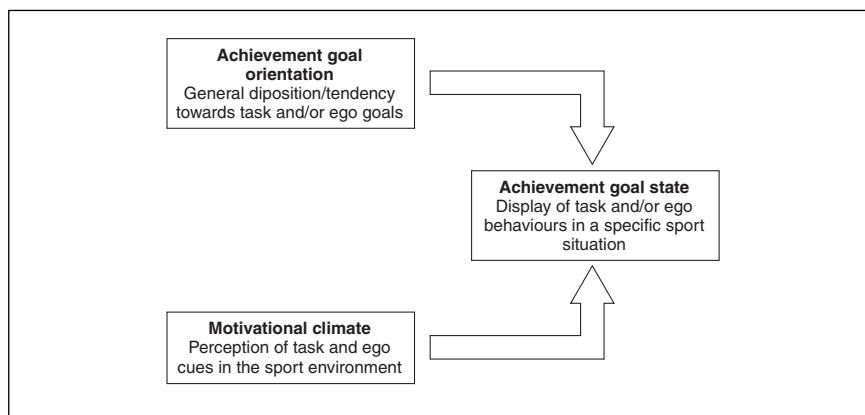


FIGURE 5.1 Task and ego goal involvement states are created from goal orientations and the motivational climate

## The independence of task and ego goals

Goals and competence perceptions have now been studied in the context of sport and shed light on important motivational processes. Typically, goal orientations are assessed using questionnaires (see Duda and Whitehead 1998) yielding scores on task and ego goals. There is now consistent evidence that the adoption of a task goal in sport can be motivationally adaptive (see Duda 1993). However, ratings of task and ego goal orientations are usually found to be uncorrelated. Hence, we have argued elsewhere that goal profiles should be studied whereby combinations of task and ego are accounted for (Fox *et al.* 1994; Harwood, Hardy and Swain 2000). In other words, some people will be low in both task and ego, some high in task but low in ego, or any other combination. Fox *et al.* (1994) found that high task/high ego and high task/low ego children were similar in their motivational responses when asked about sport in general. A general conclusion is that a high task orientation is positive, either singly or in combination with a high ego orientation.

### GOALS AND BELIEFS

The study of the links between goal orientations and beliefs about the causes of success is fundamental to the understanding of motivated achievement behaviour in sport. Research in the classroom, as well as in sport and physical education contexts, has shown that task and ego goal orientations are differentially correlated with beliefs about the causes of success. Typically, a task orientation is strongly correlated with the belief that success in sport is due to motivation/effort, but unrelated to the belief that ability causes success in sport. Conversely, ego orientation is correlated with ability beliefs but correlates rather weakly with motivation/effort (see Duda 1993). Such findings provide an explanation for why a focus on task orientation is beneficial. Effort is controllable, and believing that trying hard will bring some success reflects the 'I can!' feeling so often desired by coaches.

### GOALS AND INTRINSIC MOTIVATION

When goal orientations have been studied in respect of their relationships with motivation, one popular index has involved the assessment of intrinsic motivation. For example, Duda *et al.* (1995) showed that a high task and low ego goal orientation was associated with high enjoyment in one sample, and a high task orientation was associated with high perceived effort in another. Both enjoyment and effort are indicators of intrinsic motivation.

### GOALS, AFFECT AND NEGATIVE THINKING

Studies of goals in sport have also investigated the emotional, or affective, correlates of achievement goals, although at times it is difficult to separate out measures of intrinsic

motivation (for example enjoyment) from affect. A meta-analysis of achievement goals and affect to clarify relationships reported in the literature (Ntoumanis and Biddle 1999b) analysed 36 studies and 39 samples ( $N=7649$ ) and found a strong correlation between task orientation and positive affect ( $r=0.55$ ). The strength of this correlation is indicated by the fact that 139 missing, or yet unknown, studies averaging null correlations would have to exist to bring the correlation down to a coefficient of 0.10, considered weak.

