Modelling Mental Links to Excellence: MTE-1 for Quality Practice

John **Partington**, Carleton University and Terry **Orlick**, University of Ottawa, Canada

Abstract

We developed the Mental Training Exercise (MTE 1) in response to requests from athletes to provide them with a convenient way to understand, acquire and/or fine-tune their mental skills in order to improve maximally from practice and compete at their best. Our collaborative, deductive procedure involved developing items from our pooled experience from working with high performance athletes. The MTE-1 comprises thirty-nine items which provide concrete behavioural representations of four types of mental skills (commitment, goal setting, imagery, and attentional focusing) which characterize the approach to quality practice of successful athletes and performers. By symbolically modelling important mental skills, and by providing self-rating scales for each, the MTE-1 enables athletes to assess their own mental skill strengths and deficits relevant to maximizing their practice gains, and ultimately to maximizing their competitive performance. Consultations with high performance athletes and some developing athletes and dancers over the past four years has confirmed the utility and perceived meaningfulness of the MTE-1. Moreover, evidence of its reliability and validity has also been accumulating. This research has also shown that the MTE-1 is easily modifiable for use with various target populations. A complete copy of the standard MTE-1 is provided.

Introduction

This article describes why and how we developed our MTE (Mental Training Exercise), an inventory that models the mental links to excellence. This article (MTE-1) focuses primarily on mental preparation for practice. The article on the MTE-2 in the subsequent issue of *The Journal of Excellence* focuses primarily on mental preparation for competition.

We undertook the creation of the MTE cautiously, almost ten years after our Olympic study (Orlick and Partington, 1988), because we knew that most athletes prefer to spend quality one-on-one time with consultants, interacting in meaningful ways rather than responding to standardized inventories. They appreciate the consultant's presence at some practices and competitions and want that person to be available to listen and to offer practical suggestions for improvement. Both the authors and athletes are opposed to distributing non-practical inventories (Partington & Orlick, 1987). The circumstances that we faced demanded that we create something practical and meaningful. Elite athletes we were working with were seeking a model of excellence to which they could compare their own mental skills. Plans were also imminent to establish Athlete Assessment Centers to which groups of national team and developing team athletes would be sent periodically for a short period of time to receive complete sport

science assessment with relevant practical feedback.

Our challenge was to develop a strategy to accommodate larger numbers of athletes in limited time, while preserving the individualized, discovery approach which we know works best with athletes (Orlick & Partington, 1987). We hoped to expedite self assessment and feedback with these groups by developing a process that would help each athlete discover or highlight their current sport-specific mental strengths and target their own areas for improvement. We felt that the MTE exercise would help these athletes gain personal awareness about their mental skills *prior* to our consultations with them, and that their responses would help target our work with them. At the same time it would give other athletes we had been already working with a model of mental skills related to excellence.

Another expedient strategy we considered was to begin the self-assessment process by focusing primarily on athlete's orientations and skills applied to daily training and practice. The goal was to set the stage for more success, less failure, and higher quality learning. We knew from previous research that the quality of an athlete's mental approach to practising has identifiable components which are a key to their confidence and success in competition (Orlick & Partington, 1988). Why not then begin by focusing on helping athletes to prepare themselves to maximize the benefits of practice?

The MTE-1 was constructed using concrete behavioral items to represent or model what top athletes have said about the mental criteria for quality practice. We chose to begin with what we know works for the best. Athletes given such an inventory prior to our consultation with them, would already be aware of their strongest mental links, and where they needed work. Moreover, the guidelines for improvement and for future mental training would be evident from how they rated themselves on behavioral items in the exercise. We reasoned that such prior reflection or increased awareness would likely maximize the impact of limited-time consultations.

Development of the Mental Training Exercise

We employed a deductive method to construct sets of simple self-rating scales. Burisch (1986) has found that when attributes to be measured are well-understood by test developers, the deductive method is superior to other approaches in terms of validity (i.e., the test measures what it is supposed to measure), communicability (i.e., results from the test are understandable and therefore useful to the respondent), and economy (i.e., the test is easy to construct and easy to answer).

