Periodization of Mental Training for Squash: A 20-Year Update

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Squash Canada Level 4 Coach
Workshop Outline

• Brief review of Periodization of Mental Training
• Updated research support for model 1987-2007
• Professional Practice Observations 1987-2007
• Practical Examples of tools & plans The next step: Mental LTADs (if time permits)
What is mental training?

Mental training (MT) refers to the systematic practice of mental or psychological skills for the purpose of enhancing performance or increasing enjoyment. Also commonly known as psychological skills training (PST).
Periodization

What is periodization?

Division of the annual training plan (technical, tactical, physical, mental) into phases or cycles to ensure peaking at the most important competition(s) of the year.
Sources of Squash
MT Knowledge

- Academic Research & Theory
- Professional Practice Experience
- Subjective Experience as Player & Spectator
Sport Scientist-Coach Relationship

Coach  Sport Scientist
Learning from Each Other

Coach A  Coach B
Activity

1. Starting with front row, turn & introduce yourself to the person in front (or behind) you.

2. Tell your partner the MOST important mental “thing” (technique, exercise, fact) you have learned about mental training and squash.

3. Write each thing down along with your name & country, and pass the sheet to the front.

4. We’ll return to this “professional practice” knowledge at the end of the session.
Periodization of Mental Training: 1987

- Predominant Approaches: “Book,” “Shotgun” or “Only when there’s a problem”, “Last-Minute Psychologist Talk”
- Little mental in periodization books (e.g., Bompa, 1983)
- Assignment, SPORTS Article, L3 NCCP Theory Sport Psychology Chapter
Squash Psychology
Periodized Squash Plan 1987

• See Appendix 1
Periodized Squash Plan 2007

- See Appendix 2
Key Challenge

• NOT “how to get a top player to No. 1”
• BUT how do we develop a *practical* system for an entire country
• Developmental vs. Elite athlete “problem-focused” approach
• This workshop targets “Train to Train” & “Training to Compete” (ages 13-20)
• Quality consulting vs. reality (24 athletes/15 min./athlete)
Key Professional Practice Opportunities
1987-2007

- Squash Canada National Team Programs – National & World Champions, many pro tour players
- Canadian National Racquetball Team - Individual & World Champions
- Princeton Squash Summer Camps – 4,000+ “kid-units” over 20 years, many IPS’, many coaches
- 1500+ coaches through my courses (9,000+ NCCP trained across Canada)
## Periodization: A Brief Review

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>General Exercises</th>
<th>Start of Season</th>
<th>Off-Court</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Specific Exercises</td>
<td>Early-Mid-season</td>
<td>On-court during practice</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Competition Exercises</td>
<td>Mid-late-season</td>
<td>Practice Matches</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
3 Steps to Teaching & Learning Mental Skills

- **Step 1** – Introduce, explain & practice the skill in a quiet setting (IDEAS).
- **Step 2** – Use (adapt if necessary) the skill during practice and training.
- **Step 3** – Use (and evaluate) the skill in progressively more challenging matches.
Update: Key Changes 1987-2007

- Periodization – everywhere now (Google, Sept. 2: 206,000)
- Still no significant mental in periodization books, articles (“Canadian psychologists were among the first to realize the necessity of psychological periodization”, Bompa, 1999)
- Solid research support for components, few season-long research studies (see reviews)
- Sport Psychology: Books, Journals, Research, Consultants, Websites, Globalization, Use of skills, Cross-cultural, Spirituality
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>1987</th>
<th>2007</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>MT Articles</td>
<td>1378</td>
<td>2646</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SP Journals</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>5 + online</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Research Methods</td>
<td>Quantitative Controlled Experimental</td>
<td>Qualitative Interview Single-Subject</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Consultants</td>
<td>2,400+</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Websites</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>Hundreds</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Key Changes To Periodization

- Periodize *more* things: Leadership, Overtraining, Academic Stress, etc.
- Refined tools
- Importance of motivational orientation & climate
- LTAD specific annual plans
Does MT Work? Which skills?

Greenspan & Feltz (1989):

- Yes for collegiate & adult
- Educational, relaxation-based interventions & remedial cognitive restructuring intervention

Martin et al. (2005):

- Yes - 14/15 positive effects, 9/15 substantial effects
- Yes – (goal-setting), imagery, self-instruction, relaxation

Suinn (2005):

- Yes – on an individual basis.
- Cannot say which skills work best because they vary for each person.
10 Key Tools/Points 1987-2007

- Program Evaluation
- IPS → Flow
- Evaluating Mental
- 10-Second Solution
- Match Charting

- Focus Plan
- Match Evaluation
- Stress/Overtraining
- MT Link to Tactics
- Detailed examples
## Results: Tennis Sport-Etudes 1989