A central topic for the study of affect in sport has been anxiety (Jones 1995). Hall and Kerr (1997), for example, found that in young fencers ego goal orientations were significant predictors of pre-competitive cognitive anxiety. Correlations between ego goal orientation and cognitive anxiety for fencers low in perceived ability were positive and very high two days, one day and 30 minutes prior to competition. Conversely, task orientation scores were negatively associated, showing that a task orientation is associated with reduced cognitive anxiety.

More recently, researchers have shown an interest not just in the anxiety response itself, but also how athletes cope with stress and anxiety (Hardy, Jones and Gould 1996). Ntoumanis, Biddle and Haddock (1999) considered whether the adoption of different coping strategies by student athletes was associated with task and ego goal orientations. They found that task orientation was associated with the use of problem-solving coping strategies, such as trying hard, seeking social support and curtailing competing activities. On the other hand, those with high ego scores were more likely to use the emotion-focused strategy of ‘venting emotions’. Items assessing this coping strategy reflect getting upset, losing one’s cool and letting out negative feelings, thus preliminary evidence suggests a more positive coping response is likely from task-oriented athletes and it appears highly relevant for our study of William.

It has already been suggested that those adopting a task goal orientation appear more likely to adopt problem-solving coping strategies when faced with adversity. In addition, evidence is emerging that links task orientation with less-negative thinking in sport. For example, in the Sydney Olympic Games, Goode and Archer lost their badminton semi-final after failing to convert a match point, but won the bronze medal match after coming back from match-point down. Thus, the potential for negative thinking at such crucial times and in such important matches is high.

In one study, Hatzigeorgiadis and Biddle (1999) found that ‘thoughts of escape’ during a competition were less likely to be reported by task-oriented snooker and tennis players, but more likely for ego-oriented players with low perceived competence. Such negative thoughts are similar to those expressed by some players when they say ‘let’s get it over with!’ prior to a match that is most probably important to them. Adopting a task-oriented perspective appears to reduce such thoughts. Given that Hatzigeorgiadis and Biddle (2000) found that measures of cognitive interference are related to measures of concentration disruption, negative thinking and cognitive anxiety, the need to address this issue is clear, and no more so in tennis where the potential for cognitive interference is high.

## TASK AND EGO-INVOLVEMENT

The discussion so far has centred on goal orientations or the general predisposition to adopt task and/or ego goals. These predispositions are considered to develop through early socialization experiences, including interactions with parents, teachers and peers. However, less attention has focused on the actual achievement goals that performers adopt in specific situations, namely *goal states* that are referred to as task-involvement and ego-involvement. For example, if a performer is high in task-involvement and low in ego-involvement prior to a tennis match, their achievement goal at the time is probably to perform to the best of their ability. They will seek improvements in their game, with less concern for showing superior skills to their opponent. The opposite of this is the player who is totally focused on winning or upon not losing the match, with little emphasis placed on how the game is played. Understanding and measuring levels of task and ego-involvement is an important objective for sport psychologists, as the momentary thoughts, feelings and behaviours that characterize performers such as William are indicative of their motivational states at the time. This is why most research has investigated those situational factors that actually influence the activation of task and ego-involvement beyond simply player's goal orientations.

Work with elite swimmers and tennis players (Harwood and Swain 1998; Swain and Harwood 1996) has demonstrated how pre-competition levels of task and ego-involvement may be predicted not only by dispositional goal orientation, but also by situational factors. In tennis, they included match-specific perceptions of ability (expectancy of winning the match), the perceived importance and value of the match and players' perceptions of the achievement goal most preferred and recognized by parents, coaches and the national governing body. These findings allow sport psychologists and coaches to understand which contextual factors will make players more task-involved, by comparison with those that make them more ego-involved. In other words, it is important to consider how best to teach a player to attain the right motivational frame of mind.