The actual work of test construction took place during several collaborative three-hour work sessions. In the first session we reviewed what we knew about key mental orientations toward quality practice based on our work with elite athletes (e.g., Orlick and Partington, 1986, 1988; Orlick, 1990). This session provided the action goals to guide our subsequent work; namely, to write sets of meaningful, concrete items representing how successful athletes have described their intense commitment to practice, their goal setting and goal striving behaviours in practice, and their

use of movement imagery, focusing and refocusing in practice. In the week prior to each session, we independently reviewed what we had learned from our research and consulting with athletes, and made notes on anything relevant to the scale to be developed. This made our weekly brainstorming, item-writing sessions maximally productive. Hence, within a few weeks the first draft of the Mental Training Exercise (MTE-1) was ready. We then sought feedback on this draft from athletes and teams with whom we were involved at that time. Revisions based on their input led to the version of the MTE presented at the end of this article.

Meaningfulness of the MTE

To illustrate the utility, usefulness or meaningfulness of the MTE we now describe several case applications from our consulting experiences. Terry begins with an application for high performance athletes and John then presents an application with developing athletes.

High performance athletes

I, (Terry) first used the MTE (MTE-1 and MTE-2) with national team athletes who I had been working with for a number of years (National Alpine Ski Team, Women's National Basketball Team, Three-Day-Event Equestrian Team and some members of the National Biathlon Team). I viewed the MTE as a model of mental readiness and mental strength, and as a reminder of what athletes do in order to excel. I explained to these athletes that the MTE contained virtually all the major components of excellence that we had discovered to be important for high performance athletes over the years. I gave them both forms of the MTE: the MTE-1 that is primarily related to quality practice, and the MTE-2 that is primarily related to readiness for competition. I also told them that it takes most athletes over an hour to do a thorough job at completing both forms.

There was no requirement that they complete this exercise, but they knew me well enough by that time to know that I would not ask them to do anything unless I believed it would be of value for them. It was presented as a personal exercise in self evaluation aimed at self directed improvement. I informed them that only that athlete and I would see their personal responses and that I would be available to discuss any parts of it with them individually, if they so chose. Almost all of these athletes completed both forms and returned them to me within one or two days.

At the end of each MTE form, there were two questions requesting athletes' feedback on the MTE inventory and the relevance of this experience. Their feedback was overwhelmingly positive of, and centered on, the relevance of the questions and thoroughness of the mental elements of excellence covered. ("*Everything was in there, I could not think of anything important that you left out*", "*It was a great reminder of what it takes to excel*").

The MTE exercise confirmed that the best athletes on these teams, as was the case with other great athletes I have worked with, are the ones who are mentally strongest. Their scores are very high on all components of the MTE. However, even those who are the best in the world have some areas in the mental domain that could be stronger or more consistent. In one-on-one discussions they can readily identify those areas for

potential improvement. The MTE is useful in providing a simple blueprint for the self-assessment of mental skills associated with excellence and perhaps help stimulate action on those improvements.

My orientation in using the MTE with high performance athletes is focused on helping them to answer the following questions. What are you doing well? What can you do better? How strong are your mental skills or positive perspectives compared to the greatest performers on the planet? Can you make them better? The first world class skier I met with after she had completed the MTE flipped through the pages on her form and said, "I am strong here and here, and this is where I need work". We spent the rest of that meeting discussing how she could strengthen that one area of focus.

I felt comfortable taking the MTE directly to national team athletes I had been working with and to advanced development athletes who were very keen to make it to the next level (e.g., junior national team athletes wanting to make the national team or junior hockey players wanting to make the NHL). This is because I felt that their openness and commitment to improvement would make it a meaningful experience. However, I did not use the MTE in my work with groups of male professional team sport athletes (e.g., NHL hockey or CFL football players). Many of these athletes seem reluctant to fill out anything that looks like a questionnaire or "school work", and some are not keen on reading anything. I chose to use the MTE only with individual members of professional teams who showed a genuine interest in excelling and a commitment to strengthening their mental skills.

On one occasion I used the MTE with a young professional hockey player who was trying to make a comeback from a serious injury. I met with him twice to learn more about his injury, his perspective and to understand how he viewed the challenge he faced. I could feel his deep commitment, so I suggested that he might want to complete the MTE exercise. He returned for a meeting a week later with his completed forms. A brief look at his responses highlighted some of his strengths (commitment ratings of 100 and imagery control ratings of 90's and 100's) as well as some specific areas that needed strengthening (refocusing ratings in the 20's and 30's). We had a great meeting that centered around how he could take advantage of his strengths to strengthen his weaknesses. He had not yet developed any specific plans for positive refocusing, so together we worked on a plan of action.

