

# Module 3. Motivation

## Unit 3.1 Understanding Motivation

### Introduction

Understanding and fostering motivation is one of sports psychology's primary areas of interest, both in terms of application and research. As a result of this interest, numerous studies have been carried out, resulting in at least 32 theories on the subject (Ford, 1992). It has also been argued that the way in which motivation is defined is often vague and confusing (Roberts, 2001).

Motivation is a fundamental component of sport. It is common to hear athletes and coaches reference this term in phrases like: "We're very motivated for this game," "this game makes for extra motivation," "today's training isn't very motivating."

Although it is commonly used, difficulties often arise when differentiating it from a term that is related to motivation but which has a different meaning: arousal.

In this unit, we will deepen our understanding of motivation by going in-depth into the definition of motivation, presenting various approaches and strategies that can be developed to build motivation.

Upon finishing this unit, you will be able to understand the difference between arousal and motivation, know what factors must be considered in order to understand athletes' motivations, and possess strategies with which to channel motivation.

### Motivational Training

Previously, we mentioned that motivation is a term that is often used in a vague and confusing way, and that it is often confused with other psychological terms. The main source of confusion is between motivation and arousal. These two processes are related but have different effects. If a coach arouses an athlete but does not succeed in motivating him or her, the player may continue to suffer from attitudinal problems. If an athlete is motivated but is not aroused, the issue has more to do with behavior.

Arousal refers to behavior and has effects only in the short term. In addition, since it affects immediate behavior, it is more changeable and easier to influence, and thus coaches can work on it.

Motivation, in turn, refers to attitude, and its influence is more long-term. It is connected with personality, and, therefore, it is less easy to influence. Coaches have a harder time addressing it, although it is also possible to do so. The table below outlines the main differences between these concepts.



**Table 1: Characteristics of motivation**

<b>Characteristics</b>	<b>Motivation</b>	<b>Arousal</b>
<b>Concept</b>	The incentive, desire, or need that moves us to act.	The energy, intensity, and effort with which we act.
<b>How is it expressed?</b>	Through attitude.	Through behavior.
<b>What effects does it have?</b>	Immediate to medium-term and long-term.	Immediate.
<b>What is it connected with?</b>	Attitude.	Mood.
<b>How is it addressed?</b>	Cognitively.	Behaviorally.

Source: Prepared by the author, based on Vives, 2011.

The difference between motivation and arousal is important, since, if this distinction is not clearly established, coaches who see that their athletes are not motivated during training might think that the activity that they have designed – and explained to the athletes – is going to motivate them, when, in fact, what it really does is increase the athletes' level of arousal. Arousal can vanish in an instant, whether due to a change in activities or because a given activity no longer motivates the athlete. On the other hand, the issue of motivation persists.

The relationship between motivation and arousal is clear because a motivated athlete is more easily aroused during the performance of a task than one who is not. Motivation and arousal are related but distinct processes. As a result, we can encounter four different combinations among athletes:

- **Motivated and aroused for an activity:** these athletes know why they are performing an activity and perform it with an appropriate level of energy and effort. Consequently, they perform the task well.
- **Motivated, but not aroused for an activity:** they know why they are performing an activity but do not apply themselves to it with sufficient effort or energy. Consequently, their performance will not be satisfactory.
- **Not motivated, but aroused:** they do not know why they are performing a task or do not see any sense in it, but they apply themselves to the task with sufficient effort and energy. If the activities that the coach provides are not varied or if not enough motivation is created, athletes may become bored because they don't see any meaning in what they are doing.
- **Not motivated and not aroused:** these athletes do not know why they are performing an activity or do not see any sense in it – thus, they do not apply themselves to the task with sufficient effort or energy. Consequently, boredom may develop, a feeling that time is being wasted as well as poor performance.

When thinking about these combinations, coaches can make use of strategies to identify different situations and can act on the basis of specific needs, according to whether the problem is one of motivation, arousal, or one involving both types.



## Focusing motivation

In etymological terms, the word **motivation** comes from the Latin *motivus*, which means movement. Meanwhile, the suffix *-tion* means action and effect. Through this simple linguistic analysis, we can see that motivation is that which moves us to perform a specific action.

If we think about the things that move us, we make progress toward identifying our motivators, that which succeeds in rousing our interest and channeling our efforts.

Channeling effort refers to a person's attitude toward a given situation. In other words, whether the person engages with or feels drawn to the situation. For example, a coach who feels drawn to studying psychology or an athlete who, after an injury, shows a willingness to carry out prevention protocols.

In addition to the channeling of effort, the amount of effort expended and the extent to which it is sustained over time are factors to take into account. For example, an athlete may show interest in participating in an optional training session but not put too much effort into the session itself. An athlete motivated by an activity or exercise may become unmotivated if she feels that it is becoming monotonous, if the activity lacks variation, or if she ceases to find it useful.