## Motivational climate

It has been argued that achievement goals form an important and powerful influence on motivation in sport. However, some researchers have also emphasized the importance of the achievement environment, or climate. The climate can be created by coaches, parents and anyone who has potential for influencing the group. Two main climates have been identified that reflect the work of Ames in school classrooms (Ames 1992). A 'mastery' (task) climate is perceived by team members when they are directed towards self-improvement, the coach or parent emphasizes learning and personal progress, effort is rewarded, mistakes are seen as part of learning and choice is allowed. On the other hand, a 'performance' (ego) climate is one that encourages inter-individual comparison, where mistakes are punished and high normative ability is rewarded.

From an analysis of 14 studies with a total sample size of almost 4500, it has been shown that the correlation between a mastery climate and positive motivational

outcomes such as satisfaction, positive attitudes towards lessons and intrinsic motivation is 0.71, indicating a large effect (Ntoumanis and Biddle 1999a). By contrast, performance climate was correlated in a small-to-moderate way, but in a negative direction with positive outcomes (-0.30). Negative outcomes were also assessed and comprised factors such as worry and the emphasis on normative ability. The effect for mastery climate on negative outcomes was also small-to-moderate and negative (-0.26), and for performance climate on these outcomes it was moderate and positive (0.46). Accordingly, these results indicate the importance of a mastery climate in promoting positive psychological outcomes in sport.

Given these findings, there is a need to assess whether motivational climate can be changed and, if so, how? Ames (1992) developed a number of practical strategies for interventions in school classrooms by adopting the TARGET structures that define a mastery climate (see Table 5.1). These strategies are considered to be important because they provide a comprehensive framework for both researchers and coaches to prescribe a wide range of motivational principles and techniques that are consistent with a mastery climate. There are few intervention studies in this area, but those that do exist support the positive influence of a mastery motivational climate and the negative influence of a performance climate on cognition, affect and behaviour.

**Table 5.1** Ways of creating a mastery motivational climate

TARGET	STRATEGIES
<b>T</b> ask: Coaching activities	Have variety and individually challenging activities; have the players set process rather than outcome goals
<b>A</b> uthority: How the coach operates with the players	Let players have a 'say' in matters such as leadership roles, decisions, practices, etc.
<b>R</b> ecognition: What is rewarded?	Recognize personal progress and improvement in players
<b>G</b> rouping: Use of groups	Be flexible over groupings in practice, avoid always having the most or least skilled players together
<b>E</b> valuation: Use of feedback	Evaluation based on improvement and effort; allow players to evaluate themselves as well as be evaluated by others; avoid public evaluation
<b>T</b> ime: Scheduling	Allow time for practice and improvement; help players with time management to encourage practice

## Towards a practical solution for William

Knowledge of achievement goal theory and an awareness of the dimensions that comprise a 'motivational climate' are critical starting points for a practical solution to William's situation. It is not simply about developing 'mistake management' techniques, or concentration and relaxation rituals between points. Such strategies may often produce solutions to symptoms, but they do not address the underlying problem or root cause.

Tennis is not only highly ego-involving in that it judges success based on win/loss outcomes, it is also highly non-task-involving in that it does not provide objective personal performance feedback to the player. The outcome of a match does not offer any direct information to the player on how they performed relative to themselves. This is unlike sports such as swimming or track and field, where you receive clear information about your performance, irrespective of the position you finish in the competition. Consequently, the ego-involving nature of tennis has knock-on effects for coaches, parents and peers who will tend to judge a player on outcomes achieved at the expense of taking a close look at the performance itself.

It is important to ensure that young performers develop high levels of task orientation and take this on-court in the form of high task-involvement. They need to be able to feel satisfaction from playing good tennis or mastering a particular shot, regardless of whether they showed superior skills to their opponent. Even if they lose a well-fought point, they still need to keep a positive perspective on how well they played and what they learned from the exchange. At the same time, they need to be competitive and be able to appreciate the fundamental importance of challenging the opposition. The importance given to the demonstration of superior skills is normally facilitated by evidence of ego orientation.

