2.2 Techniques II and Athlete Self-Assessment

Introduction

In this unit the importance of utilizing methods for developing self-assessment will be studied, targeted as much to the coaches as to the athletes. In the case of the athletes, self-assessment and its importance in promoting high performance in sports will be taken into account.

During the process of teaching and learning sports-related practices, the variables for teaching are not only related to the content of each particular sport and its particular goals to be achieved, but also the importance of utilizing tools for assessment which permit the process to be carried out.

As was reflected in the previous unit, there is a diversity of tools available to the coach or the sports psychologist to monitor the behavior of the athletes and to evaluate their learning. For coaches, it is also possible to apply certain recording techniques on their degree of implication when working with athletes and deporting these motivational levels to sport.

2.2.1 Concepts

Self-assessment is a very useful tool or strategy for reflexively and critically educating and evaluating the learning and teaching processes that athletes and trainers engage in. In the area of science or education, concepts utilized refer to students or teachers. It is in these fields where self-assessment processes and their importance in the teaching process are studied.

Also, self-assessment may be defined as a practice where one evaluates one´s self, regarding specific behaviors or motor actions.

Participants in self-assessment, are the subjects themselves, those directly involved as the object of evaluation. Self-assessment by the athlete reflects a formative approach to the learning process. Both the coach and the sports psychologist are responsible for educating athletes on the importance of assessment processes (Lopez, 2005).

Castillo (2002) sustains that self-assessment is the resource with which the athlete learns about the process he is carrying out and is considered to be a basic factor behind his motivation and his effort to learn. It allows for reflection on the practice, both of the individual and the team, and with this, conclusions can be drawn for the improvement of training processes. Athletes must possess self-knowledge so as to be aware of their competencies and be able to set objectives and reinforce the progress made as these objectives are achieved. Similarly, in cases where self-assessment shows that the proposed goals have not been met, it will be useful to analyze the causes and set new achievements.

Self-assessment is a tool which permits a diagnosis regarding possibilities and limitations with respect to the accomplishment of proposed objectives.

The benefits of a correct self-assessment:

- The subject becomes aware of his progress during the process of teaching and learning.
- The subject takes responsibility for their activities carried out and self-management.
- It is used individually, which is effective and replaces traditional methods of evaluation where the group is measured.
- The subject deepens their level of self-awareness and places higher value on the process.
- It favors the autonomy of the athlete and the coach.

It may be summarized as an acute reflection about what has been learned. The subject knows if he has accomplished a particular task correctly.

It is expected that the athlete as well as the coach or the psychologist clearly understands the characteristics of the sport they are working in. To the extent that they are familiar with their sport, there will be greater clarity regarding the objective measurable aspects of the sport.

An athlete's self-assessment can serve to discover that he does not yet master certain motor skills or issues related to the sport itself (rules, culture, customs, etc.), with this, he adjusts his demands and proposes other work plans with the coach.

In the case of the coach, self-assessment accomplishes the same purpose. If the coach tasks that are too demanding for the level of the athlete or cannot find the right motivational levels for each training, he will have to adjust his future interventions.

With the coach, self-assessment is a reflection and judgment on their teachings. It develops deeper self-knowledge on their practice.

Herrero (1999) outlines different kinds of self-assessment:

- Individual self-assessment: doesn't utilize collaboration with others.
- With feedback: the participation of other people with whom you work or train is used to make value judgments.
- Interactive: a process of systematized analysis shared with other people.

