
Athletic Coping skills of Football players in Goa

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Introduction

Sports today has become part of our lives. Everywhere we look, there is some kind or the other of the sporting activity that is being televised. In fact the television and other forms of media makes sure that we do not miss a single important sporting events. And the one game that has no competitor in terms of popularity in the world is football (Soccer). Football players like Ronaldo, Messi etc., have become very popular. The football game has become highly professional internationally at all levels. Every performance of the players is highlighted, evaluated and magnified. With this enlarged pressure players are seeing for ways to take their performance to the next level. Dynamics of physical conditioning and football skills are primarily important in determining their level of success. However there are many psychological factors that are equally important if not more to consider if the player is to achieve his or her potential. Both coaches and players are accepting more and more after becoming aware that to get ahead in their profession and to better their personal and team performance they need additional reinforcement. And that reinforcement is a well-trained mind. Most sports athletes and players get drained mentally even before they are low in energy physically. It is due to the fact that their mind is not as trained as their physical bodies. So now coaches and players from different sports are giving importance to the psychological aspect of sports performance, especially people involved in professionalized sport. They now accept that for the players to play at the highest level of their ability, they must use many psychological techniques. It is here that mental skills training and sport psychology comes into play. And since soccer is the most popular sport in the world, team owners and managements have started employing sports psychologists to intervene and conduct sessions with the players to help them cope with pressure, enhance their mental strength and endurance, improve team bonding, stay focused to the task, etc. In India football has been making strides forward but at a snail's pace. However with the advent of Indian Super League (ISL) lot of money is pumped and media is involved. It has brought crowds to the grounds but there is lots that needs to be done to improve the players' performance besides better training facilities. There is a need to employ a sports psychologist if not at least to provide the players timely mental training interventions. In the state of Goa football has been part of its culture and has rich tradition of producing good footballers who have represented the country. Football has been declared as the state game, and there are some professional as well as village clubs present in Goa which has helped to keep the game alive. However there is a need to take the game to the next level. The psychological aspect is completely neglected. So this study has been my humble effort to know the present psychological status of the professional clubs in Goa and to make the team management and the players that there is this mental aspect of their play which they can improve to aid enhance their performance on the field.

Objective

The study aims to know and understand the psychological skills used by the professional football players in Goa.

Methodology

Stratified Sampling method was adopted targeting 80 professional players played in the Goa professional League organised by GFA. The players belonged to the four reputed clubs namely, Dempo Sports Club, Salgaonkar Sports Club, FC Goa and Sporting Club de Goa. The Individual Clubs were contacted and sessions were booked with the clubs separately before their training sessions where they were briefed about the purpose of the research and given clear and detailed instructions regarding the questionnaires. The subjects were encouraged and prompted to give genuine responses by the investigator to the test statements. The Athletic Coping Skills Inventory (ACSI), a measure of an athlete's psychological skills, developed by Smith et al. (1994) was administered. The ACSI-28 measures 7 subscales namely, Coping with adversity, Coachability, Concentration, Confidence and achievement motivation, Goal setting and mental preparation, Peaking under pressure, and Freedom from worry. Descriptive statistics, mean, standard deviation and ANOVA was used to analyze data through SPSS.

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Results and Findings

Descriptive analysis of ACSI of professional players in relation to playing experience

ACSI SCALES	SUB	Playing Experience (in years)	Number of players	Mean	Std. Deviation	Minimum(0)	Maximum(12)
Coping with adversity	0-10	54	8.50	1.861	3	12	
	11-20	26	9.27	1.733	5	12	
Coachability	0-10	54	8.19	2.283	3	12	
	11-20	26	8.15	2.222	3	12	
Concentration	0-10	54	8.94	2.004	5	12	
	11-20	26	8.69	2.276	4	12	
Confidence and achievement motivation	0-10	54	7.37	2.366	2	12	
	11-20	26	8.27	2.308	4	12	
Goal setting and mental preparation	0-10	54	7.46	2.255	2	12	
	11-20	26	7.88	1.862	4	12	
Peeking under pressure	0-10	54	7.83	1.809	4	12	
	11-20	26	7.42	1.793	4	12	
Freedom from worry	0-10	54	8.09	2.157	3	12	
	11-20	26	8.27	1.867	4	12	

N= 80

Professional players (n=80) for whom the ACSI was administered 54 players had playing experience of 0-10 years and the remaining 26 players had played competitive football from 11- 20 years. The descriptive data in the above table reveals that all the professional players have scored on a higher side of the scoring range which is from a low of 0 to a High of 12 on each sub scale where higher scores signify greater strength. It has been observed that players with 0-10 and 11-20 years of experience have scores that are very closely related. However, in the sub scale of coping with adversity and Confidence and achievement motivation the players with 11-20 years of experience have scored higher as compared to the players with 0-10 years of experience.

ANOVA						
		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Coping with Adversity	Between Groups	10.385	1	10.385	3.132	.081
	Within Groups	258.615	78	3.316		
	Total	269.000	79			
Coachability	Between Groups	.017	1	.017	.003	.954
	Within Groups	399.533	78	5.122		
	Total	399.550	79			
Concentration	Between Groups	1.116	1	1.116	.254	.616
	Within Groups	342.372	78	4.389		
	Total	343.488	79			
Confidence & Achievement Motivation	Between Groups	14.180	1	14.180	2.574	.113

	Within Groups	429.708	78	5.509		
	Total	443.888	79			
Goalsetting & Mental Preparation	Between Groups	3.120	1	3.120	.683	.411
	Within Groups	356.080	78	4.565		
	Total	359.200	79			
Peeking under Pressure	Between Groups	2.954	1	2.954	.908	.344
	Within Groups	253.846	78	3.254		
	Total	256.800	79			
Freedom worry	Between Groups	.548	1	.548	.128	.721
	Within Groups	333.652	78	4.278		
	Total	334.200	79			

The ANOVA nevertheless shows that there is no significant difference in any of the seven sub scales of the ACSI at .05 level of significance.

Conclusion:

This study helps to understand the psychological status of the professional football players in Goa based on the seven subscales of Athletic Coping Skills Inventory. Besides helping the players, it will also aid the coaches and managers to better understand the players and in turn be able to bring out the best performance from them. The youth players will benefit the most from this study as they will know what level of mental skills is required to play at the professional level. This study will assist the physical education teachers, coaches, selectors and administrators who are in some way or the other linked in the process of sports team selection to get a better insight into the psychological factors involved in sports performance specifically in the game of football.

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