In summary, in order to understand motivation, we must take into consideration both personal factors (personality, needs, interests) and situational factors (the coach's leadership style, the atmosphere on the team, its win-loss record). Thus, motivation must focus on the interaction between personal and situational factors. To the extent possible, coaches must be familiar with the specific needs of each of their athletes, their objectives, the way that they view and evaluate personal and collective successes and failures, the activities they like or that stimulate them, their expectations, and the motives that drive them to participate in their sport.

## Providing guidance in accordance with the athlete's motivational style

Motivation will always be influenced, to a very significant extent, by the motivational style of the athlete, which can be described in terms of the different personality traits that comprise a given attitude. Because of their relevance to this unit, we will learn about three of the most influential traits when it comes to explaining what motivates an athlete: goal perspective, attributional style, and achievement motivation. We will also present some strategies so that coaches can channel their athletes' motivation in accordance with the athletes' personal attributes.

### 1. Goal perspective

This is the tendency of a person to be motivated by certain types of objectives. We can differentiate between two types of objectives that lead to different motivational patterns. Although various types of objectives are mentioned in this section, we will explore this idea in greater depth in the next unit.

**Table 2: Goals**

Types of objectives	Consequences
Objectives oriented toward the learning and improvement process through which athletes seek to improve their skills. Motto: Be better	They commit themselves to the task and improvement continues. Motivated by the process itself, independent of results.



	Strong and resistant to failures, they see failure as an opportunity for improvement. More resilient in the absence of external reinforcement such as awards and compensation.
Objectives oriented toward results Motto: Be the best	These athletes might neglect process and pin their hopes on achieving the results they desire without considering how to make them possible. They may lose their motivation if these results do not come about. They may also may find it difficult to think about what they can do to increase their chances of winning and regain their motivation to do so.

Source: Prepared by the author, based on Vives, 2011.

People with process-oriented objectives are **intrinsically motivated**, since their motivation does not depend on external factors. People with result-oriented objectives are **extrinsically motivated**, since their perspectives are focused on external factors.

Being motivated to win or to be the best is not bad; in fact, high-level athletes must have this motivation. The problem is when extrinsic motivation becomes too important. It is then that athletes can forget about process and ignore factors under their control, making results the basis of their mood. When we talk about “balanced motivation,” this means that athletes are motivated by achieving results but also by their task and by continual improvement so that they might have a better chance of achieving them.

One aspect that coaches who identify extrinsically-oriented athletes might consider is taking advantage of this extrinsic stimulus in order to show them what they can do to achieve it, not only in competitions, but also during training sessions. A change in orientation will probably not occur after just one conversation, and this message will require persistence on the part of the coach. The best way to be persistent is to set process-oriented objectives for the athlete that provide a “why” for the attainment of specific results.

In the next unit of this module, we will address process objectives in greater depth.

## 2. Attributional style

This refers to a person’s willingness to explain the causes of what has happened to them. To be sure, these are the causes that athletes come up with to explain their successes and failures. Two kinds of attribution can be established based on this premise: external and internal.

Those who are inclined to external attribution seek to explain the facts through causes that are external or removed from themselves. For example, “we lost because of the official” or “the field was in bad condition.” Those who are inclined toward internal attribution take responsibility for results and look for causes in their own performance. Apart from being internal or external, causes can also be stable (for example, talent or ability) or unstable (for example, good luck) depending on whether they vary in the moment when a specific situation occurs.



The table below shows examples of the ways that success and failure can be attributed to causes in terms of their stability and their locus of control.

**Table 3: Attributions**

Causes	Internal	External
Stable	Talent Abilities Skills	Difficulty of the task
Unstable	Effort Concentration	Luck Referees

Source: Prepared by the author, based on Vives, 2011.

When positive results are attributed to internal factors, such as ability, the athlete experiences a feeling of satisfaction and aspires to success. When a negative result is attributed to internal factors, such as a lack of effort, it tends to bring about feelings of dissatisfaction and shame, as well as a drop in the athlete's sense of ambition. Let's think of an athlete who loses a match and attributes this to a lack of concentration. When one makes internal attributions, it becomes more likely that the causes of a failure will be turned into future challenges and become an intrinsic motivation.

External attributions frequently involve excuses in the face of negative results, for example, invoking the official's performance. They do not motivate the athlete to improve. Coaches should be the first to avoid this style, and, when they observe it among their players, they should make them reflect on it. For example, they might explain that, given that these factors cannot be controlled, it makes no sense to feel self-reproach or get worried about them. The key question to pose to an athlete or coach who has a tendency toward external attribution is: "and what can you do about it?"

### 3. Achievement motivation

This is a personal trait that has to do with the motivational propensity for seeking success or avoiding failure. Those who are **oriented toward achieving success** do not fear failure, and they display perseverance in situations that may lead to success and set goals that are a challenge to them. They see victory as a result of their abilities and attribute failure or mistakes to a lack of effort or bad luck, but not to their lack of talent or ability.