When he returned a week later to give me an update he said, "*you know that MTE form I filled out last week, well if I did the part on refocusing right now, it would be totally different*". I asked, "*How it would be different*?". He said, "*My scores would be in the 80's and 90's*". He went on to say that he had been working on implementing his refocusing plan every day all week and it was working very well.

When I have used the MTE with people who are highly committed, who want to complete the exercise and then act upon the lessons which surface, it has been useful. It is a valuable and respectful tool that can help, especially when

working with larger groups, when time is limited, when athletes want to compare what they do mentally with what the best athletes do, and when accomplished athletes need a reminder for what they already know they should be doing. Given the time, I still prefer to just talk one-on-one with an athlete on an ongoing basis to discuss whatever he or she feels is most important at that particular time.

Developing Athletes

This application of the MTE-1 also worked well, although I (John) was a little more didactic than usual on consulting. I (John) had been asked to provide a practicum experience in applied sport psychology for a doctoral student. Neither the student nor the six male gymnasts, aged fourteen to seventeen, with whom we intended to work, had much experience in mental training. Fortunately, the coach was very open, and committed to helping his athletes to develop mental skills.

First we met with the coach and obtained his perspectives about the mental readiness needs of the six athletes and how they functioned together as a team. Then we observed several of their 4:30 to 8:30 p.m. practices. We saw a lot of intense work and daring, but we also saw one athlete chronically goofing off for water breaks; another seemed lethargic and had spotty attendance; a third seemed to be stuck in the rut of failing and re-trying without refocusing so that his repeated attempts began to appear ritualistic; the current "star" of the team injured himself on an angry second attempt after failing on a risky high bar move; and we learned that one gymnast had forgotten what to do in one of the lines in his floor exercise routine at a recent competition. At that time, this athlete didn't believe in doing mental imagery. In short, there were adequate reasons for us to suggest to the coach that we should begin our intervention by teaching his athletes about the orientation and mental skills necessary to improve the quality of their practising. We explained that this could be accomplished efficiently through MTE modelling, and assessment, together with our feedback. The coach approved of our proposal after examining the MTE-1.

The team practised twenty hours per week, Monday, Tuesday, Thursday, and Friday evenings, and Sunday afternoon. The coach assigned the Tuesday practice for us to work with the team. We developed a six-week program to introduce the four mental prerequisites for quality practice, which are modelled by items in the four MTE-1 scales. Based on our judgement of this team's needs, our curriculum was scheduled as follows: commitment (one week); mental imagery (three weeks); practice goals (one week); and practice focus (one week). We used this part method format to introduce each of the four parts of the curriculum; that is, we gave only one mental segment of the MTE to the athletes just prior to their physical warm-up. Then, while they practised, we photocopied each completed form for our own use, computed some simple summary statistics, and examined item responses in detail to determine which of the athletes had rated themselves strong on the skill being assessed, and which had given lower ratings. Then we had a team meeting towards the end of the practice. Athletes were given back their MTE scale, and we explained and tried to "sell" the significance of the skill. We did this both by explaining that the MTE

items reflect what the best athletes in a variety of sports had told us about their orientation towards practice, and by means of teaching aids such as the video, Visualization, produced by the Coaching Association of Canada. Then while giving the team feedback, with the athlete's permission, we encouraged those who were strongest on certain mental skills to share specifics about how they operate to get the most out of practice by drawing upon that particular skill. For example, in the session on the MTE practice focus scale, the athlete who rated himself highest on overcoming distractions told the others about how he could leave his outside concerns behind for the duration of practice. His strategy was to slam his car door shut out in the parking lot when he arrived at practice. For him this was symbolic of locking his daily concerns in the car before he entered the gym. The team really seemed respectful of these kinds of disclosures, and some of the suggestions became a lasting part of the team's developing identity, as you would hear these things frequently slip into conversation.

