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Original article

## THE ATHLETE'S MOTIVATION

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### *Abstract*

"It has never achieved anything great without enthusiasm!" Ralph Waldo Emerson, american poet and prose writer.

The motivation- physical phenomenon that trigger, direct and support energetically the activity."(DEX, 2010).

*Objectives.* The present study aims to bring to the attention of colleagues, teachers and coaches, who are training performance athletes, the importance of motivation in psychological training of athletes, motivation being the key to the success and performance of any individual.

*Methods.* Within this research, the methods used in the research of the phenomenon are: the bibliographic method, the study of materials that treat motivation, the method of pedagogical observation and the ascertaining method.

*Results.* By monitoring the behaviour of athletes in training and competitions, they received medals and diplomas, applause, a recognition of achieved performance, praise and encouragement.

*Conclusions.* Motivation is crucial for achieving success and notable performance in the events in which the athlete competes. Motivation has as its main role the development and support of specific behaviours to an athlete until he will constantly adhere to them, manifesting a decreasing need for rewards.

*Keywords:* motivation, sports performance

### *Introduction*

The motivation creates the mental energies necessary for the activity or human condition. The motivation determine the concentration of the attention and willing, sustain energetically the efforts for the preparation and participation in competitions.

The motivation can be intrinsic, that come out from the interior of the individual, without any outside pressure and without having need of reward,

it's only achieve pleasure during the sport activity, get involved voluntarily, off passion for the activity itself. The extrinsic motivation refers to the accomplishment of the activity in order to obtain a result, it results from an external source of the individual, such as the rewards: medals, diplomas, awards and money, also praises, assessments, applauses but also constraints and punishments.

Due to a strong inner desire, many manage

to excel, being able to supplement physical qualities or motor skills such as height, speed, strength and dexterity.

Motivation can be intrinsic, it leaves from within the person, without external pressure and without the need for reward, only obtaining pleasure in carrying out sports activity, the person gets involved voluntarily, out of passion for the activity itself.

An athlete is intrinsically motivated if he believes that he has the skills to be effective in achieving the desired goals, and the results are not determined by luck. Extrinsic motivation refers to performing an activity in order to obtain a result and which comes from a source outside the person and who can encourage that person to perform an activity. These are found in rewards that can be concrete: medals, diplomas, trophies, prizes and money, as well as intangibles: praise, appreciation, applause but also constraints and punishments.

Zörgö B. stated that the external factor itself is "the one that triggers (or stops) some process and cannot be considered the reason for the triggered phenomenon, without a relation to a need, an intention or aspiration of the subject". (Zörgö, 1980, p.168)

Motivation is an indispensable link in the mechanism of behaviour adjustment, in athletes it must be optimal, well dosed to achieve maximum performance. In specialised literature, some authors consider that the most important reasons to practice a sport are:

- self-affirmation - the need to be appreciated, the need for prestige
- social trends - the desire for integration in the community

- interest in competition - the need to compare with others

- the desire to win - the desire for glory, to be known, to be the center of attention, to dominate, to surpass oneself

- the need to move is an innate reason, by itself the motor act offers satisfaction

The self-affirmation is one of the major reasons in sports, it includes the prestige need, the need of being accepted and appreciated, of receiving a rank in a particular collectivity. Then it is also the contact need, need of affiliation, integration in a certain collectivity with common interests and activities. The interest for the competition subsumes the need of being successful, of comparing to others, winning desire, desire to beat, to gain awards.

The reasons that determine the coaches and athletes, to engage themselves in this large labor, are in three aspects appropriate to the human need:

-the necessity of feeling competent and exercise self-determination

-need of stimulation

-need of the social contact

The athlete needs to be stimulated, it requires the permanent recognition of the effort during the training, to grant some material rewards through which can be rewarded the losing and sacrifices of the coaches and athletes.