Accordingly, within certain limitations, being ego-involved can provide a player with important psychological tools:

- It can help to focus resources on the opposition and develop an appropriate game plan. Head-to-head competition means that it helps to know something about the other head! Ego-involved players will easily be able to allocate attention to their opponent; it is the amount and quality of that attention that the sport psychologist or coach needs to monitor carefully.
- It provides competitive direction and purpose to each point even if a player is playing well below par. For example, without ego-involvement a player is less likely to care whether they win or lose. With ego-involvement, backed up with a high level of task-involvement, this kind of player will be resourceful to the end of the match. As one coach put it, ‘this individual has the personality to win the match with a rusty spanner if his well-equipped tool box happens to have been left at home’!

Thus, any practical solution that incorporates the tenets of achievement goal theory and motivational climate should generally be centred on strategies that ensure high levels of task orientation and positive forms of ego orientation. A solution will invariably involve mental training, but may also require a change in the behaviour of coaches and parents.

## ASSESSMENT ISSUES AND FINDINGS

For William, and with this theoretical background in place, several key factors have been established:

1. He has a high ego orientation and his behaviour indicates that he is highly ego-involved in matches, particularly against those players that he is expected to beat.
2. There is little evidence of task-oriented behaviour and no post-match routine in which his performance is reviewed, either by himself or with the aid of a coach or parent.
3. Eric, his father, is also highly ego-oriented and his behaviour and actions reinforce this. Little task-oriented behaviour is evident. The coach is not doing anything to help the situation.
4. The nature of tennis, the national scheme, his rival peers, his coach and father together are probably responsible for developing William's overall 'performance' as opposed to 'mastery' motivational climate.

Psychological and environmental assessment by a sport psychologist in national age group tennis would occur over a number of days or weeks. There is also a range of direct and indirect methods that a sport psychologist should apply for a full assessment of the player. Implicit knowledge of tennis and an awareness of the psychological demands of the game at junior level are highly desirable. Further, assessment would not only involve direct observation of the player and significant others both on and off court, but would also include formal and informal discussions with them using fairly specific and structured questions. This process seeks to establish a comprehensive psychological and motivational skills profile that characterizes not only the player, but also the coach and parents. However, the factors that supersede the effectiveness of any assessment and subsequent work are the honesty, adherence and commitment of the clients.

## COMPONENTS OF A PRACTICAL INTERVENTION

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A practical solution that has been identified by the first author incorporates a coordinated series of intervention techniques with players, coaches and parents. The objectives of these techniques are:

1. To educate William, his coach and parents about the psychological demands of tennis, the implications/consequences of negative attitudes, and the importance of developing an appropriate motivational focus or attitude to competitive match play.
2. To increase William's use of task-involving cognitive strategies both in training, pre-match, in-match and post-match.
3. To help him understand, restructure and cope with the ego-involving nature of tennis and specific matches.
4. To actively reshape the tennis motivational climate by enhancing the frequency of task-involving behaviour of significant others in key contexts; in training, at home, pre-match and post-match.

5. To develop a 'working relationship' between player, coach and parent based on enhanced communication and feedback about achievements and skill development;

The specific sessions and tasks described in the following sub-sections comprise elements of a programme previously executed by the first author acting as an educator/facilitator. The programme should ideally be conducted over at least a four-month training and competition period before being revised.

### **Stage 1: Initial education sessions**

Ideally, there should be four educational sessions of 60–90 minutes with William, his coach and parents separately. In the first session, the consultant may explore each person's knowledge of the psychological demands of tennis and discuss what makes tennis psychologically tough. This allows the consultant to talk about the nature of tennis and then to present, with exemplar player quotes if possible, the different motivational profiles that players could possess. For example:

- 'Tennis is just about winning ... no more, no less ... no-one looks at how well you played' (high ego/low task exemplar).
- 'I just go out and play, I don't really care if I win or lose' (high task/low ego exemplar).
- 'It's about performing to the best of your ability, being competitive and hungry, and learning about why you might have won or lost on that particular day' (high task/high ego exemplar).