A problem may come up when a coach and an athlete differ in their conceptions of success. An example of this might be an athlete, who, wanting to perform a feint in order to show off, becomes less effective by risking too much. Rather than thwarting the athlete's desire for success, the coach should encourage the player to reformulate his conception of success and explain to them that success consists of more than just beautiful feints, rather, that it is important to ensure efficient execution and not to waste energy in wanting to show off. As a supplement to this talk, the trainer might also propose that the player set himself the goal of correcting this facet of their performance by recording their actions during the game and applying positive and negative reinforcement that is contingent on the achievement or non-achievement of the goals defined.

Another problem that might come up is that success might become associated only with results, at the risk of neglecting work, becoming distracted, easing up, or having too much self-confidence if the result is not in question. This relationship between results and extrinsic motivation neither encourages persistent effort nor concentration on the part of the athlete when the expected result



is not in question. This aspect may make it easier for the athlete to avoid facing off against the most challenging competition or attempting the most difficult training tasks; as a result, the athlete fails to progress.

Players with who have a high propensity for seeking success can be a dilemma for coaches in team sports where, upon occasion, going off the agreed-upon script has a positive outcome. A player who does not adhere to the team's established tactical discipline and decides to perform an action on his or her own initiative, at the cost of generating conflict, is the same player who, on other occasions, allows the team to discover new options when the game is not going as planned.

The coach may do two things to resolve this dilemma: on the one hand, they may adapt the player's role to his or her attributes, thus preventing their suffering and fostering their virtues. On the other hand, the coach may make the argument to the team that their teammate's anarchic actions should be accepted as a necessary risk and as a trait to be accepted because, for the team, there is a positive side to them which has served to move games forward on other occasions.

Athletes that are **oriented toward avoiding failure** tend to avoid challenges, be afraid of failure, and feel uncomfortable with both success and failure. They tend to be calmer and more comfortable in easy situations in which they feel they have sufficient confidence or in extremely difficult situations where no one expects them to be effective. They also have the tendency to attribute defeat to a lack of ability and victories to luck or to the unchallenging nature of the situation.

When these athletes sense an elevated likelihood of failure, they utilize a self-protective mechanism that consists of reducing their effort so that others will not be able to discover their lack of ability. Coaches can confuse this lack of effort with a lack of motivation, although, in fact, they are motivated, but to avoid failure. Their biggest problem is a combination of a low level of confidence with a skewed attentional focus, as they are more concerned with what an error might mean than with the task and what they have to do in order to execute it correctly. The coach should encourage the athlete and set appropriate goals so that the athlete feels comfortable and, at the same time, has a real chance of attaining them. In this manner, the coach helps build solid confidence, based on progress made and the acquisition of skills that they have practiced. As a result, athletes have the confidence to use them during competition.

To bring this point to a close, a series of considerations to keep in mind when managing attributes in the face of success or failure are presented below:

**Table 4: attribution management**

	To encourage	To avoid
<b>An athlete's failure</b>	Emphasizing the need to work hard and make an effort  Linking attributions to abilities and to individual objectives	Attributing results to a low level of ability, so that they might understand that there has been a significant lack of personal progress
<b>An athlete's success</b>	Attributing success to ability  Attributing success to effort expended	Attributing success to luck  Attributing success to the easiness of the task
<b>General</b>	Taking advantage of the circumstances to learn or to set new goals	Making false or insincere attributions, of any kind

Source: Prepared by the author, based on Vives, 2011.



## **Psychoeducation: a dynamic for working on motivation**

A good foundation from which to channel athletes' motivation is to make it clear what both coaches and athletes mean by motivation.

To bring this unit to a close, we would like to present a proposal for fulfilling this function. On one hand, understanding how the athletes view motivation, and, on the other, establishing a common perspective on this issue that will make it possible to work on and channel motivation during the season. Let's say that this dynamic serves as a starting point from which to start building athletes' motivation upon clearly defined foundations. To do this, it is imperative that coaches believe in the importance of motivation and, specifically, in the benefits of intrinsic motivators as they relate to athletic performance. It is also important that they know how to argue for these ideas utilizing solid reasoning and that these ideas' daily application be consistent.

**Objective:** the athletes should be able to identify and distinguish between intrinsic motivation and extrinsic motivation as it relates to the creation and maintenance of their athletic behaviors.

**Aspects to consider:** adapting the content and the depth of the discussion to the age of the participants; drawings or illustrations can be utilized for younger participants.

**Duration:** 30 minutes.

**Material:** felt-tip marker, blackboard, sheets of paper, ballpoint pens.

**Procedure:** the coach selects several situations in the sport that generate motivation, both intrinsic and extrinsic and writes them on the blackboard (for example: winning a trophy, improving a technical motor pattern that the athlete was previously not able to perform). Do not select too many; two of each kind will be enough.

