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Does the motivation, anxiety and imagery skills contributes to football (soccer) experience?

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Abstract

The article is devoted to football psychology, especially how motivation, imagery skills and trait and state anxiety contributes to sport experience of athletes. 162 male football (soccer) players, mean age=16,93±3,93 yrs participated in the research. According to the results, professional athletes outperform other groups of footballers in frequency of imagery use in sport: mostly in cognitive-specific imagery and cognitive general imagery. The professional footballers in comparison with less experienced football players are more intrinsically motivated to experience emotional stimulation in sport and to know new methods and techniques to enhance sport performance.

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Key words: sport psychology; football, soccer, psychology of football; motivation in football; imagery in football

1. Introduction

Modern football attracts not only wide audience of fans but also researchers in sport science. According to this, the numerous studies in football science devoted to aspects of psychological diagnosis and intervention for athletes with different levels of experience:

- novice athletes [1-3];

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- intermediate footballers [4-5];
- professional football players [6- 8].

Nowadays, the volume of literature that defines or describes psychological determinants of sport success has expanded. The primary emphasis has been on sport motivation [9]; imagery [3],[8],[10-13]; emotional self-regulation, especially in pre-start routine [14-17].

At the same time a question concerning the dynamic of the professionally important skills development remains unanswered. To this end, the purpose of this study was to investigate how motivation, anxiety and imagery skills contributes to football experience.

2. Method

2.1. Participants

The participants of our research were 162 male football (soccer) players. Age: from 12 to 26 yrs (Mean age=16,93±3,93 yrs). According to the data of years of sport experience, sample were divided in 5 groups: novice athletes (from 0 to 4 yrs), pre-intermediate athletes (from 5 to 7 yrs); intermediate athletes (from 8 to 10 yrs), semiprofessional (from 11 to 14 yrs) and professional football players (from 15 to 19 yrs).

2.2. Questionnaires

Athletes completed Russian versions of questionnaires: Sport Imagery questionnaire – SIQ [18]; Sport motivation scale – SMS [19]; State-trait anxiety Inventory [20]. Athletes filled out the questionnaires individually in quiet place (usually after training), the completion of the questionnaires lasted between 30 and 45 min.

3. Results and discussion

3.1. Imagery in football (soccer)

Imagery is defined as «using all the senses to recreate or create an experience in the mind»[21].

Paivio and Hall et al. describes five functions of imagery use in sport. Paivio proposed that imagery plays both a cognitive and a motivational role in influencing behavior. Each role operates at a general or specific level. Cognitive general (CG) imagery involves mentally rehearsing competition/race plans and strategies of play. Cognitive specific (CS) imagery is the mental rehearsal of different skills. Motivational general-arousal (MG-A) imagery involves imaging the arousal and anxiety associated with performing. Motivational general-mastery (MG-M) imagery is used to imagine being in control and feeling confident in sport situations. Motivational specific (MS) imagery entails imaging goal achievement and accomplishment (e.g., winning) [22].

First, we analyzed differences in imagery skills of footballers with different sport experience using Mann–Whitney U test.

The data of analysis reported in Table 1.

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