The coach needs to look closely the motivational elements, to know guide them to the performance purpose. Starting from the initial reason, the coach can change through arguments, depending of the preparation targets or through the transmission of new tasks during the training classes, through the belief of acceptance and new guidelines, everything to enhance the yield.

The motivation is represented by the quantity of psychic energy that the athlete use in his actions and by the direction that he guide this energy.

The motivation differentiates an athlete from a champion.

In psychology, motivation is considered a set of factors that underlie human behaviour (internal states, needs, tendencies, affections, interests, intentions, ideals, processes) and that support the achievement of certain actions, facts, attitudes. In other words, motivation is the result of stable dispositions in a person.

Motivation can be associated with the term desire. Thus "desire is a conscious need, an emotional trigger oriented towards its object, object seen or consciously designed".(Popescu-Neveanu, 1978, p.370)The motivation is the energy that push us as individuals to take action, to undertake something. Even if sometimes we can strongly say that we don't know why we are doing certain things, this doesn't means that is no motivation, but only that the motivation is more or less conscious. The conscious motivations are those beliefs that push us to do certain things or which alike prevent us to do anything. The need induces an imbalance state, and the behavior tends to restore the balance.

The motivation is an inner state, personal, a way to be, which is different from one person to other and which makes the difference between a successful life and a life without satisfaction. The motivation comes out from our inner, is a state that stress the individual, like an obsession that push him to achieve his purpose. On the other hand, the extrinsic motivation represents the reward from exterior, based on the principle that if you do this, you get this and this is usually used at home.

Force Field Analysis was created by Kurt Lewin in the 1940s, where you can find both the subject and the objects, persons, activities. To characterize a component of the motivation it used the vector concept which have in physics: size, direction and sense. The analogous of physics vectors, the motivation vectors are characterized through intensity, direction and sense, properties that can be measured through certain psychological methods. The direction and sense of the vector express the attraction, the approach or the avoidance or the rejection. Its intensity is found in the approach force or rejection force. Between the actives motivations, as like between the physical forces, can exist diverse relations, but more complex.

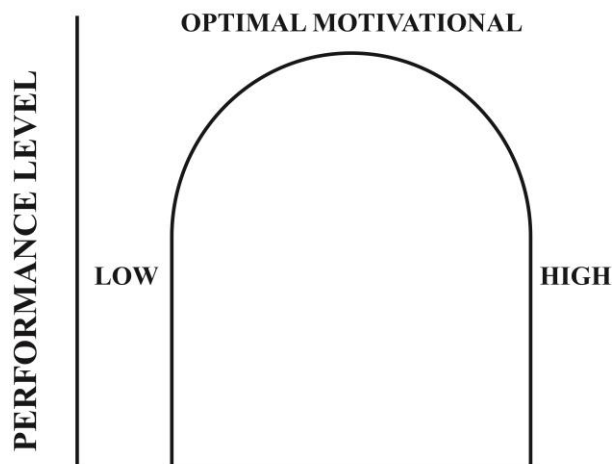
The motivation is an ability that can be learned. To learn this ability first you have to know yourself, to know exactly what you want to achieve, to know which are the factors that wake up inside you the anrgy and desire to grow up, the happiness and the enthusiasm.

Over time, researchers have developed many theories of motivation in psychology. I mention here Hertzberg's theory of two factors, Abraham Maslow's pyramid of needs, McClelland's theory of the need to achieve, basic needs theory, evolutionary theory of motivation, theory of expectations, theory of impulse reduction (1943, Clark Hull), theory of excitation of Stanley Schachter and Jerome E. Singer, stimulus theory, temporal theory, Festinger theory, Walker's hedgehog theory (1980), etc.

In Walker's theory, he states that the preference of organisms (what they like to do) was measured by offering the freedom to choose alternatives. Organisms prefer to do things that are neither too simple nor too complex, they look for activities that are at an optimal level of complexity.