Once they are written on the blackboard, the coach asks if anyone can tell what these phrases mean. He or she should encourage participation and list the ideas suggested so as to show that they have to do with motivational techniques. After that, small groups are formed and asked to think about which of these phrases is most motivating, and, using the sheet of paper and ballpoint pen corresponding to each group, to put the phrases in order from most to least motivating and to justify their choices. Five to ten minutes are allotted so that the groups can discuss and complete this task.

After this period of time has elapsed, the groups are asked to share their perspectives. A debate is held about different motivational techniques and the pros and cons of each. The coach should guide the debate so that motivation is understood in a way that is consistent with what has been studied in this unit.

To draw the activity to a close, the coach should promote the idea of incorporating the aspects that have been worked on into daily routines. This will inspire the athletes to build their motivation on solid foundations, using the importance of intrinsic motivation as a starting point. If it is deemed appropriate, another element connected with motivation (such as the setting of objectives) can be added.

## **Conclusions**

In this unit, motivation was defined as an attitudinal attribute, since it differs from arousal.



Also addressed was the importance of being familiar with athletes' motivational patterns so that their motivation can be channeled for the purpose of facilitating the optimization of performance from a psychological standpoint.

In addition, this unit provided strategies for channeling a team's motivation in accordance with what is known about its perspective on goals, the causes to which it attributes success and failure, and its achievement motivation.

Lastly, this unit presented an idea for a group activity that serves as a starting point for working on players' motivational orientation.



# Unit 3.2 Motivating through objectives

## Introduction

In the world of sport we can find endless examples of objectives and how to reach them. There are athletes who articulate goals such as “making the starting lineup,” “trying to improve my performance during matches” and “winning championships” or “to be completely recovered from an injury before an important competition.” Coaches articulate goals such as “qualifying for the next round,” “winning a game,” or “becoming the coach of a professional team.”

Goals are always present, and athletes and coaches can identify them. The problem lies in that they are not always established in the right way, or are not adopted from a perspective that enables us to give clear instructions that increase motivation allowing us to succeed in the endeavors we set for ourselves.

Beyond sports, goals are present in every area of people’s lives. As an example, if we think of the goals we come up with every new year (for example: to stop smoking, to lose weight, to exercise, or to get a job), we can say that setting goals is easier than achieving them. Most people don’t need to convince themselves that goals are important; rather, they need guidance in order to set them effectively and to develop a plan of action that will enable them to reach their goals.

In this unit, we will address these topics.

### Objectives and their aspects

A goal or an objective is something that we want to achieve and that motivates us. Although the definition of the term “objective” may seem simple, when we examine the different aspects of an objective, the level of complexity increases and makes establishing objectives a systematic and passionate endeavor. Next, we will present different aspects that can be taken into consideration when specifying objectives.

### According to their nature: objective and subjective

Broadly speaking, people involved in sport tend to identify two types of goals: objective and subjective goals. The former are related to attaining a specific level of mastery in a task, usually within a specific period of time (Locke, Shaw, Saari, and Latham, 1981). For example: attaining an even win-loss record as determined at the end of the season or scoring a specific number of points during the next competition. Subjective goals, meanwhile, have to do with general statements of intent, for example: wanting to execute a specific task well during the next competition or wanting to feel better.

From a motivational perspective, declarations of intent may constitute an important factor in sport when the time comes to face challenges, although it is worth mentioning that these are based on the athlete’s own perceptions and lack tangible elements that would enable them to be measured objectively. Thus, goal-setting from an objective point of view turns out to be more interesting, given that its achievement indicators are less biased and more specific and quantifiable.



## According to their formulation, the point in time, and the time frame: general, specific, and operational

We can identify three typologies based on the point in the season at which objectives are formulated and the level of specificity that they possess: general, specific, and operational objectives.

**General Objectives** tend to be set at the beginning of the season and have to do with what one wants to achieve during a macrocycle, such as improving speed. These are long-term objectives.

