

Emotional Intelligence in Sports: Toward a New Program for Intervention

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Many diverse theoretical frameworks for Emotional Intelligence (EI) have been proposed; these varying conceptualisations have implications for applied sport psychology. This paper provides an overview of the various EI models, along with their critique, as well as their application in sport psychology. Importantly, the present paper presents a pioneering attempt to draw on all the major EI theoretical frameworks to propose an EI intervention program for professional practice in sport psychology. The aim of this program is to enhance the professional sporting performance and outcome. The AERI, an intervention program consists of four inter-related components: (a) attention, (b) emotional awareness, (c) emotion regulation, and (d) identification. This program, it is argued, would allow coaches, sports psychologists, and fitness leaders to adapt their approaches to train athletes to enhance their levels of EI.

Keywords: Emotional intelligence, Sports psychology, Intervention program

It was 19 minutes into the extra time of the final match of the 2006 World Cup when Zinedine Zidane, one of the best soccer players of all time, left the whole world shocked by head-butting Marco Materazzi of Italy for allegedly hurling spiteful words at him. The French player earned himself a red card for his actions, which marked the end of his international career.

Losing one's cool on the field is not new for any player. However, what distinguishes winning athletes from those who, although technically gifted, are able to manage their emotions is Emotional Intelligence (EI).

There is growing evidence of the role of EI in sport performance (Laborde, Dosseville, & Allen, 2015; Laborde, Dosseville, Guillén, & Chávez, 2014). Higher EI has been linked to higher performance in particular team sports, such as cricket (Crombie, Lombard, & Noakes, 2009), hockey (Perlini & Halverson, 2006), and baseball (Zizzi, Deaner, & Hirschhorn, 2003). Higher EI has also been found to be positively related to the use of psychological skills, such as success motivation (the ability to motivate oneself efficiently toward sport achievement) (Kajbafnezhad, Ahadi, Heidarie, Askari, & Enayati, 2012). Apart from group and individual factors affecting sporting outcome, EI also

plays a role in enhancing sporting performance. For example, EI is positively associated with precompetitive emotions that optimise performance (Lane, Devonport, Soos, Karsai, Leibinger, & Hamar, 2010).

That EI is trainable and can be developed had led to the development of a host of intervention programs in sports based on theoretical models of EI. This paper examines and critiques the various theoretical frameworks for EI and throws light on their application in sports psychology. It proposes a new intervention program that draws on several EI theoretical constructs with the aim of enhancing professional sporting performance and outcome.

Models of EI

Many diverse theoretical frameworks for EI have been proposed; these varying conceptualisations have implications for applied sports psychology. Following is an overview of the EI models, along with their critique and the studies that have based their intervention programs on them.

Ability Model of EI

Salovey and Mayer first developed an ability model of EI (Salovey & Mayer, 1990), within which EI refers to a form of intelligence that