Each party could then be asked about the merits and limitations of each of these attitudes, not simply within a particular match, but also for long-term participation and persistence. The consultant will need to tailor the approach and presentation of information according to the cognitive level of the client (for example, William or Eric). An effective consultant will use examples from the modern game to elucidate information from both the perspective of a 13-year-old player and also the mature parent. Overall, the main purpose of the session is to help each to understand the motivational skills required to play the game successfully at junior level.

In the second session the consultant may introduce his/her view of what characterizes the ideal motivational approach and the attitude that they want the player, coach and parents to work towards developing in training and competition. The 'Competitive Performance Mentality' (CPM) is a psychological approach to tennis devised by the first author and based on the belief that in any tennis match the player faces two achievement challenges: (a) the *self-challenge*: to maximize, improve and/or maintain current standards of personal skills in each area of tennis; and (b) the *game challenge*: to use the self-challenge to overcome the test/opponent set for them on that day.

Possessing a CPM for matchplay reflects a goal-involvement profile of both high task-involvement and highly functional ego-involvement. There is an important distinction between being ego-involved because you want to impress others with your ability or fear losing due to others' expectations (that is, social approval ego-involvement), and being

ego-involved because you understand and appreciate the functional challenge of the game. There are major differences between these two explanations for being ego-involved and it is the authors' belief that the latter is a more positive, natural and adaptive approach to match play. The consultant may then consider:

1. The self-challenge to provide the foundation for personal success.
2. How tennis challenges you to be competitive and that the game challenge is simply a test set by tennis. That winning or losing matches is not something to fear simply because of the impressions that others have of you.
3. How the two challenges exist for every match, whatever the situation or level of opposition.
4. How either, both or neither of the challenges may have been met successfully at the end of the match.
5. How critical it is to review and appraise the self-challenge first (own skills), and to appraise the game challenge by reflecting on the skills of the opponent and aspects that tested your resources in the match.

A meeting of this kind with parents can help them to understand what kind of role-related actions and verbal and visual behaviours constitute 'Competitive Performance Parenting'!

In session three, the player, coach and parents may join as a group if the consultant feels that all are committed to the perspectives that have been introduced. This session acts as a troubleshooting and contingency management session to explore and brainstorm those elements of tennis that can distract players from a CPM and turn them into highly ego-involved pressure players. These factors may include the ranking, rating, age, seeding or current form of the opposition; verbal expectations of the coach or parents pre-match; stage of tournament or importance of match; playing for a team; the presence of national coaches; negative visual reactions by parents or coach based upon the outcome of a point. This exercise helps a player to appreciate how easy it is to lose focus on what is fundamentally their most important goals, namely personal performance and process. Further, it helps both coach and parent to recognize what they should do, but don't, and even more importantly, the actions, reactions and words that they take or say, but shouldn't.

A useful acronym to help players to cope with the ego-involving characteristics of tennis, and to refocus their attention on the importance of self-challenge/game challenge is 'RESISTANCE'. Players, coach and parents can be informed about when, where and how each word can weaken their RESISTANCE and provoke an ego-involved state of mind in the absence of high task-involvement. Each word is followed by a typical cognitive restructuring phrase that might be used by the player, or reinforced by coach or parents. RESISTANCE refers to:

- Rating: 'It's not the rating or ranking that produces the performance.'
- Esteem: 'Separate the person from the outcome.'
- Seeding: 'Matches aren't played on paper, they are played on tennis courts.'
- Importance: 'Any match is just as important as any other match.'
- Score: 'It's not about the score, it's about your effort, discipline and focus.'
- Team: 'Effective team members play like the player who gained selection.'
- Audience: 'An audience's main desire is to witness a player trying their best.'
- No justice: 'One bad line call or net cord does not win or lose a match.'
- Comparison: 'Never base achievements solely on comparisons with others.'
- Endorsements: 'High fashion and designer labels never won a tennis match.'