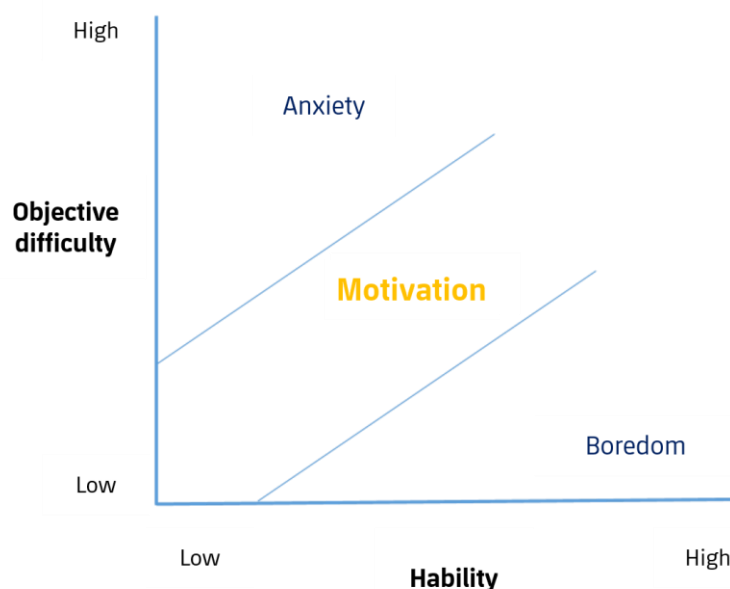
**Specific objectives** are derived from the general objective and have to do with what one wants to accomplish in terms of mesocycles; for example, maintaining an upright posture with a slight forward inclination of the torso (mesocycle 1), lengthening the stride (mesocycle 2), making contact with the floor with the foot tensed (mesocycle 3). These objectives have to do with the general objective of improving speed, with the difference that adjustments are made to both their content and their scope during for each mesocycle. These specific objectives are medium-term.

**Operational objectives** have to do with what one wants to achieve each week or each microcycle and are derived from both the general objective and the specific objective. For example, to be able to run 10 meters in x number of strides. These objectives make it possible to perform a more specific and immediate evaluation of a performance, help athletes to see their improvement, and reinforce their motivation. Operational objectives are formulated for the short term.

### As needed: difficulty versus ability

Objectives can vary in difficulty. However, when defining them, it is important to take into consideration athletes' levels of ability and adjust the objectives to this reality. Objects can be made progressively more difficult afterwards so that they represent a challenge, but we should avoid making them unattainable. This is a good strategy for maintaining motivation, reducing the anxiousness or anxiety related to fulfilling unrealistic objectives, as well as avoiding the boredom that results from setting objectives that are too easy.

Figure 1: motivational state



Source: Prepared by the author, based on Vives, 2011.

## According to perspective: result, performance, and process

Sports psychology has identified three goal typologies: those that focus on the result, on performance, and on process.

As their name indicates, **results-based goals** are aimed at achieving a specified result in a competitive event, for example, winning a game. The achievement of this type of goal depends not only upon personal effort but also on the opponent's ability and gameplay. A team may play their best game of the season, and, even so, they may lose it, or not achieve their objective.

**Performance goals** are aimed at achieving objectives for improvement, as measured against athletes of their own level, or against performances or marks that they have been set previously. For example, such a goal could be to improve one's passing effectiveness or offensive rebound percentage from 70% to 80% as compared with one's most recent game.

**Process goals** focus on specific actions that must be taken in order to perform well, for example, releasing the ball at the highest point of a jump when making a shot or lowering the center of gravity and positioning oneself so as to protect the ball when facing away from the basket.

Research has determined that these three types of goals are necessary and that they play an important role in sport. However, we will first take a look at some considerations that will help us define our goals in a positive way so that they become a motivating element for encouraging improvements in performance.

In table 5, we present a summary of the different types of goals, their pros and cons, so that we might derive the greatest benefit from them.

**Table 5: Pros and Cons of different types of goals**

	When to use them	When not to use them
Result	<p>Established during the off-season, they can provide short-term motivation.</p> <p>Thinking about how one lost to an opponent can mean extra motivation during training.</p>	<p>Before or during competition, it can generate anxiety, distractions, or disruptive thoughts.</p> <p>Worrying too much about the score and the result can mean not paying enough attention to the task that is being performed and can impair decision-making.</p>
Performance	<p>Before or during competition and during training sessions, they can provide motivation.</p> <p>Increasing the percentage of balls recovered in the opponent's half of the field can provide motivation for performing of specific action that makes the achievement of a desired result more likely.</p>	<p>Sometimes, putting too much emphasis on performance goals can provoke anxiety, especially when they are set too far above one's actual athletic potential. Furthermore, if one sets a performance goal but the actions that have be taken in order to achieve it are not understood (i.e. there is no process goal associated with the performance goal), it can be counterproductive.</p>