The relationship between preferences and complexity can be presented on an inverted "U" curve. The zero point represents a neutral reaction, neither pleasure nor pain. When the complexity is too small, the line drops below zero, which means that events are too simple, become boring and unpleasant. When the complexity is moderate, the joy is maximum, and when it is too great, the events become unpleasant, chaotic and overwhelming.

The "inverted U" theory is the theory that "applies to sports in which we encounter complex and very complex motor acts, which require fine coordination, detailed control over the body, regulation of force or explosive power. In such cases, high motivational actions will affect the processes of differentiation in the cerebral cortex, disrupting the accuracy of movements, thus requiring a moderate level of motivation".(Nae, 2010, p. 8)



The motivation is essential for the psychic activity and for the development of the personality because:

- is the first chronological element of the activity
- signals physiological and psychological deficiencies
- selects and triggers the activities corresponding to its own gratification and supports them energetically
- contributes, through repeating some activities and avoiding others, to the formation and consolidation of some attributes of the personality

Theoretically, the motivation should be constant at the performance athlete. Practically, we confront with apathy feelings, superficiality and lacks of involvement states. Most of them give up when

meet difficulties. They are no motivated anymore to continue. In order to keep alive the motivation, you have to remind permanently that you have a purpose and you obtain benefits after all the effort.

For the last two years, we confronted with great changes regarding the motivation in sports. It became obvious the target of the accomplishment of some material benefits, same for the athletes and coaches as for the organizers of the national and international competitions.

The support of the motivation is also for the athlete as for the coach. We speak about three motivation strategies: through fear, purpose and rewards. The motivation through the purpose is the most effective method on long-term, in contrast to the

other two, which represent a motivation on short term. Through the assignation of a purpose, we encourage the athletes to motivate themselves, becoming aware of the reason of the training. The motivation through rewards- no matter how we motivate the athlete( trophies, money, promotion etc), the incentives must be permanently increased, otherwise they don't have worth anymore for the athletes. The motivation through fear- the athlete avoids the loss of the position, avoid the mistake, its concentration is more on what it's not important.

At the groups I have for training, I can say the rewards represent a strong motivation. So, at the competitions they have participated, home and out of our center, the athletes received from the organizers attendance diplomas, badges, swimming glasses, shirts, vouchers, etc. And the winners got diplomas, medals, objects prizes, etc. There were competitions where they got only diplomas and IV-VI-th places. During the six months of the training I used the reward in money of the ones that get high performances in the training tasks. At the end of the period, I noticed the efficiency of this demarche. I will mention the special case of one athlete, who at the regional competition didn't manage to accomplish the attendance schedule of the national championship. The failure and the reward constituted a strong reason for her in the training and preparation program. Daily, the athletes have received points depending on their evolution. At the end of the month the first three ranked have received money as a reward. The athlete managed, during 4 of the 6 months of training, to achieve first place and in the regional competitions qualified on the first place of all my athletes. During the training lessons, the coach has to maintain the athletes interest, for the physical development and technical-tactical improvement.

After a fail must be analyzed tightly the behavior of the athlete, highlight the real causes that determinate the fail, regarding the quality of the execution in competition. With tact, the coach will present the lacks noticed during the contest.

### **Conclusions**

The coaches should include the new elements in classes, that can increase the interest and lead to a new motivation. The means of the preparation must be accessible, stimulate the athlete interest. Generally, the competition, creates a strong motivation if it's well organised and the positive results are rewarded, place the interest and the participation of the athletes during the training. The lack of the rewards has a negative effect. Through the rewards, it highlight the value of the athletes( medals, cups, diplomas, trophies, etc.).

For the development of the motivate activity must be permanently followed the satisfaction of the needs: the recognition of the effort, of the value and competition, the stimulation of the activity and sport result, also the integration in the social relationships. The coach and the athlete must search methods and means in order to become competitive and to remain at a superior level in the elite of the sport performances.

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