

Sports Performance Vs Behaviour

One of the things everyone (myself included) wants to know or cares about in sport is the actual athletic performance (i.e., the time or the score). Another one very few people care about is the athlete's behaviour: 1) the athlete's body language; 2) the parts of the body that are tensing up or relaxed; 3) what he says; and 4) what he does.

In my opinion it is important to look at both, performance and behaviour. In fact, the most important to me is the actual behaviour because from here we can start to investigate how the athlete's behaviour is affecting the biggest concern that is common to any athlete in the world, i.e., the outcome, the result. Performance.

For example, when an athlete loses his mind on the pitch, swears, pushes against the referee's chest and gets a red card – one less player and the team's performance is directly affected. This would allow us to infer about how the athlete's words and behaviour affect the outcome of the match. Another example: a swimmer before his race. We can see that he can't face his opponents so keeps his head down, is constantly biting his nails and his body looks tense. He swims badly and the coach sees how much all that tension affected swimming technique, physiological fatigue and the end result.

How do coaches deal with seeing these (and many other) behaviours happening with their athletes? Simple answer: it's really hard and rarely will you see them addressing these issues in a little more than superficial ways. Firstly, they didn't get any training for this – they were trained to prescribe training load, work with technique and tactics mainly. And even if they had the knowledge and the training for it, how in the world would they manage all training-related stuff, and on top of that having to deal with changing their behaviours. A coach has been taught to fine-tune the athlete for his/her, or the team's best performance. A sports coach deals with the exterior perspective I have been referring to, i.e., performance. Not so much behaviour.

But what drives behaviour? This is the question that will take you to the next article – *Mindset and Subjective Experience*. Check it out! 😊



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