Now let me give you a more detailed explanation of how we utilized an MTE scale with this gym team. Consider our first session on commitment. I began this team meeting by pointing out that compared to their high school peers these gymnasts were "super committed", given that they were training twenty hours per week all year long. Next, to "sell" the importance of commitment, I read excerpts from interviews with three very successful and highly committed Canadian Olympians (Orlick and Partington, 1988). Finally, for feedback, I noted that the team's average rating on the second item, "...really want to become an outstanding performer in gymnastics", was "98", "like an A+", while their item averages on the "make it happen" questions 4, 5, 7 and 8, "Do you give 100% in practice whether its going well or not so well?"; and, "Do you take personal responsibility for mistakes and work hard to correct them?", averaged "79". We left them with the challenge that there was a nineteen point gap between their wanting to be successful, and their current reported willingness to work for it. I explained that greater success would come from closing that gap simply by giving a little more in each practice.

Reliability and Validity of the MTE

We didn't initially undertake formal steps for establishing reliability and validity for the MTE since the purpose and circumstances associated with our work differed from those of traditional research-oriented test developers. However, in the past couple of years our thesis students have used the MTE along with other measures in their research on various topics involving different types of performers. (Bullock, 1995; Bradley, 1996; Lusk, 1997; and Burman-Hiscox, 1997). Although their research was not directed at the psychometric properties of the MTE, some of their findings have provided a promising potpourri of preliminary evidence in support of the psychometric status of the MTE. It should be noted that in each of these studies, a few items were modified slightly to ensure their perceived relevance, e.g., an item for dancers might replace the word "coach" by "your dance instructor".

Acceptable levels of reliability, or internal consistency, were found for the four scales in the MTE-1. Table 1 illustrates alpha coefficients reported in

a study of seventy-eight cadet and elite rifle shooters, and from studies of sixty teenage female students of highland dance and one hundred and five students of modern dance.

Table 1. Internal Consistency Coefficients for the MTE-1 Scales

MTE Scales	Samples		
	Shooters	Highland Dancers	Modern Dancers
Commitment	0.855	0.836	0.851
Goals	0.909	0.904	N/A
Imagery	0.879	0.817	N/A
Focus	0.729	0.885	N/A

Furthermore, impressive evidence of criterion validity was found in the three student theses which involved between group comparisons. Consider first the study of rifle shooters. Participants were seventy three male and female, army, air, and sea cadets, in the age range fourteen to eighteen years, who were competing in National or Provincial Cadet championships, as well as five adult male civilians who had competed at one or several competitions at the level of Olympic, Commonwealth, and Pan American Games, and/or World Championships. One set of findings showed that each individual MTE item, and each of the four scale scores discriminated significantly between the twenty most accurate and the twenty least accurate participants. Another stage of the analysis compared MTE scale scores of shooters in four groups representing different levels of expertise based on competition target scores. MANOVA results indicated a strong multivariate discrimination between the four skill levels in terms of the four MTE scale scores. (Hotellings $\underline{t}$ = 1.04, $\underline{F}$ (12.209) = 6.06, $p < 0.001$). Furthermore, univariate tests revealed a significant level of discrimination between the four skill groups by each of the four MTE scales:

- Commitment
  $\underline{F}$ (3.74) = 16.2, $p < 0.001$
- Goals
  $\underline{F}$ (3.74) = 7.52, $p < 0.001$
- Imagery
  $\underline{F}$ (3.74) = 6.18, $p < 0.005$
- Focus
  $\underline{F}$ (3.74) = 16.75, $p < 0.001$

Another student thesis which demonstrated MTE criterion validity involved thirty five male hockey players and thirty five male students of the martial arts form called Tae Kwon Do (TKD), all in the age range eight to twelve years. A cross-sectional design was used, with the skill level designations of the TKD samples chosen to parallel the skill level and length of training of the league divisions designated by the Canadian Amateur Hockey association. The finding most relevant to this paper is that for the combined sample of seventy athletes, significant differences were obtained between participants in the three skill levels for both commitment scores ($\underline{F}$ (2.64) = 7.77, $p < 0.05$) and focus scores ($\underline{F}$ (2.64) = 11.66, $p < 0.05$) .

The higher the commitment and better the focus, the higher the skill level.

