

# MENTAL TOUGHNESS OF ATHLETES

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- ✘ Research has identified mental toughness as a crucial attribute for success in competitive sport .
  - ✘ The concept of mental toughness has been identified as one's ability to withstand adversity, pressure and stress
  - ✘ Mental toughness includes factors such as an athlete's ability to cope with pressure/stress/adversity, to rebound after failure, to persist, and to be emotionally resilient (Thelwell et al., 2005).

✘ The data showed that the following components were fundamental to the definition of mental toughness:

1. Having an unshakable self-beliefs in the unique qualities and abilities that make you better than your opponents.
2. Strength: You have to be in good physical and mental condition. You must be psychologically and emotionally prepared.
- 3 Having an unshakable self-belief in your ability to achieve your competition goals.
- 4, Have conviction: You have to be a little bit stubborn.
- 5 Regaining psychological control following unexpected, i can control events (competition specific).
6. Have a strong will to succeed: Don't let setbacks stop you from achieving your goal.
7. Remaining fully focused on the task at hand in the face of competition-specific distractions,
8. Be consistent; Recognize and adjust to change so that you are always able to make a contribution to your team.
9. Not being adversely affected by others' good and bad performances.
10. Be competitive: It's not just about beating your opponent. You have to internalize competitiveness and take pride in what you do.

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11. Switching a sport focus on and off as required.
  12. Personal management: Don't duck potential problems; take on the problems directly to prevent small problems from building into bigger problems.
  13. Thriving on the pressure of competition.
  14. Take the right approach: Always be ready to play.
  15. Accepting that competition anxiety is inevitable and knowing that you can cope with it.
  16. Have passion for what you do.
  17. Having an insatiable desire and internalized motives to succeed.
  18. Bouncing back from performance setbacks as a result of increased determination to succeed.
  19. Remaining fully focused in the face of personal life distractions.
  20. Pushing back the boundaries of physical and emotional pain, while still maintaining technique and effort under distress (in training and competition).

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- ✘ Although recent research has provided information regarding the concept of mental toughness, little is known about potential variables that may be related to mental toughness.
  - ✘ Based on the current mental toughness literature, we predicted that males and team sport athletes would report higher mental toughness scores than females or individual sport athletes. This is because confidence is a key component of mental toughness (Clough et al., 2002), and males have been reported as being more confident than females and team sport athletes more confident than individual sport athletes (Vealey, 1988).

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- ✘ Also, Bull, Shambrook, James, and Brooks (2005) have suggested that mental toughness<sup>T</sup> might be specific to certain sports. This could possibly result in differences between team and individual athletes. Team athletes are mentally tougher than individual athletes.
  - ✘ Following Connaughton et al. (2008) it was predicted that older and more experienced athletes would exhibit higher levels of mental toughness.

# AIMS AND HYPOTHESIS OF THIS RESEARCH

- ✘ The aim of this research was to analyze the relations between mental toughness of athletes and their gender, age and type of sports.
- ✘ The first hypothesis: There are statistically significant differences among men and women in mental toughness
- ✘ The second hypothesis: There are statistically significant differences among team and individual athletes in mental toughness
- ✘ The third hypothesis: There are statistically significant differences among older/more experienced and younger/less experienced athletes in mental toughness

# SAMPLE OF RESEARCH

- ✘ The sample consisted of 64 athletes, 57,84 % men and woman 42,16%, 62,50 % athletes of individual sports (archery, tennis, boxing) and 37,5 % athletes of team sports(basketball, football, volleyball), 71,9% athletes who are younger than 30 years and 28,1 % % athletes who are older than 30 years, 56,3% athletes who train less than 10 years and 43,7% athletes who train more than 10 years.
- ✘ The sample consists of 58 athletes of individual sports and 42 athletes train collective sports

# QUESTIONNAIRE

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- ✘ SMTQ (Sports Mental Toughness Questionnaire) was developed to determine the level of mental endurance in sports by Sheard et al..
- ✘ The SMTQ contains 14-items rated on a Likert-type scale, anchored between 1 (*not at all true*) and 4 (*very true*). The Sports Mental Toughness Questionnaire measured total mental toughness and three dimensions: consistency, control and self-confidence.
- ✘ Sample items on the three subfactors include “I interpret potential threats as positive opportunities” (confidence), “I give up in difficult situations” (constancy), and “I am overcome by self-doubt” (control).
- ✘ Cronbach's alpha coefficients of internal consistency have high values (consistency  $\alpha = .77$ , control  $\alpha = 0,79$ , self-confidence  $\alpha = 0,85$  and mental toughness  $\alpha = 0,92$ ).
- ✘ The data was analyzed by using the Spss 20.0 for windows package program.