The 10 dimensions typify the competitive tournament climate, with coaches and parents often fanning the flames by talking about seeding, ratings and comparing notes about whom they expect to win the match, or be selected. This type of NON-RESISTANCE behaviour is typical of most coaches and parents at tournaments. Nonetheless, although one might argue that this behaviour is part of the game, never doubt the impact that such behaviours have on developing high ego orientations in players. In sum, one of the key objectives for this session is for the player, parents and coach to consider the quality of their verbal interactions with others. In particular, it is to demonstrate how coaches and parents typically engage in high ego-involving, non-task-involving behaviours and interactions at tournaments.

In the final educational session for each member of the group, the consultant introduces the structure and content of the working programme. While the previous sessions have focused on what is required, and why, the final session represents 'how' it takes place. In order to maintain a cohesive triangular approach to the problem, each member may be identified as the Competitive Performance Player, Competitive Performance Parent and Competitive Performance Coach. The responsibilities of each member might be as detailed in the next section.

### **Stage 2: Implementation of action tasks**

The Competitive Performance Player

William's programme involves a number of tasks designed to develop a greater appreciation and awareness of game-relevant skills. Evaluating himself on the achievement of these personal skills and tasks should condition a higher level of task orientation and shape a more positive ego-oriented side to his attitude. These action tasks include:

1. Development of a pre-match performance routine and checklist for his matches.
2. A match goal-setting sheet (Harwood 1996), which lists up to three specific self-challenge performance goals alongside process goals for his 'thinking' and 'doing' routine in between points.
3. A self-reflective review and rating of these goals and processes at an agreed time post-match, if possible, regardless of outcome. This review should take place following the 'outcome sink in, emotions sink out' period.

4. A more considered report of the self-challenge and game challenge where he is asked to reflect upon the course and flow of the match; the 'on form' skills that satisfied him; his thoughts, feelings and behaviour throughout the match; the opponent's skills and aspects that put him under pressure; areas for improvement and what he learnt from the two challenges.
5. The calculation of a competitive performance score for the match by allocating points for the level of performance overall, achievement of set goals, behaviour throughout the match and the outcome of the match (i.e. points earned for the level of self-challenge and game challenge). This gives the player a personal achievement standard, akin to swimming/athletics, which he can work from and for which he was responsible.
6. In conjunction with the coach, the completion of a daily training review sheet noting down the goals of his training session, and what he felt that he had achieved with respect to technical, tactical, physical and/or mental aspects of his game.
7. Mentally recording any player, coach or parent who makes a 'NON-RESISTANCE' comment to him, then smile, and reinforce RESISTANCE as a Competitive Performance Player.

These tasks form basic, but essential, routines designed to help a player increase resources for personal achievement. The key performance contexts (training, pre-match, in-match and post-match) from which the player is able to draw feelings of success and satisfaction are also covered in these tasks. Constant reference and reinforcement of the self-challenge and game challenge, alongside RESISTANCE restructuring, will gradually foster the activation of positive task and ego-involvement states.

#### The Competitive Performance Parent

By the final session it should be clear to William's parents that they play a critical role in their son's motivational development. Their role comprises not only the quality of their verbal and visual behaviours, but also how proactive their involvement is in assisting the coach. A skilled consultant may refer to the principles of TARGET and highlight to parents the practical 'dos' and 'don'ts' in each specific category. With the focus on reconstructing Eric's behaviour, in particular, and developing a Competitive Performance motivational climate, both parents should commit and adhere to four core action tasks:

1. Familiarize themselves with the task-oriented approach to apply in key performance contexts, and make statements and ask questions such as 'How did your strokes feel today?', 'You looked fast around the court and recovered well between shots', 'What were your tactics and were they effective?', 'I thought that you could have reacted better after that point, what do you think?'. Each of these points that could be made after the match relates to technical, physical, tactical or mental skill areas. The consultant and Eric could work together towards developing a list of typical competitive performance comments or questions to put to William for different situations. Remember, each context is a 'climate' in its own right, so what Eric says before a match in the car is just as important as what he says after William returns from or

leaves for a practice session. His son is about to experience, or has just experienced, an achievement context and Eric must be assertive in facilitating a 'mastery' climate for both situations with the way he interacts with his son.