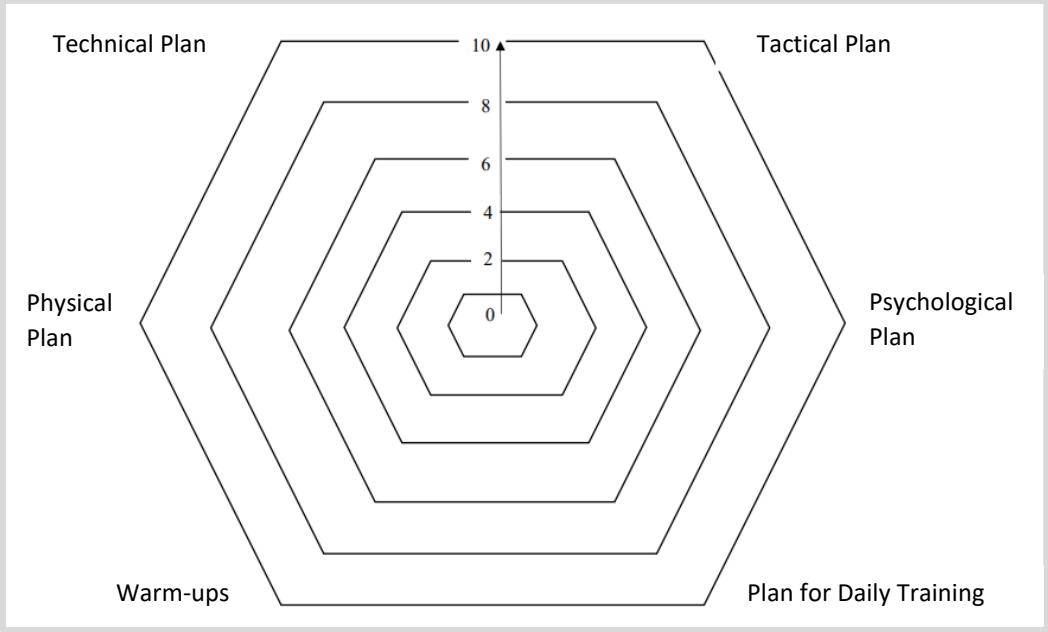
2.2.2 Practical Applications

Below we will look at some useful tools for carrying out self-assessment.

It is important that coaches frequently do self-assessment, incorporating a space for reflection and assessment into their routines on a daily basis. For them, it is advisable to photograph their starting point and, above all, for the coaches to set out what their goals are.

A form of self-assessment for the coach would be to create a scorecard with respect to technical preparation, tactics, physical preparation, psychology, warm-ups and preparation for daily training. Figure 1 below shows a more visual representation of self-assessment.

Figure 3: self-assessment



Source: Prepared by the author.

In order to carry out assessments, all possible sports settings must be considered. This includes trainings, matches and important competitions in particular. Different contexts should also be considered, such as: the locker room, the field or pitch, and the video room. All of these variables may influence the “what” and, above all, the “how”, being that the setting will significantly impact self-assessment.

Examples: What percentage of times?

- Did I respond with reinforcement after an especially good play?
- Did I reinforce a strong effort?
- Did I punish poor behavior?
- Did I utilize mistakes as a way to offer technical instruction?
- Did I prepare training sessions adequately?
- Did I get angry about poor results? Did I get angry about bad behavior?
- Did I comply with the norms that have been established?

Besides quantitative self-assessment and what may be considered a more objective view, a qualitative self-assessment may provide richer information about the "hows" previously mentioned.

For example: If I had to do this exercise, training session or match over...

- What would I change?
- What would I do differently?
- What would I take more advantage of?

It is important that coaches frequently do self-assessment, incorporating a space for reflection and assessment into their routines on a daily basis. For them, it is advisable to photograph their starting point and, above all, for the coaches to set out what their goals are.

In the case of athletes:

- Questionnaires: developed by the coaches and filled out by the athletes. The goal is for the answers to provide objective information.
- Daily journals: in this case the athlete will record his thoughts, ideas, assessments and concepts learned during a set learning process. They may be used during a season or an important tournament, recording experiences, feelings or whatever the coach and athletes consider to be important.
- A self-assessment notebook: in this case the athlete records lessons learned and makes an assessment of his own effort. What have been your best moments and objectives?

What did you learn?	How did you learn it?	What do I know now?