A third thesis, which generated results relevant to the question of MTE criterion validity, involved sixty female students of highland dance from eleven dance schools representing various achievement levels (i.e., Beginner, Novice, Intermediate, and Premier). The study examined the relationship between dancing achievement, and student orientations to, and skills for practising dance, as given by items in the MTE. Four multiple regression analyses were conducted, with participant's dance achievement level as the dependent variable, and item scores on each of the MTE scales as independent variables. Significant associations were found between dancing skill level and both commitment and mental imagery (Commitment R-squared = 0.385, F = 2.820, p< 0.008; Imagery R-squared = 0.371, F = 2.019, p< 0.047). It should also be noted that although results for practice goals and focus failed to reach significance with this group, there is still reason to believe that the MTE measures for these skills in young dancers have some criterion validity and practical significance given that there was a difference of at least twenty points (on scales of one hundred and one hundred and fifty, respectively) between the five highest and five lowest ranked dancers on these scales.

To recapitulate, these three studies found support for the criterion validity of the MTE scales:

- support for the commitment scale was found from rifle shooters, hockey and TKD athletes, and dancers
- support for the goals scale was found from rifle shooters
- support for the imagery scale was found from shooters and dancers
- support for the focus scale was found from shooters and from the sample of hockey and TKD athletes.

Discriminant and Convergent validity

Consider next, evidence of discriminant and convergent validity. Discriminant validity of the MTE was evidenced by results in the study of rifle shooters. Each scale in the MTE significantly discriminated between shooters at four levels of expertise. However, this study also found no gender differences for any of the scale scores. Thus, for shooters at least, MTE scores discriminate what they should, i.e., performance levels, but not what they shouldn't, i.e., gender.

Convergent validity of the Commitment Scale was demonstrated by results from two samples of dance students. One study of sixty female teenagers enrolled in highland dance classes found a significant positive relationship between scores on the Commitment Scale and students reported number of hours of practice throughout the year in class and at home. (R-squared = 0.216, F = 3.238, p< 0.019; practice at home in July-August, beta = 0.277; practice at home in September-June, beta = 0.163; practice in class in September-June, beta = 0.130, practice in class in July-August, beta = 0.035).

The second study, with one hundred and five female modern dance students, age eleven to eighteen, showed a significant positive relationship between students' reported commitment to dance

practice and their ratings of the teaching style of their dance instructor on a composite factor score. As expected, high commitment was related to a positive teaching style (R-squared = 0.177, $p<0.05$). Typical components of positive style included "making dance fun and exciting", "teacher likes teaching", "supportive outside of class", "teacher loves to dance", "makes learning easy", and "happy and in good spirits most of the time". In sum, the inference about the convergent validity of the MTE Commitment Scale comes from findings that dancers who report high commitment also report that their instructors have a positive teaching style; furthermore, committed dancers report doing more "in class" and "at home" practice than do dancers with low commitment.

Perceived content reality

Finally, what about the "softer", but practically significant criteria of perceived content validity, representativeness, and utility of the MTE? Two of the four student theses provided open-ended questions on these concerns, e.g., "In the space below, please share your findings about this exercise; about how the questions made you feel; or any other comments", and "Are there any other areas related to training or practice that we have not touched on that you feel are important"? Content analysis revealed that ninety percent of the dance students reported that there was no reason to include any additional items to represent what was important to them about their approach toward practising. As for the rifle shooters, seventy three percent provided positive comments in support of the representativeness of the MTE items, and their utility for making shooters more aware of their current level of mental skills application in practice. Their suggestions for improvement included providing extra items on team and coaching issues, and making a French translation available for French-speaking Canadians. At the national team level, the athletes Orlick spoke of who completed to MTE-1 and MTE-2 reported that it was extremely inclusive and did not suggest any additional items.

Before concluding our discussion of the preliminary evidence on the validity of the MTE, one further point can be made. Although our validity evidence was obtained rather unsystematically from a variety of samples, including dance, and a range of age levels, this enables us fortuitously to draw attention to the generality of this measure. Young adults and even boys and girls in both sport and dance settings could understand the mental training principles in the MTE, and the majority in those heterogeneous samples considered the items to be representative of what they do, or should do to improve. This is quite remarkable considering that we developed the MTE from our experience with elite adult athletes in order to expedite our future work with other national level and international athlete clients on our consulting work at Athlete Assessment Centers.

The question of the validity of the MTE, as with all other such measures must always remain open for further scrutiny and improvement.