2. Complete a 'language log book' that Eric will refer to daily on the frequency and nature of competitive performance comments or questions that he makes to his son. Parents have previously found this is a useful exercise for conditioning themselves to behave in a different manner.
3. Learn a simple match analysis and charting system to provide useful performance feedback for the player after the match. Many parents could be more proactive when watching matches. A well-qualified coach should have a number of simple charting systems (such as charting match flow) to teach Eric to keep him focused and to provide William with valuable performance information upon which to reflect.
4. Check the completion of the player's pre- and post-match routines, as well as read through the player's match review and reflections, offering support wherever possible. If a parent watched the match, their match analysis may help the player gain more objective information on the achievement of specific pre-match goals.

#### The Competitive Performance Coach

The final session with William's parents could be tailored to the coach's needs. All of the action tasks asked of parents would similarly apply to the coach, given that he can contribute to the development of an ideal motivational climate for William. However, there are a few coach-specific tasks that would greatly enhance our coordinated approach. These tasks include the following:

1. Incorporate the TARGET dimensions into coaching sessions (Table 5.1). This will require the coach to check delivery style and the quality of information transmitted to the player. For example, the purpose of specific drills should be clear and relevant to the player. Both performance and process goals should be set where possible; feedback should be performance-related; the player should be encouraged to rate and evaluate success on a drill; recognition should be given for personal improvement and high levels of mental and physical effort. These are the core requirements for a session that seeks to foster the highest quality of motivation from the player.
2. Spend at least 15 minutes at the start of every week discussing and checking the player's training log for the previous week. This is not only helpful in reinforcing to the player the importance of completing a log book, but also in allowing the coach to determine whether messages are being received. If the player has played a tournament, for example, it is the responsibility of the coach to discuss the player's match review/report and agree on the content of future sessions. In this respect, the player recognizes that his areas for personal improvement in matches are valued and are an immediate focus of attention for the coach.

### The Competitive Performance Triangle

It should be clear that William, his coach and Eric are not isolated units in the intervention. In fact, the success of the intervention and its effect on readjusting both the attitude and behaviour of father and son rests on the interdependent features of the triangle. Nevertheless, there are two further strategies that could help strengthen links within the triangle:

1. Each individual should be encouraged to develop contingency contracts, which consist of expectations and acceptable behaviours that each one is committed to. Parent, player and coach read through each other's contract, agree with the list of expectations and behaviours, agree to adhere to their own contract and sign each one. These written agreements should be considered essential to the effectiveness of the intervention and monitored closely by all three.
2. The three should be encouraged to meet on a regular basis to discuss achievements and other tennis-related issues, including any breaches of contract. Each member would be asked to present a short personal progress report, with the player chairing the meeting to emphasize their responsibility as a competitive athlete.

## Summary

The practical suggestions described here are extensive and detailed yet reflect common sense. They are extensive because it is necessary to modify the cognitions, behaviour and beliefs of a social unit within an environment that does not lend itself well to change. Having carried out the educational role and set up the programme, the consultant should be on hand to review progress and be quick to recognize unacceptable behaviour from anyone. While the professional consulting process requires time and money, both can be well spent if each member of the triangle adheres to their roles and responsibilities.

While reading this case study we hope that it is possible to perceive a natural transfer to other sports and to recognize that achievement goal and climate interventions in youth sport are similar to those in any other sport when faced with a performer processing negative attitudes and behaviour in competition. There may, indeed, be truth in the cliché that 'attitude is everything'!



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