	<p>Establishing performance objectives for training exercises is a good way of monitoring one's own progress. For example, setting the objective of increasing the number of times that one connects with the pivot in a practice game or during a specific exercise.</p>	<p>Increasing the percentage of defensive rebounds can help players concentrate on something beyond winning or losing. Despite this, if the team doesn't know what specific actions each player can take in order to successfully increase the percentage of defensive rebounds (e.g., positioning oneself in a specific way when the opponent shoots in order to gain a positional advantage and win the rebound).</p>
<p><b>Process</b></p>	<p>These are especially recommendable during training sessions, and also before and after competition, given that they focus on the "how" of doing things. In this way, they help athletes focus on the relevant and controllable factors, thus encouraging focus and concentration. Process-related goals help motivate athletes to continue progressing, giving them the necessary confidence to consolidate the actions that are necessary for dealing with a specific game situation.</p> <p>If we want to improve speed, an example of this might mean focusing on our running technique and increasing the length of our stride.</p>	<p>Having process-based objectives is always beneficial, given that they depend exclusively on oneself: they are, therefore, controllable elements that direct attention toward something relevant, the "how" of how it is done. However, for them to be as effective as possible, they first need to be worked on and consolidated in training.</p> <p>If one wants to increase the percentage of completed passes in a game by improving passing efficiency, setting the objective of opening up more than one passing lane per action, making contact with the ball using the inside of the foot, imparting enough force so that the pass is sharp and steering the path of the ball toward the dominant leg of a teammate might end up being counterproductive if one has not worked on these skills in training sessions.</p>

Source: Prepared by the author.

The objective of winning is a constant in the world of sports. Results are demanded of athletes and coaches, thus, "winning" is often thought of as the crucial and defining factor for them. Wanting to win is not the problem, rather, the problem is not being focused on what one has to do in order to achieve victory.

Results are the consequence of having achieved one's process and performance goals. Also, finer adjustments can be made to these types of goals, given that the final balance of these result-based goals is winning or losing.

### **According to context: training and competition**

Objectives can and must be set (for training and for competition) independently of context (result, performance, or process). In competition, performance and process objectives that focus on how to perform a task avoid focusing on the significance of the competition, an aspect that can generate stress when facing an opponent or during an important competition. They can also lead



to athletes' slacking off or becoming overconfident when facing a very beatable opponent or during a competition that is seen as unimportant.

During training, objectives give meaning to what we do or what we work on. Often, coaches articulate what the athletes will be working on – i.e., the exercises that will be performed and how they should be performed. However, if one does not specify what one wants to achieve during a training session or through a specific exercise by establishing a specific objective, athletes will not see any point to the work, will not have a reason to do it, and, thus, will not be able to self-assess or consolidate the ideas worked on during the training session. Training objectives improve motivation and the confidence in the tools that have been acquired.

When we describe an exercise but leave out the “why”, the athletes will perform the activity but without a specific focus. In turn, coaches make various corrections that end up going unnoticed (offense, defense, individual technique). When they have finished, the coach and the athletes may have the feeling of not having worked on anything in particular, nor of having made any progress.

For example, a coach may put forward the following explanation: “In this drill, we are going to work on the management of numerical superiority while on offense. In order to attack the right way in a situation in which there are more attackers than defenders, the player who is unguarded must take the shot. We will know that we have gotten it right when the player who is unguarded is the one who takes the shot.” Through the use of this simple (but thoughtful) argument, players are encouraged to focus on reading the defense, communicating among themselves, creating passing lanes and being patient when they discover that the defense has made a mistake. The coach makes corrections on the basis of the established objective and if he notices other issues, he jots them down in order to comment on them later, so as not to stray from the established objective. Consequently, athletes concentrate and exert themselves to achieve the objective that has been set and they care about whether it turns out well or not. Thus, they learn.

### **According to number: individual and collective objectives**

Objectives can be set for an individual or for the team; what is important is that both be present. Keeping this in mind, it is important that both types of objectives be established ecologically, that is, in such a way that an individual's objective does not conflict with that of the team, and vice versa. Team goals stimulate motivation and cohesion. According to Dawson, Bray, and Widmeyer (2002), there are four types of goals for sports teams:

- The personal goal of each team member: “to improve shooting technique”
- An individual goal that each member has for the team: “to improve game-reading skills in order to cover my teammate's position when he attacks”
- The team goal: “To increase the number of shots on goal by 10% during the next game.”
- And the team goal for each of its members: “to ask that a teammate calm down when he complains to an official.”

The definition of a team goal is that it aims to meet specific standards of group skill within a determined time period. (Weinberg and Gould, 1996). Meeting with the team and agreeing to a list of shared objectives is not enough to achieve a change in behavior. In addition to identifying goals to achieve, the strategies that will be implemented and tasks that will be performed in order to achieve those goals should be identified, as well as the process that the team will undergo in order to achieve them.

The establishing of effective team goals involves six basic principles (Widmeyer and DuCharme, 1997):



- Firstly, setting long-term objectives.
- Establishing, a clear path to the achievement of the long-term objective, for medium- and short-term objectives.
- Involving all the team members in the setting of group objectives.
- Evaluating and monitoring progress made toward the achievement of team objectives.
- Rewarding progress made toward the achievement of team objectives.
- Stimulating the team's confidence with respect to the common objective.

### **According to the area: technical, tactical, and psychological objectives**

Objectives can also be seen in terms of the area to which they refer.