Assessments

Proposals for improvement

- A page outlining the weekly plan: in this case it is to motivate the athlete to be responsible for his actions. Develop a detailed list of objectives to accomplish during the week.

For the coaches

- Feedback: in this case audio or video recordings may be utilized.
- Self-assessment sheets: a list of skills is developed in an educational style, whereby the coach records feedback on what has been achieved, using a numerical scale (quantitative) or summaries (qualitative).

- Self-reporting: the coach develops questions in relation to the training and later verifies if they have been achieved or not.
- Observations: an assigned person observes the practices carried out by the coach.
- Standards comparison: making comparisons with the parameters of benchmark work carried out by other coaches.
- Control checklists: Variables observed in training sessions are recorded based on a previously developed list, with the intention of verifying if the variables are met.
- Daily journals: feelings about the day to day training sessions and other occurrences that are noteworthy.

Committing athletes and coaches to undertake regular self-assessment is vital to their performance and learning. Self-assessment should be considered a useful tool for understanding, interpreting and examining different learning speeds based on the subjects' individual characteristics.

The coach, when using self-assessment as a tool, must consider the ages of the athletes he is working with. Each variable to be measured must be adapted to the subject's developmental age, to the context where the work takes place, and to the specific objectives of the group.

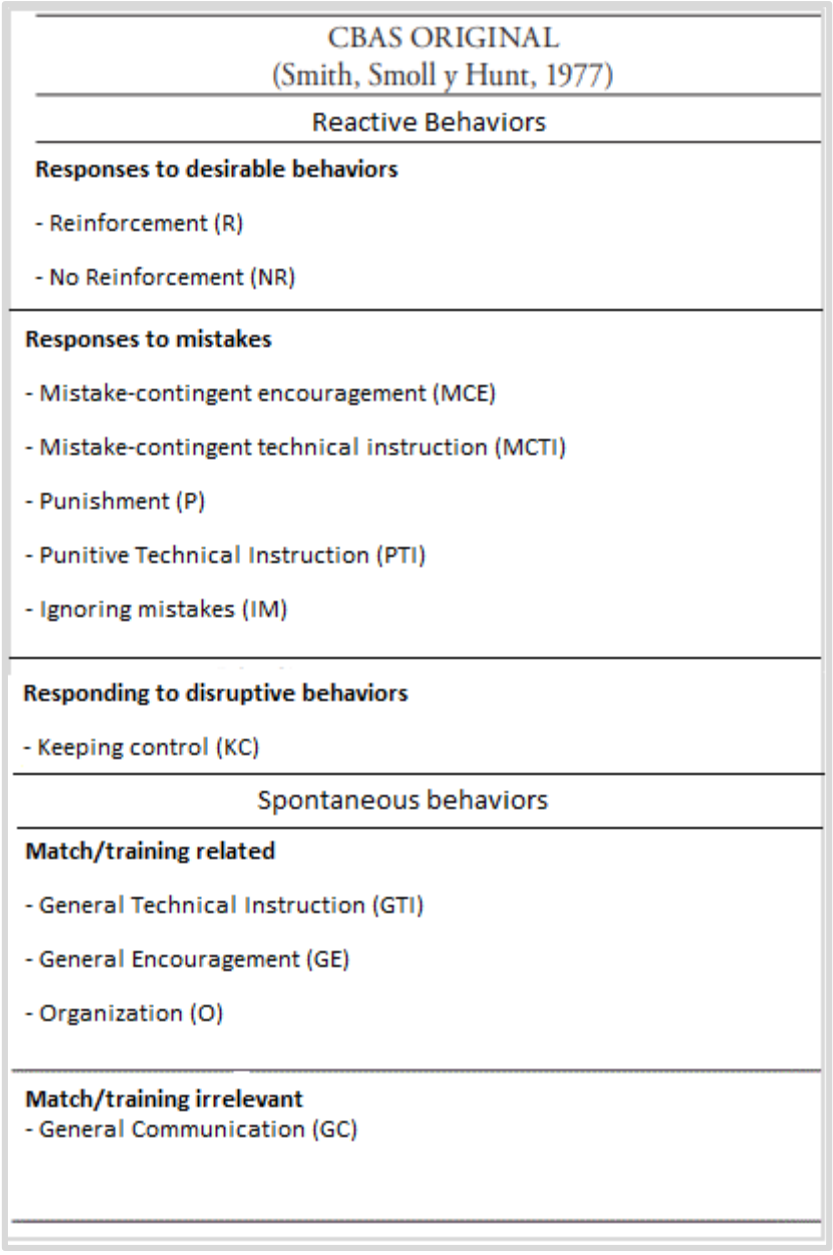
2.2.3 Studies and Applications

We will now discuss a study by Conde, et al. (2010) where an instrument was used to evaluate how well coaches were able to maintain an athlete's motivation levels. One of the challenges in the world of sports is to understand the functioning of some of the most important psychological variables, such as motivation. The coach plays an important role in this task and it is thus worthwhile to evaluate this dynamic.

In this study the instrument recorded, systematized and analyzed the behavior of the coach and his interaction with the athletes. The instrument in question was the Coach Behavioral Assessment System (CBAS), which can be used to analyze the behavior of coaches in different sports. The behavior of the coach is measured during the competitions and the training sessions. With this type of instrument, the coach obtains important information about his interventions during training sessions and competitions, allowing him to modify, as necessary, his behavior.

