Creating an Optimal Climate for Athlete Achievement & Enjoyment

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“Develop healthy, capable and resilient young athletes, while attaining widespread, inclusive, sustainable and **enjoyable participation and success** for all levels of individual **athletic achievement**. “
Two questions to answer...

1. What does success mean?

2. How can you create the right climate for achievement and enjoyment?
An athlete’s behaviour in achievement situations is a consequence of their perception of “success” in different contexts.

Achievement Goal Theory
(Nicholls, 1989; Duda & Hall, 2001; Duda, 2013)
Achievement Goal Theory

Dispositional Factors
- Task-oriented
- Ego-oriented

Situational Factors
- Task involving climate
- Ego involving climate

Achievement Behaviour
Task Oriented Behaviour

1. Persistence
2. Optimal Effort
3. Focus on developing current skills and learning new ones
4. Self referencing
5. Choice of moderately challenging activities
6. Selection of competitive settings that allow feedback on performance
7. Do not fear failure
“For myself, losing is not coming second. It's getting out of the water knowing you could have done better. For myself, I have won every race I've been in.”

Ian Thorpe, 5 Time Olympic Champion
Ego Oriented Behaviour

- Perception of high ability
- Selection of activities where person feels he/she will demonstrate superior performance to others
- When this cannot be achieved – person will select goals that are either very easy or will avoid the task
- Drop out
- Don’t persist
- Blame others (Attribution failure to external factors outside of their control)
- Super sensitive to criticism in front of peers
- Challenge coach authority
“It’s not enough to succeed; others must fail!”

Quote attributed to Gore Vidal
In pairs, consider which grouping is best and why

- Hi task/low ego?
- Low task/High ego?
- Hi task/Hi ego?
- Low task/Low ego?
High Ego – Low Task

Anxiety
Focus on winning

High Ego – High Task

Focus on winning or what it takes to win
Uses feedback constructively

Low Ego – Low Task

Disinterested
Low perceived ability

Low Ego – High Task

Low anxiety
High enjoyment
“What may make high task & high ego individuals motivated and confident ‘over the long haul’ … is the fact that they have their strong task orientation to fall back on when their sense of normative competence is in jeopardy”

(Duda, 1997; Van Van Yperen et al., 2015)
What is a Motivational Climate?

The way in which an individual in a position of authority shapes and structures an achievement setting establishes a motivational climate that conveys certain goals.
“People say you need to be hard on people, but by the time you’re at that elite level you are prepared to die and the last thing you need is someone whipping you into shape. No one could have questioned my commitment to the sport, so it would seem rather ridiculous that you would need to push and bully to get the best out of me.”

(Victoria Pendleton, Olympic Champion)
“It’s interesting to hear so many ways to explain it: laid-back, free willy, doing whatever,”

“We run this program with extraordinary standards in how we prepare every day, with expectations that they’re going to be working their tails off every single step of every single practice.” And they do that, they’re in an environment where they can feel good about what they’re doing.”

“This is the result of a journey to figure out how you can create an environment where people can find their best, stay at their best, foster their best for the people around them so that everybody can join in.”

(Pete Carroll, Super Bowl winning Coach with the Seattle Sea Hawks)
How can we create the “right” climate?
Think TARGET...

Ask yourself…

- **T**ask - Are activities task or outcome focused?
- **A**uthority - Do you insist or involve?
- **R**ecognition - What do you reward?
- **G**rouping - How do you group players?
- **E**valuation – What do you assess?
- **T**iming – Do you provide time for individuals?

Applicable in practice **and** competition
If you build it, they will...

- Keep participating
- Feel capable
- Have positive affect
- Be at decreased risk of burn-out
- Perform...

Duda et al, 2013; Harwood, 2015; Hodge et al., 2014; Isoard-Gautheur et al., 2013
Two Questions to Answer...

1. *The meaning of success* is crucial. Winning is important, but *the journey of striving to win* through learning, effort and persistence is more important.

2. The climate established by the coach plays a major role in terms of producing an adaptive and resilient athlete that can functional effectively in their sport, so think TARGET.
Selected References