- Example of a physical objective: "Improving speed"
- Example of a technical objective: "Improving feints made with the non-favored leg."
- Example of a tactical objective: "Improve one's ability to become unmarked downfield"
- Example of a psychological objective: "Improving self-control when fouls are called on me."

Objectives can be set for different areas, although it is important to emphasize that when athletes are not experts in goal-setting, the phrase "less is more" becomes very relevant. Coaches should be careful about the number of objectives they suggest to their players, since it is better to focus on one objective and introduce another after the first has been achieved than to be focused on more than one objective and to dilute the team's focus and efforts.

It will be important to identify each objective's priority so as to be able to act accordingly. For example, coaches and athletes may identify the objectives to be achieved during a season in each of these areas and, afterwards, agree about which has first priority and where to begin their work.

### **Attributes that objectives must possess**

The way that objectives are formulated is a crucial factor, as it will determine to a great extent whether they will perform their function effectively. The attributes that well-formulated objectives must have are:

- Positive: avoid formulating objectives in negative terms and emphasize what is to be achieved, for example: "hold on to the ball in the defensive area" rather than "do not lose the ball in the defensive area."
- Controllable: objectives that depend on an athlete's own work and effort, for example: "take powerful shots at the lower-right area of the goal" instead of "convert the penalty."
- Specific: define what is to be achieved, how it is to be achieved, when it is to be achieved, and under what conditions. For example: "achieve an 80% pass completion rate when I'm running."
- Evident or measurable: think of the observable evidence or indicators that enable you to determine whether the objective has been accomplished, for example: "Improve the percentage of balls recovered in the opposite half by 10%," rather than "increase pressure on the ball in the opposite half."
- Challenging and realistic: objectives must be reachable, while also posing a challenge. If this balance is not maintained, we run the risk become stressed, whether due to demands that are too tough or ones that are so easy that they become boring.
- Ecological and systematic: avoid the possibility that an objective might pose problems for other aspects of the game or cause friction with other members of the team. As was

mentioned previously, the individual objective should not conflict with the collective objective, and vice versa.

- Time-limited: objectives should include a date by which they should be achieved.

## Objective-setting phases

### Phase 1: Preparation and planning

While it is common to start out on a goal-setting program, little importance is typically given to this phase. This stage is vital, since this program's success is closely tied to the time spent on this phase. Despite the hectic nature of day-to-day life in sports and the difficulties that can arise when presenting new tasks to teams and technical staff, spending time on this phase will save time and effort in the future.

- Evaluation of abilities and needs

Before any goal is set, we must identify specific needs and evaluate individual capacities. This can be carried out by asking players and coaches which aspects they want to improve and asking individuals to assign a point value to each. We can also propose an assessment in which the trainer and coach each give a score and then combine their findings to reach a consensus.

Another option might be for experts in each area to compile a list of abilities necessary for sport in question and to ask each member to measure the extent to which each has been acquired.

If the coach is familiar with the player's career and has pinpointed the aspects to be improved, another project might be the coach to suggest the aspects to be improved. However, this will depend on the athlete agreeing that the proposed items are areas that need improvement, and are also seen as necessary. The objective will be the athlete's, so while the coach may suggest a few things, the one who will ultimately have to make the choice is the athlete.

- Establishing goals in different areas

Keeping the different goal typologies in mind. Principal objectives often have to do with achieving things during competition. However, as has been mentioned previously, training objectives, individual objectives, collective objectives, and physical objectives should also be considered. This does not mean that all of these should be addressed simultaneously; it will be necessary to prioritize some of them in accordance with specific needs.

- Identifying influences

Objectives cannot be set in a vacuum; athletes' potential, their commitment, and the amount that they can practice must also be taken into consideration. It would be of little use to set an objective of staying for an extra half an hour after each training session to practice taking foul shots if the player isn't committed or isn't disciplined enough to do so on her own. On the other hand, before she becomes more independent and is autonomous enough to practice on her own initiative, setting objectives during regular practice sessions would be a more appropriate focus.

- Planning out the strategies

At this point, it is important to plan out the actions that will be necessary for reaching the objectives; if we fail to provide detailed and realistic strategies for reaching them, our objectives will remain unmet.

## Phase 2: Education and acquisition

Having planned out the intended achievements, coaches then can teach athletes the most effective way of setting objectives. This means that the coach will provide information and define criteria for the setting of objectives – based on the contents of this unit.

- Scheduling meetings

Before the season starts, the coaches should schedule a series of meetings in order to define individual and collective objectives. In this regard, it is important to be able to distinguish between effective and non-effective goals (in the way they are formulated) based on the principles presented in this unit and apply these principles to the objectives. During subsequent meetings, work can continue on the objectives and on preparing the action plan that will be followed in order to reach the proposed objective.

