

# THE WHOLE ATHLETE EXPERIENCE

## FC UNITED SPORTS PERFORMANCE

### "Excellence Is an Attitude, Not an End Game."

This month's newsletter addresses how the psychological side of the Whole Athlete impacts the youth sport experience.

Where our previous issues elaborated on various Recovery strategies to aid players physically, these following address mindset and mental strategies for the Whole Athlete's long-term healthy, happy, and successful development.

What does it mean to be excellent? Is it a physical outcome as the result of a goal? Is it an affirmation received from a coach, parent, or teacher that results internal motivation? Or is it simply a concept designed to inspire?

Regardless of the answer, it is only achievable through attitude.

According to research, attitude seems to be a learned trait. In the study, "**An Integrated, Multifactorial Approach to Periodization for Optimal Performance in Individual and Team Sports**" by Inigo Mujika, Shona Halson, Louise M. Burke, Gloria Balagué, and Damian Farrow, these sport scientists and psychologists alike compiled data that reports the significant value of periodized programming for optimal and holistic individual development.

Sports periodization has traditionally focused on the exercise aspect of athletic preparation, while neglecting the integration of other elements that can impact an athlete's readiness for peak competition performances. Integrated periodization allows the coordinated inclusion of multiple training components into an athlete's activities. The idea behind this method creates a rich learning environment for athletes to develop numerous skills, physically, psychologically, emotionally, and socially.

In other words, when thoughtful, intentionally organized programming is applied to young individuals, the result is success, regardless of the original goal. When the practice plan is executed with a value for the players to learn, and then progressed over time, the psychological side of sport development will be an individual's greatest tool in life, regardless of future sport participation.

The idea here is to teach excellence through practice, train it through sport, and apply it in life.



### PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT STAGES FOR MENTAL SKILLS:

After much on-going debate amongst sport psychologists, researchers published a theory of stages in mental growth. Below are the proposed stages of Mental Skill Development in youth.

**Basic skills:** motivation, self-awareness, productive thinking, and self-confidence.

**Performance skills:** cognitive-perceptual skills, attention management, and energy management.

**Personal developmental skills:** identity formation, interpersonal functioning, and media management.

**Team functioning skills:** leadership, communication skills, cohesion, and team confidence.

### NEW TERMS!

**PERFORMANCE INTELLIGENCE:** Knowing how to maximize your potential, knowing how to work with your environment, and knowing how to deliver high performance.

**PROGRAM PERIODIZATION:** systematic planning, progression, and cycling of athletic or physical training. The aim is to peak athleticism and readiness for the most important competitions within a sport calendar.

# Psychological skills for performance

Reference: I. Mujika et al. IJSP 2018

Designed by @YLM Sport Science



## 1 COURAGE

- The ability to manage fear of failure is imperative and a predictor of success
- Don't be afraid to fail and embrace it as part of a process
- See valuable lessons in defeat and understand the vulnerability of perseverance




## 2 CONSCIENTIOUSNESS

- Work tirelessly, try to do well, and complete the task at hand
- In the context of conscientiousness, grit and success, commitment to go for gold is important, not just show up for practice

## 3 LONG-TERM GOALS

- Practice must have purpose
- Long-term goals provide context and framework to find the meaning and value of long-term efforts, which helps cultivate drive, sustainability, passion, courage, stamina...



## 4 RESILIENCE

- A key component of grit, resilience is the powering mechanism that draws one's head up, moves an athlete forward, and helps them persevere despite obstacles
- Gritty athletes believe "everything will be alright in the end, and if it is not alright, it is not the end"

**Excellence is an attitude, not an endgame**

**DESIGNING AN ENVIRONMENT FOR OUR YOUNG ATHLETES THAT TEACHES THE VALUES NECESSARY TO ACHIEVE A SENSE OF SELF-EXCELLENCE IS OUR PRIORITY.**

## RESEARCH STUDY:

In the *Periodization of Psychological Skills* section of this study, researchers discuss the various ways to build and progress a mentality within individuals. The general conclusion is that, despite the method, the most successfully performing athletes possess "GRIT". It was the opinion of this research team that grit contained the most valuable attributes for athletes that ultimately resulted in an excellence-oriented mindset.

**Conclusion:** Teach developing youth how to be gritty. Researchers identified these 4 characteristics as the foundations for GRIT. Design learning environments that reveal and develop these qualities--

**Courage:** The ability to manage fear of failure is an imperative predictor of success. The supremely gritty are not afraid to fail, but rather embrace failure as part of a process. To learn from defeat, you must accept vulnerability, only then can you grow.

**Conscientiousness:** Work tirelessly, try do a good job, and completes the task at hand. Go for gold rather than just show up for practice. This requires integrity and self-awareness.

**Long-term goal endurance and follow-through:** Seeing beyond today's immediacy for tomorrow's purpose. That is PURPOSE with long-term context.

The difference between someone who succeeds and someone who spent a long time doing something is purpose. Long term goals are the context and framework that cultivate drive, sustainability, passion, courage, stamina or in other words, grit.

**Resilience:** optimism, confidence, and creativity. A key component of grit is resilience—the powering mechanism that draws one's head up, moves an athlete forward, and helps them persevere despite whatever obstacles they face along the way.

**Excellence versus Perfection:** Excellence is an attitude, not an endgame. It is far more forgiving than perfection, allowing and embracing failure and vulnerability in the ongoing quest for improvement. It allows for disappointment so that progress may be prioritized over perfection.

To be excellent, failure is your teacher and grit is your game. The Whole Athlete's greatest pursuit is that of excellence.

# LOOKING AHEAD:

This is the first of many following issues that address the psychological side of "The Whole Athlete". Look for next month's issue discussing performance anxiety. We will discuss causes, reactions, and strategies for individual and team success.

As always, if you have questions over the information provided, feel free to email me at [Taylor.h@fcunitedpremier.com](mailto:Taylor.h@fcunitedpremier.com)!

\*\*References and research for this newsletter are cited to YLM Sport Science:  
<https://journals.humankinetics.com/doi/pdf/10.1123/ijsp.2018-0093>

- Taylor Hynes