

Sport psychological skills that discriminate between successful and less successful female university field hockey players

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Abstract

Sport psychology plays an important and ever-increasing role in competitive sport. The objective of this study was to determine the sport psychological skills that discriminate significantly between successful and less successful female university field hockey players in order to emphasize the characteristics that need to be addressed in sport psychological skills training (SPST) sessions. The subjects consisted of 106 female university hockey players, categorized into a successful (players from the A division) and less successful group (players from the B division). The sport psychological skill (SPS) levels measured with the Psychological Skill Inventory (PSI) and the Ottawa Mental Skills Assessment Tool-3 (OMSAT-3) from the two groups were compared and reported. The results indicated that the successful group had better results in 66.7% of the variables that were measured in the study. Practical significance was found in four of the 18 psychological variables that included achievement motivation, goal directedness, goal-setting and fear control. Furthermore, six variables discriminate significantly between the successful and less successful female hockey players, which included achievement motivation, stress reactions, fear control, self-confidence, mental rehearsal as well as imagery.

Key words: Sport psychological skills, field hockey, performance, discrimination.

Introduction

Field hockey is a team game played by millions of male and female adults and youths in more than 118 countries (Anders, Myers & Myers, 2008). It is a team sport that is played with 11 players aside with a hockey stick and hockey ball. Field hockey is characterized by activities such as twisting, turning, never-ending rushes, stopping and movements as well as sprints, starting, break-a-ways, passing and shooting. Field hockey players are faced with many mental and emotional challenges in addition to the physical demands during a match (Anders *et al.*, 2008). It is assumed that these psychological challenges may differ among players of different levels (Junge, Dvorak, Rosch, Graf-Baumann, Chomiak & Peterson, 2000).

The role of sport psychological factors and skills in achieving optimal performance cannot be underestimated (Van den Heever, 2006). According to Cox and Yoo (1995), success in professional sport is not only dependent on the physique of players and tactical aspects but also on psychological skills. Le Roux