Highlights of the MTE

We close this article with a brief discussion to highlight major features of the MTE-1. First, although our work on the MTE was triggered by the desire to provide a model of relevant mental skills for excellence, and the anticipation of

increased requests to serve larger numbers of athletes, the orientation we brought to its development was athlete-centered. We wanted to provide a comprehensive mental training blueprint, modelled by specific behaviours and orientations reported to us by highly successful athletes, in order that other athletes might know what they need to do, and how they might best focus in practice to gain maximum benefits. Our athlete-centered approach sets the MTE, and the way we use it, apart from many other inventories. This is because the authors of many other inventories were intending to satisfy either their own research interests, the requirements of coaches or administrators for athlete selection, classification or management, or as a tool to help consultants establish rapport and feel comfortable with their athlete clients. Our attempt at an athlete-centered approach is focused solely on helping the athlete to meet his or her own needs, and athlete feedback, to date, indicates that they appreciate this approach.

A second feature to highlight is that the four MTE-1 scales are proving to be both valid and useful, even though our test development strategy omitted some of the standard psychometric rituals. We believe that this has been possible because the MTE is grounded, not in theory, but in the reported experiences of successful athletes.

Third, because the MTE is based on how successful athletes approach their sometimes mundane yet crucial preparation day in and day out, we have fortuitously developed an instrument which seems to have anticipated the current needs for measurement of the growing number of researchers on expertise who are becoming aware of the important role of deliberate or quality practice.

As a final highlight, we wish to point out how simple it has been for us, and our students to modify the wording of the MTE for different target populations. Through these kinds of adaptations we can facilitate the modelling of successful approaches to preparation for a variety of challenges encountered by a wide variety of athletes, performers, and people in general, as they pursue their dreams and objectives. We invite you to use a performer-centered approach and to try such modifications for yourself, your athletes, students, and others.

References

Bullock, B. (1995). Mental skills inventory for Canadian target shooters. Honours Thesis. Ottawa: Carleton University.

Burrisch, M. (1986). Methods of personality inventory development - comparative analysis. In

A. Angleitner and J.S. Wiggins (Eds.), Personality assessment view questionnaires: Current issues in theory and measurement. New York: Springer.

Burman-Hiscox, V. (1997). Satisfaction and commitment in dance: The role of teacher efficacy and its relation to student enjoyment. Honours thesis. Ottawa: Carleton University.

Ericsson, K.A., Krampe, R.T. & Tesch-Romer, C. (1993). The role of deliberate practice in the acquisition of expert performance. Psychological Review. 100(3): 363-406.

Lusk, C.A. (1997). Comparative effects of participation in taekwon-do and ice hockey on aggression, self-confidence, and mental skills for training in young males, Honours Thesis. Ottawa: Carleton University.

Orlick, T. (1990). The Pursuit of Excellence, Champaign, IL: Human Kinetics Publishers.

Orlick, T. & Partington, J. (1986). Psyched: Inner views of winning. Ottawa: Coaching Association of Canada.

Orlick, T. & Partington, J. (1987). The sport psychology consultant: Analysis of critical components as viewed by Canadian Olympic athletes. The Sport Psychologist, 1, 4-17.

Orlick, T. & Partington, J. (1988). Mental links to excellence. The Sport Psychologist. 2, 105-130.

Partington, J. & Orlick, T. (1987). The sport psychology consultant: Olympic coaches' views. The Sport Psychologist. 1, 95-102.

MTE-1
Mental Training Exercise

The following questions are designed to help you to understand and strengthen your mental skills. The items are based on what top athletes do to perform at a consistently high level of excellence. Answer the questions with reference to the sport or performance domain to which you are most committed at the present time.

