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Case Study 1 - Maximizing Competitive Benefits

Following the last Olympics, several ski jumpers lodged complaints with the U.S.O.C. that they weren't given a fair chance to make the Olympic Team because coaches were hand-picking the athletes that they funded and selected for competitions with little regard to how they actually performed in competition. For example, McKenzie, the winner of U.S. Nationals, was not on the Olympic Team. In an effort to give all competitors a fair shot to be funded and represent the U.S. in international competition, the U.S. Ski Jumping Advisory Board instituted a new selection policy in which every jump in practice and competition with the national team, from off-season workouts on plastic in July through the end of the competitive season in March, is counted towards team selection.

Let's examine how this new system will impact Mike, the U.S.'s most talented young jumper who is still developing his technique and learning to compete consistently in international competition, versus McKenzie, a grizzled veteran at 28 who has a strong history of making international teams but lacking the talent to be competitive for a top 10 finish in World Cup meets. Mike benefited from the old system, whereas McKenzie had languished. **Explain your rationale for your answers to each part of the four questions in detail. Your rationale will count as much as your actual response.**

1. Will this new system enhance both Mike and McKenzie's **motivation** to work hard and perform their best? Why? Under what circumstances might competition be an ineffective motivator?

2. Will this new system enhance **quality control** for both Mike and McKenzie? That is, will they both develop their techniques and skills as fully as possible under this competitive system? Why? Under what circumstance might competition be ineffective in promoting quality control?

3. Do you think that both Mike and McKenzie will experience **positive character development** as a result of competing in this new system? Why? Under what circumstance might competition be ineffective in helping athletes develop positive character traits?

4. Do you think that both Mike and McKenzie will develop better **cooperation skills** as a result of competing in this new system? Why? Under what circumstances might competition be ineffective in helping athletes develop cooperation skills?
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Case Study 2 - Helping Christy Experience Flow

Promoting Passion -- Last season Christy had a basketball game where she was in the zone. Everything she did worked, and her performance was effortless and automatic. Every shot she took went in. She played great defense, including 5 steals because she seemed to know what the other team was going to do before they did it. Finally, she had 11 assists because she saw the floor so well, anticipated what her teammates and opponents would do and stayed calm and poised under pressure.

Christy has since found out that she was experiencing Flow, a peak performance experience that has greatly enhanced her passion for basketball. Christy wants to experience Flow again, as often as possible for as long as possible. She has become obsessed with basketball and with trying to experience Flow whenever she practices and competes. It has become the major reason she plays the game. Answer the following 5 questions about Flow. Explain your rationale for your answers in detail. Your rationale is equally important to your actual response.

1. Review the major characteristics that define Flow for Christy? Explain each one.

2. What strategies can Christy use to increase her chances to experience Flow? Why?

3. What strategies can Christy's coach employ to help her experience Flow more often and longer? What strategies should her coach avoid that may inhibit Flow? Why?

4. Pick another sport and identify strategies to promote Flow for athletes in that sport. What is the rationale for each suggestion?
Nancy is a 44-year-old mother of 3 who has been relatively sedentary most of her adult life. Nancy was on the swim team as a child and was a cheerleader during high school, but she has done no regular exercise since. Family finances have always necessitated that Nancy work most of her married life, taking only 6-8 weeks off work after the birth of each of her children. Nancy enjoys her work as a real estate agent, but work and family responsibilities left her little time to exercise while her children were growing up. Now that her youngest daughter is in college, Nancy would really like to begin exercising but she doesn't know how to go about starting. She's unsure what type of exercise she should try, and she is confused about how long and how hard she should exercise. Nancy would also like to find an exercise partner or group, but she doesn't know anybody with whom she might exercise. Answer the following 4 questions about Nancy's exercise adherence situation. Explain your rationale for your answers in detail. Your rationale is as important as your actual response.

1. What exercise stage is Nancy in? How do you know?

2. Based on exercise adherence research, what are her major reasons for initiating an exercise program likely to be? Why are these reasons important in order to get people started exercising?

3. What barriers to exercise might Nancy struggle with as she tries to begin an exercise program? Why?

4. What types of compliance strategies may be most effective for Nancy? Why?
You Have It or You Don't -- Patrick is a promising offensive lineman who wants to play in the NFL. Consider these 2 scouts’ opinions about Patrick--one where he has a physical problem and the other a mental problem.

When Scout 1 evaluates Patrick, he sees a 6’7” and over 300 pounder who has the frame pro scouts want, along with good feet and exceptional lateral quickness and agility. His technique was good on both run and pass blocking, and he is an intelligent student who plays smart on the field. However, the scout feels he lacks the upper body strength to play in the League, so he recommends a variety of strategies to enhance his upper body strength and flexibility that will help him reach his goal of playing at the next level. The scout projects him as a 5th or 6th round draft choice.

When Scout 2 evaluates Patrick, generally he likes Patrick's physical skills, but he has real questions about his mental toughness. Patrick gets frustrated against smaller, quicker players and often loses focus and gets holding penalties. Against big physical defenders, Patrick's lack of upper body strength is a major liability, and he often gets easily frustrated when he gets overpowered and may give up on the next play. Although his physical strength problem is correctable, the scout sees Patrick's lack of mental toughness as a big problem that will hurt his consistency, attitude and resilience. The scout suggests that Patrick does not have the mental toughness to make it in the NFL, and he believes the prospect won't be drafted or picked up as a free agent. (adapted from Vealey, 2005)

These pro scouts obviously see Patrick's mental and physical problems differently. Answer the following 3 questions about mental skills. Explain your rationale for you answers in detail because it is as important as your actual response.

