

2.1.2: Psychological factors affecting performance in sport



Motivation

Motivation can be defined as our drive and desire to achieve our aims, goals or targets. It is generally accepted that athletes require high levels of motivation to commit themselves to the training and preparation necessary to perform at their best. Motivation is divided into two types:

Intrinsic motivation comes from the drive within athletes to perform to the best of their ability and to succeed. This type of motivation is categorised by the athlete's commitment to improve their skills and techniques through training and practice and will lead to feelings of pride and enjoyment in this process, as well as from their competitive results.

Extrinsic motivation comes from sources outside of the athlete which encourage the athlete to work hard and perform at their best. These factors might take the form of tangible rewards such as prize money, championship titles, certificates or medals.



Anxiety

Anxiety can be defined as a negative mental state that can cause a lack of focus and an increased level of tension and nerves in an athlete. This will clearly have a negative impact on the athlete's level of performance. The symptoms of anxiety can be divided into two groups:

Somatic (physical) effects:

These are physical symptoms that can be experienced by an athlete and might include an increased heart rate, increased rate of breathing, sweating, a feeling of nausea or 'butterflies' in the stomach.

Cognitive (mental) effects:

These are mental symptoms that can be experienced by the athlete and might include the athlete having difficulty concentrating, an increased number of negative thoughts and self-doubt and increased feelings of worry about what might happen during the performance.