1. What sport or performance domain are you most committed to at this time?

_____

2. What was your highest accomplishment or best personal performance in this sport or domain?

_____

3. What is your ultimate goal in this sport or performance domain?

_____

COMMITMENT

1. Are you willing to sacrifice other things to excel in your sport?

Never _____ Always

0 10 20 30 40 50 60 70 80 90 100

2. Do you really want to become an outstanding performer in your sport?

Never _____ Always

0 10 20 30 40 50 60 70 80 90 100

3. Are you determined to keep pushing yourself and never give up in trying to achieve your sport goals?

Never _____ Always

0 10 20 30 40 50 60 70 80 90 100

4. Do you take personal responsibility for mistakes and work hard to correct them?

Never _____ Always

0 10 20 30 40 50 60 70 80 90 100

5. Do you give 100 percent in practice (whether it's going well or not so well)?

Never _____ Always

0 10 20 30 40 50 60 70 80 90 100

6. Do you give 100 percent in competitions or games (whether behind or ahead)?

Never _____ Always

0 10 20 30 40 50 60 70 80 90 100

7. Do you put in extra time for mental and physical preparation before, after, or between regular practice sessions?

Never _____ Always

0 10 20 30 40 50 60 70 80 90 100

8. Do you push hard even if it hurts?

Never _____ Always

0 10 20 30 40 50 60 70 80 90 100

9. During the competitive season do you feel more committed to improvement in your sport than to anything else?

Never _____ Always

0 10 20 30 40 50 60 70 80 90 100

10. In order to achieve your goals are you willing to do whatever you believe is in *your* best interest, even if it means going against the advice of coaches, athletes, or others?

Never _____ Always

0 10 20 30 40 50 60 70 80 90 100

GOALS

1. Before practice or training, do you set specific physical/technical performance goals for yourself?

Never _____ Always

0 10 20 30 40 50 60 70 80 90 100

2. Before practice or training, do you set specific mental goals, for example, to stay positive, to focus only on what you want to do, or to put away distractions?

Never _____ Always

0 10 20 30 40 50 60 70 80 90 100

3. Do you commit yourself to go after the goals you set with full focus and effort?

Never _____ Always

0 10 20 30 40 50 60 70 80 90 100

4. Do you give yourself the best chance of achieving your goals by arriving well rested, on time and ready to go?

Never _____ Always

0 10 20 30 40 50 60 70 80 90 100

5. During practice, before you execute a skill, piece, drill, routine or play sequence, do you set a specific goal by deciding exactly what you want to do, and exactly how you want to do it?

Never _____ Always
0 10 20 30 40 50 60 70 80 90 100

6. Do you go after your specific goals in practice by giving everything you have?

Never _____ Always
0 10 20 30 40 50 60 70 80 90 100

7. During practice when there is a break in the action, do you take the time to think about what worked and what didn't work in trying to achieve your goals?

Never _____ Always
0 10 20 30 40 50 60 70 80 90 100

8. After practice do you take the time to think about what didn't work in trying to achieve your goals?

Never _____ Always
0 10 20 30 40 50 60 70 80 90 100

9. During practice, between drills, trials, set or routines, do you decide exactly what you want to do next time, based on thinking about what worked and what didn't work last time?

Never _____ Always
0 10 20 30 40 50 60 70 80 90 100

10. After practice, do you decide exactly what you want to do next time, based on thinking about what worked and what didn't work last time?

Never _____ Always
0 10 20 30 40 50 60 70 80 90 100

MENTAL IMAGERY

1. Before practice and competition, for example at home, on the way there, or during warm-up, do you imagine yourself doing the moves that you want to do?

Never _____ Always
0 10 20 30 40 50 60 70 80 90 100

2. During practice, before you do a skill, drill or play sequence, do you take a moment to run the skill through your mind?

Never _____ Always
0 10 20 30 40 50 60 70 80 90 100

3. When the coach gives you feedback or a suggestion, do you try to clearly imagine or feel what you are being asked to do before attempting to do it?

Never _____ Always

0 10 20 30 40 50 60 70 80 90 100

6. After doing a less than perfect skill or play sequence, do you imagine yourself doing it better, before actually trying it again?

Never _____ Always

0 10 20 30 40 50 60 70 80 90 100

5. When learning or refining a skill or routine, do you try to come up with good personal reminders (e.g., words, images or feelings) to guide your imagery and performance?

Never _____ Always

0 10 20 30 40 50 60 70 80 90 100

6. Take a moment now to imagine yourself doing a basic movement, skill, element or sequence, that you do regularly in your sport. After trying this, respond to the following questions:

A) How close was it to the way you actually do it?

Couldn't imagine it _____ Totally like

0 10 20 30 40 50 60 70 80 90 100

B) Did you experience the physical sensations in your body that you actually feel when you do it?