The following checklist can be used to assess whether the established objective possesses the necessary attributes:

**Table 6: Checklist for proposed objectives**

Objective:	
Is it stated in positive terms?	yes no
Is it under the athlete's control?	yes no
Is it specific?	yes no
Can it be measured?	yes no
Is it challenging and realistic?	yes no
Is it ecological?	yes no
Is it time-limited?	yes no

Source: Prepared by the author

The following table shows an example of one potential simple action plan.

**Table 7: Example of an action plan**

General Objective	Specific	How to achieve it	When it will be carried out	Who will assess it	Date of achievement
Increase passing precision while running.	Complete 80% of passes while running (of every 10 passes,	Passing precision exercises in training. Leading by passing	Monday, Wednesday, Friday, and during the game.	I will wear a self-tracking device during training sessions, and, during games	10/1/2019.

	complete 8).	during the game.		the assistant coach will keep track.	
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Source: Prepared by the author.

### Phase 3: Implementation and follow-up

Once participants have learned to formulate objectives, it is time to put the action plan into effect, complete the assessment and follow-ups.

- Monitoring and assessment

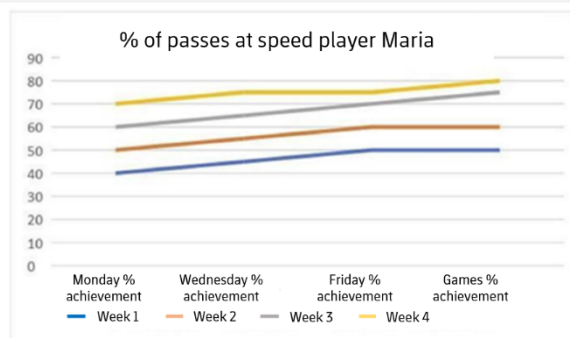
Many objective-setting programs fail to do this. Objectives are not useful if we don't assess them or monitor our progress in pursuing them. For the assessment to be effective, the indicators for achievement should be well defined; so should the individuals responsible for carrying out the assessment, the method to be used, and the point in time at which said assessment will be carried out.

Assessment and feedback are crucial elements that allow us to know whether the objective has been achieved or not. If it has not been met, it is time to reformulate the objective (was it a realistic objective? Could it be formulated in another way?) And reflect upon the strategies that were implemented and actions that were taken in order to archive it (were the proposed actions useful in reaching the objective? Could any other actions be taken to reach it?)

As part of the feedback offered during the monitoring of progress made, it is important to be able present graphics and logs so that we can chart this progress. Below, we see an example of how this works:

Figure 2: an example of a session

Player "Maria"	Monday	Wednesday	Friday	Game	Observations
Week 1	40%	45%	50%	50%	Needs technical instruction
Week 2	50%	55%	60%	60%	Good progress
Week 3	60%	65%	70%	75%	Needs to focus on xxx
Week 4	70%	75%	75%	80%	Objective achieved



Source: Prepared by the author.

- Offering support and reinforcement

During the season, it is important for coaches to ask athletes about their objectives, to show interest in them, and to offer support so that they might be achieved. Openly encouraging progress and giving importance to results is a key aspect of effective goal setting.

### **The benefits of setting objectives**

Scientific evidence shows that goal setting is beneficial in two ways: one of them indirect (that is, an indirect view of the thought process) and the other direct (a direct mechanistic view).

Setting objectives influences behavior and performance indirectly by means of important psychological factors such as confidence and anxiety. Confidence is instilled by our perception that each objective that we reach results in the acquisition of a new resource; this can also reduce anxiety when competing. The setting of objectives directly influences:

- Drawing athletes' attention to the key elements of a task. For example, a football player sets a specific goal in order to improve his or her play during matches and focuses on improving one skill, such as taking free kicks or winning contested balls.
- Helping to stimulate athletes' efforts, since they see a point and a purpose in making an effort.
- Helping athletes to keep their efforts up and to persevere when the objective is not achieved in the short term, or when they plan to achieve it over a longer period of time.
- It encourages the development of new learning strategies. For example, basketball players who want to increase their three point field goal percentage can optimize their technique by adjusting the biomechanics of their shot or by practicing shooting threes after training sessions, even if they are tired.

### **Conclusions**

Setting objectives is an effective technique for channeling athletes' motivation, and it improves athletic performance both directly and indirectly. Although objectives are frequently invoked in sport and are given a great deal of importance, it is common to commit certain errors when defining our objectives. This could be because they lack the key components of an effective objective (i.e., being stated in positive terms, being specific, controllable, measurable, challenging, realistic, ecological, and time-limited), or due to being focused exclusively on results.

In this unit, we have described various attributes of objectives (according to time frame, area, and context) with the aim of broadening our outlook and letting go of the reductionist focus based on results-oriented objectives that prevails in sport. Without a doubt, these should exist, but if they are not accompanied by performance and process objectives, they will entail a real psychological trap.

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