# RESULTS

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- ✘ Men ( $M=3,46$ ,  $SD=0,47$ ) have higher consistency ( $p=0,00$ ) than woman ( $M=3,01$ ,  $SD=0,79$ ). Also, men ( $M=2,93$ ,  $SD=0,66$ ) have higher control ( $p=0,00$ ) than women ( $M=2,32$ ,  $SD=0,84$ ). Results show that men ( $M=2,99$ ,  $SD=0,66$ ) have higher self-confidence ( $p=0,02$ ) than women ( $M=2,54$ ,  $SD=0,84$ ).
- ✘ Lastly, men ( $M=3,11$ ,  $SD=0,53$ ) are mentally tougher ( $p=0,00$ ) than women ( $M=2,61$ ,  $SD=0,77$ ).
- ✘ Men are also mentally tougher than women in other research (Nicholls et al., 2009).
- ✘ These differences could be due to variations in the underlying expression of the attributes related to mental toughness in males and females or, alternatively, to different socialization processes.

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- ✘ There are not differences between athletes who are younger than 30 years and athletes who are older than 30 years in consistency ( $p=0,68$ ), control ( $p=0,50$ ), self-confidence ( $p=0,90$ ) and mental toughness ( $p=0,94$ ).
  - ✘ There are not differences between athletes who train less than 10 years and athletes who train more than 10 years in consistency ( $t(62) = -2,14, p=0,08$ ), control ( $t(62) = -1,41, p=0,16$ ), self-confidence ( $t(62) = -1,46, p=0,13$ ) and mental toughness ( $t(62) = -1,78, p=0,08$ ).
  - ✘ Age and years of experience are of course closely related variables ( $r = ,60$  in this study). Therefore learning experiences and/or biological changes were not responsible for the small changes in the attributes underlying mental toughness.

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- ✘ Athletes of team sports ( $M=3,44$ ,  $SD=0,52$ ) have higher consistency ( $p=0,00$ ) than athletes of individual sports ( $M=3,17$ ,  $SD=0,71$ ). Also, athletes of team sports ( $M=3,01$ ,  $SD=0,76$ ) have higher control ( $p=0,00$ ) than athletes of individual sports ( $M=2,48$ ,  $SD=0,76$ ). Results show that athletes of team sports ( $M=3,11$ ,  $SD=0,64$ ) have higher self-confidence ( $p=0,02$ ) than athletes of individual sports ( $M=2,61$ ,  $SD=0,79$ ).
  - ✘ Finally, athletes of team sports ( $M=3,18$ ,  $SD=0,64$ ) are mentally tougher ( $p=0,01$ ) than athletes of individual sports ( $M=2,73$ ,  $SD=0,69$ ).
  - ✘ Athletes of team sports who usually have social support from other team members were mentally tougher than athletes of individual sports. Also, Bull, Shambrook, James, and Brooks (2005) have suggested that mental toughness might be specific to certain sports.

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- ✘ The first hypothesis about differences in mental toughness among men and women is confirmed.
  - ✘ The second hypothesis about statistically significant differences among team and individual athletes in mental toughness is confirmed.
  - ✘ The third hypothesis about statistically significant differences among older/more experienced and younger/less experienced athletes in mental toughness is not confirmed.

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- ✘ The practical implication is great importance of systemic work with women and athletes of individual sports to strengthen mental toughness.
  - ✘ A limitation of the present study is the potential for social desirability in the reporting of mental toughness, which could have influenced findings. Also, limitation of this research is small sample.
  - ✘ In summary, mental toughness is related to a number of different variables, but further research is required to explore the underlying mechanisms.

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