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Program Component</th>
<th>Average</th>
<th>Range</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>+5+4+3+2+1-0-1-2-3-4-5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Helped a Lot-Hindered-Interfered</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Team Mental Meetings</td>
<td>3.3</td>
<td>2-4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Individual Meetings</td>
<td>4.1</td>
<td>3-5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relaxation</td>
<td>3.3</td>
<td>2-5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Positive Self-Talk</td>
<td>3.9</td>
<td>2-5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Activation</td>
<td>2.5</td>
<td>0-5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Visualization</td>
<td>3.2</td>
<td>1-5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Overall Program</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1-5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School Program</td>
<td>0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
## Activity: Fill in the Blanks

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Skill/Phase</th>
<th>General Prep (Off-court)</th>
<th>Specific Prep (On-Court)</th>
<th>Competitive (Conditioned game-simulation)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Relaxation</td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Positive Self-Talk</td>
<td></td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Activation</td>
<td></td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Visualization</td>
<td></td>
<td>7</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Concentration</td>
<td></td>
<td>9</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Instructions

1. Take note of the number you have been assigned.

2. Take 3-4 minutes to develop a mental training exercise for the skill and phase you have been assigned.

3. We will take up 2-3 examples – if chosen, present your technique in 1 min.

4. Turn in your papers and we will “publish” the others.
Motivational Orientation/Climate

- 2 Types of Orientation - Task/Win
- 2 Types of Climate - Task/Win
- 1 Resultant State - Task/Win
- “Win”-Orientated athletes display “maladaptive behaviors; “Task”-Oriented athletes display “adaptive” behaviors
- Harwood & Biddle (2002) a must read!
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Maladaptive</th>
<th>Adaptive</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Giving up</td>
<td>• Never give up</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Getting frustrated</td>
<td>• Stay calm</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Choking</td>
<td>• Don’t choke</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Avoiding competition or opponents</td>
<td>• Will play anyone</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Sometimes don’t work hard in practice</td>
<td>• Work hard in practice</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Drop out of sport</td>
<td>• Stay involved in sport</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Establishing a Positive Training & Competition Environment

- Complete the TEOSQ for a) yourself and b) an athlete (anyone)
- Are you (they) mostly task or win-oriented?
- Is your training environment task or win-oriented?
Task vs. Win Orientation/Climate

Inverse Relationship Between Motivational Climate/Orientation & Need for Mental Training

Task Climate-Orientation vs. Need for Mental Training
Hot off the press!

- Coaches were trained in establishing a mastery (task) climate

- Their athletes experienced less anxiety (girls & boys; JESP, Smith, Smoll, & Cumming, 2007)
Would you do the same?

“\ When Serena was four and a half, she won her first tournament, and she entered 49 tournaments before the age of 10, winning 46 of them. At one point, she replaced sister Venus as the number one ranked tennis player aged 12 or under in California. In 1991, Richard Williams, saying that he hoped to prevent his daughters from facing racism, stopped sending them to national junior Tennis tournaments, and Serena attended a Tennis school run by professional player Rick Macci instead. Macci had already helped the careers of Jennifer Capriati & Mary Pierce, among others. Soon Richard, who had struck a deal on behalf of his daughters with a major clothing company, was able to move the rest of the Williams family to West Palm Beach, to be near Serena and Venus. Serena became a professional in September 1995, at the age of 14. “
Influencing Communications

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Coach</th>
<th>Coach</th>
<th>Parents</th>
<th>Parents</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>“DO”</td>
<td>“Avoid”</td>
<td>“Do”</td>
<td>“Avoid”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>During Practice</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>At matches</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Overheard”</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
LTAD

Seven Stages of Long-Term Athlete Development

- Active Start
- FUNdamental
- Learning to Train
- Training to Train
- Training to Compete
- Training to Win
- Active for Life

*slides courtesy of "Canadian Sport for Life" and Sport Canada LTAD Workshop Presentations*
Longterm Planning is Not New

- Most relevant to squash is Tennis Canada’s “Club Training Programs” with periodized annual plans – with mental component.

- Smith College Squash Example
Activity: What mental qualities & skills to emphasize at each stage of LTAD?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Stage</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>a) Qualities</th>
<th>b) Skills</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>FUNdamentals</td>
<td>6-9</td>
<td>a)</td>
<td>b)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Learning to Train</td>
<td>8-12</td>
<td>a)</td>
<td>b)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Training to Train</td>
<td>11-16</td>
<td>a)</td>
<td>b)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Training to Compete</td>
<td>16-23</td>
<td>a)</td>
<td>b)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Training to Win</td>
<td>18+</td>
<td>a)</td>
<td>b)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The MOST important mental “thing” (technique, exercise, fact) you have learned about mental training and squash:
Workshop Summary/Evaluation

To download presentation, videos, notes, etc. and post comments & opinions:

http://scienceofcoachingsquash.wordpress.com/
Jahangir Khan (1985): 

“There is one other very good training exercise that I didn’t really want to reveal. I had to be persuaded... it’s not the players who read about these things who will be dangerous, it’s the ones who go out and actually do them. There won’t be many of those.”
Questions? Comments?
References


Refer to references in Bacon (1989). A full reference list is published at: http://scienceofcoachingsquash.wordpress.com/