The observed behaviors of the coaches are divided into two categories: reactive and spontaneous. Reactive behavior refers to the response that is produced by the coach based on an athlete's reactions to errors or successes. Spontaneous behaviors originate directly from the coach.

Figure 4: Coach Behavioral Assessment System (CABS)



CBAS ORIGINAL (Smith, Smoll y Hunt, 1977)
Reactive Behaviors
Responses to desirable behaviors
- Reinforcement (R)
- No Reinforcement (NR)
Responses to mistakes
- Mistake-contingent encouragement (MCE)
- Mistake-contingent technical instruction (MCTI)
- Punishment (P)
- Punitive Technical Instruction (PTI)
- Ignoring mistakes (IM)
Responding to disruptive behaviors
- Keeping control (KC)
Spontaneous behaviors
Match/training related
- General Technical Instruction (GTI)
- General Encouragement (GE)
- Organization (O)
Match/training irrelevant
- General Communication (GC)

Source: Smith, Smoll y Hunt (1977).

In the study by Conde, et al. (2010), the CABS was adapted with the intention of measuring the different variables for a coach dedicated to functional training. Only a single subject is measured. In this adaptation, the two different categories (spontaneous and reactive) were used and twelve different variables were given. The variables were defined by a group of coaches who are experts in motivation.

Figure 5: an adaptation of the CABS

CBAS Adaptation (Conde et al., 2010)
Reactive Behaviors
Response to desirable performances
1. Positive verbal and non-verbal reinforcement
2. No reinforcement
Response to undesirable performances
3. Encouragement
4. Technical instruction
- Interrogative
- Ego
- Task
5. Punishment
6. Punitive technical instruction
7. Ignoring the mistake
Response to misbehavior
8. Keeping control
- Ignoring behavior
- Not seeing the behavior
- Control
- Punitive control
Spontaneous behaviors
Aspects related to the task
9. General technical instruction
- Interrogative
- Ego
- Task
10. General encouragement
11. Organization
- Formal
- Informal
Aspects related to the task
12. General communication
- Initial
- Final

Source: Conde, et al., 2010.

As mentioned, this is an instrument which objectively assesses the motivational climate generated by a coach. As a result, future interventions with athletes will be more effective. It is ideal for this kind of work to be implemented with the support of a sports psychologist, who can assist in carefully interpreting the results. Another point to keep in mind is how to choose subjects who will be involved in the observations with the coaches. These subjects should be duly familiarized with the subject matter and the sport in question.