Not at all _____ Totally

0 10 20 30 40 50 60 70 80 90 100

C) Did you see things as if you were inside your own body doing it?

Not at all _____ Totally

0 10 20 30 40 50 60 70 80 90 100

D) Did you see things as if watching a video of yourself doing it?

Not at all _____ Totally

0 10 20 30 40 50 60 70 80 90 100

E) In your imagery could you hold on to the feeling or image throughout the skill or sequence?

Not at all _____ Totally

0 10 20 30 40 50 60 70 80 90 100

F) How close was your performance image to a perfect performance?

Not even close — Totally

0 10 20 30 40 50 60 70 80 90 100

7. Now let's take a moment to imagine yourself doing this movement, skill, element or sequence again. But this time move it up a notch, make it really great - totally awesome!

A) Were you able to move it up a notch the way you wanted to?
YES ( ) NO ( )

Explain: _____

B) How close was this performance image to a perfect one?

Not even close — Totally

0 10 20 30 40 50 60 70 80 90 100

PRACTICE FOCUS

1. Before practice, if you are thinking about a problem related to home, school or a relationship, are you able to shift gears and leave those concerns behind for the duration of the practice?

Never _____ Always

0 10 20 30 40 50 60 70 80 90 100

2. Do you know what kind of focus allows you to perform best in practice situations?

Don' know _____ Know exactly

0 10 20 30 40 50 60 70 80 90 100

3. What is your best practice focus?

_____

_____

_____

4. When executing moves, skills, routines or plays in practice are you able to maintain this "best" focus?

Never _____ Always

0 10 20 30 40 50 60 70 80 90 100

5. Do you know how to take a mental break in practice when there is no need to be focused on your performance?

Don' know _____ Know exactly

0 10 20 30 40 50 60 70 80 90 100

6. What do you do to take a mental break in practice?

_____

_____

_____

7. During your practice when there are breaks in the action, how successful are you at allowing yourself to take a mental break when it might be helpful?

Never _____ Always

0 10 20 30 40 50 60 70 80 90 100

8. During practice there are a number of things that can distract athletes or take them away from their best focus. After each of the situations listed below, indicate how successful you are at getting back on track, into a positive performance focus?

a) Making an error or screwing something up:

Problem Getting back on track _____ Get Right back on track

0 10 20 30 40 50 60 70 80 90 100

a) Coach getting "on your case" or making a negative comment:

Problem Getting back on track _____ Get Right back on track

0 10 20 30 40 50 60 70 80 90 100

b) Negative thoughts or worries about teammates:

Problem Getting back on track _____ Get Right back on track

0 10 20 30 40 50 60 70 80 90 100

c) Negative thoughts or worries about being monitored or evaluated:

Problem Getting back on track — 0 10 20 30 40 50 60 70 80 90 100 — Get Right back on track

d) Negative thoughts or worries about being ready for competition:

Problem Getting back on track — 0 10 20 30 40 50 60 70 80 90 100 — Get Right back on track

e) Negative thoughts or worries about possibly failing:

Problem Getting back on track — 0 10 20 30 40 50 60 70 80 90 100 — Get Right back on track

f) Negative thoughts or worries about getting hurt or being injured:

Problem Getting back on track — 0 10 20 30 40 50 60 70 80 90 100 — Get Right back on track

Identify and rate any other distractors.

Distractor #1 is: _____

Problem Getting back on track — 0 10 20 30 40 50 60 70 80 90 100 — Get Right back on track

Distractor #2 is: _____

Problem getting back on track — 0 10 20 30 40 50 60 70 80 90 100 — Get right back on track

9. After practice how successful are you at drawing out lessons that can help you?

Never — 0 10 20 30 40 50 60 70 80 90 100 — Always

10. Do you act on these lessons at your next opportunity?

Never _____ Always

0 10 20 30 40 50 60 70 80 90 100

11. After practice how successful are you at shifting gears and leaving today's practice behind, especially if things didn't go well?

Never _____ Always

0 10 20 30 40 50 60 70 80 90 100

12. What works best for you to shift focus away from thinking about the practice?

_____

_____

_____

This concludes the mental training exercise. In the space below, please share what you feel are your mental strengths.

_____

_____

_____

_____

Where do you think you need most work to improve?

_____

_____

_____

What are you going to do to make those improvements?

_____

_____

_____