Below, we will look at another study, which uses the "Multidimensional Motivational Climate Observation System" (MMCOS), as proposed by Smith, et al. (2015) in which the behavior of athletes is observed in terms of their influence on a positive or negative motivational climate. This instrument uses an observer who records information and notes on a worksheet.

The MMCOS is an instrument which evaluates the behavior of the coaches. The observers record information about the environment across seven different dimensions where the coach is interacting and engaging:

- Supports autonomy: offers significant options.
- Controlling dimension: uses extrinsic rewards.
- Task orientation: foments cooperative learning.
- Ego management: utilizing punitive reinforcement to prevent errors.
- Relationship-building: demonstrates unconditional support.
- Relationship-limiting: limits interactions.
- Structure: generates learning expectations.

All of these dimensions are scored for the coaches who can then interpret the results to modify their behavior if necessary.

Next we will look at athlete self-assessment, as an indispensable tool for understanding how athletes view themselves and how they can interpret their reality based on these perceptions.

2.2.4 Athlete Self-Assessment

Gonzales (2011) defines the concept as follows: the critical assessment that the athlete makes on the attributes that he has to offer, using internal judgments on the development of his own skills. This is a way to carry out an internal self-assessment in order to evaluate or not one's potential and make possible adjustments.

The athlete assesses his capabilities and abilities on the basis of the reality and how other people see them. Said assessment or evaluation may not be useful if his perception is far from the objective truth. If an athlete overestimates some of his capabilities, he will center his efforts on other things. To the contrary, if he undervalues some of his capabilities, it is possible that he will demonstrate signs of insecurity and not be able to fully exploit his capabilities.

The coach is responsible for assessing and evaluating the athlete's performance and preparation. Self-assessment is studied by sports psychologists, with the aim of assisting athletes to predict their own behaviors and to make judgments about their own capabilities.

Within an athlete's psychological preparation during a season, self-assessment is an important area to work on. In order to develop self-assessment skills, methods and techniques are proposed which offer the possibility of developing this concept through psychological preparation, that is:

- Interview the athletes and coaches: the athlete's self-assessment is contrasted with the coach's evaluation.
- Scale of self-assessment: a scale of assessment is completed and scored based on the response of the athletes. Said scale is usually completed by the coach and the team psychologist.
- Attitude towards competition: identify how the athlete appreciates their own abilities before competition and, furthermore, how they see their opponent.
- Preparation level: how the athlete is feeling in terms of their sporting preparation.
- Observations: here we seek to interpret expressions of athletes that show signs of self-assessment and, in addition, observe the assessment of others (coach and teammates) about the athlete.

The athlete must, based on his self-assessment, modify the aspects of his behavior that he considers in need of modification. Self-assessment is part of an athlete's psychological preparation, since it contributes to generating higher levels of confidence in an athlete's sports training. With the indicated methods of self-assessment, appropriate interventions can be implemented with athletes.

It is important that the coach instructs the athletes, providing support in terms of analysis and criticism and in the development of action and

improvement plans. As a first step, the coach (or sports psychologist) should provide guidance in the development of a tool that is practical and illustrates the advances, setbacks and stagnation experienced by athletes, as well as all the behaviors that make up attitude to training and sport in general.

Example: for the athlete, inquire about the percentage of times that:

- Actively listened to the coach?
- Encouraged the team when it was necessary?
- Complied with the coach's instructions?
- Put in effort?
- Respected the decision of the referees?

For example: for the athlete. If I had to do this training session or match over again...

- Would I change anything?
- Would I do anything differently?
- Would I take more advantage of a situation?
- Would I manage the errors differently?

Throughout this unit we have looked at methods and tools for developing self-assessment for coaches. With these, we want to equip the coaches with tools so they can continuously assess athletes, with the aim of better understanding them and their achievements, which in turn will allow the coach to set suitable goals for each player and at each moment.

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