1. What is the reason for this differential view of mental and physical skills? Is there a flaw in the scouts’ logic? If so, what?

2. Name at least 2 other myths about mental training. What are the flaws in logic for each of these myths?

3. What are the similarities in mental and physical training? How does each impact performance?
Case Study 5 - "Going for the Goal!"

Goal Dilemma -- Melanie, a young high school volleyball coach, comes to you for help motivating her athletes. She's curious if a goal setting program might be the answer to her teams motivational problems, but she doesn't know much about goal setting, particularly how to set up and run an effective program. Melanie wants her athletes to be more motivated in off-season conditioning, in the weight room, during practice and particularly in matches. Although the team has a poor work ethic, Melanie believes the girls will work hard if she organizes her program effectively. She suggests that her athletes' lack of motivation is a carryover from the previous coach's "country club" atmosphere that was more interested in having fun than in developing skills and striving to win. She hopes setting goals will rechannel her athletes' energy and help create a positive motivational climate.

Based on your knowledge of goal setting, you know how goals are set is important. What are the key steps in the process of making goals work most effectively? **Answer the following four questions that relate to essential components of effective goal setting program.** Explain the rationale for your answers thoroughly, citing important information from the book and lectures. Your rationale will count as much as your actual response.

1. **What is the difference between process, performance and outcome goals?** What is the problem with outcome goals that is hurting Melanie's team, and how can process and performance goals provide a better alternative for maximizing motivation and performance?

2. **Many coaches use the SMAART goals approach to teaching their athletes what type of goals to set. SMAART stands for Specific, Measurable, Aggressive but Achievable, Relevant, and Time-Bound. I prefer the DRUM (daily, realistic, urgent & measurable) acronym.** Critique what is good and bad about the DRUM versus SMAART acronyms, so Melanie can decide which to use with her team.

3. **Many coaches and athletes don't use a systematic approach to setting and attaining goals. Briefly list the 5 steps of the Goal Implementation Process and identify the two most important steps Melanie needs to focus on.** Make sure you explain why these steps are important.
**Slump Busting** -- Conner is a talented high school baseball player who seems to be his own worst enemy. Conner is a perfectionist, and whenever he makes a mistake or performs poorly, he gets down on himself and begins to focus on all his faults and puts himself down for not being able to eliminate these silly mistakes. Unfortunately, when Conner gets down on himself, he can't let go and keeps running these negative thoughts and personal putdowns over and over in his head. This negative attitude affects his confidence and concentration, and his performance suffers. Conner has had several slumps during the season that seem to be brought on by his inability to deal constructively with his flaws and mistakes.

Tom Bradley, Conner's coach, wants to help Conner deal with his negative attitude because he is the team's most talented player and the key to their success this season. Coach Bradley thinks Conner needs to work on his self-talk, so he can maintain a more positive attitude and develop a better approach toward mistakes. Conner doesn't know much about self-talk other than those funny skits they did on Saturday Night Live. He's skeptical and thinks it sounds like a loser making excuses. Based on your knowledge of self-talk, answer the following five questions that relate to what Coach Bradley can tell Conner about self-talk to sell him on trying it and strategies that he can use to improve Conner's attitude and ability to deal with mistakes better. Explain the rationale for your answers thoroughly, citing important information from the book and lectures. Your rationale will count as much as your actual response.

1. What are the ABC's of Self Talk? What do they say about the cause of Conner's negative attitude and difficulty in dealing with mistakes?

2. What is the "Critic," and what impact does it have on Conner's attitude and approach to mistakes and adversity? Name at least 2 types of "distorted thinking" or "irrational beliefs" that may be responsible for Conner's problems. Explain each.

3. Name and explain at least 3 Positive Smart Talk Commandments that could help Conner maintain a more positive and constructive attitude.

4. How can Conner "reframe" his remaining negative thoughts using the 3-D approach?
Case Study 7 – Is What You See, What You Get?

*Hitting an Ace* -- Mary is a collegiate tennis player who has been struggling with her serving. Whenever she tries not to double fault, she seems to always hit the ball into the net or too deep. Mary's coach, Bill Mitchell, wants her to try imagery as a "feed forward" strategy (i.e., get information before performing to enhance success) to help her serve better. Mary has never used imagery before to enhance her sport performance, and she is skeptical about its effectiveness. Mary tried using imagery to improve her serving after practice, but she couldn't seem to get a clear image of what she wanted to do and imagery seemed to make her serving worse rather than better.

Based on your knowledge of imagery, answer the following five questions that relate to what Coach Mitchell can tell Mary about imagery to sell her on trying imagery as a tool to enhance her serving and to help her use imagery in ways that will maximize its effectiveness. Explain the rationale for your answers thoroughly, citing important information from the book and lectures. Your rationale will count as much as your actual response.

1. What is "imagery" and why is it a better performance enhancement strategy for Mary to use than "visualization?"

2. What is the scientific explanation for why imagery would help Mary improve her serving? Is Mary's initial experience with imagery unusual? Why or why not?

3. What is the difference between an internal and external imagery perspective? Which should Mary use to enhance her serving?

4. What 2 imagery dimensions does Mary need to develop to enhance her imagery skill? Explain each. List 3 strategies that will help Mary enhance her imagery ability and explain why each is important.
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Case Study 8 – Shaping the Point Guard

Although Robin, the point guard on your basketball team, is a talented player, defenses have figured out that she always runs plays to only the right side of the floor, and they have been able to stack their defense to totally disrupt your offense. You want to achieve greater balance in your attack, so Robin runs offensive plays to the left side of the floor as often as she doesn’t to the right, making it harder for defenses to predict what you’ll do. Based on shaping principles, answer the following 4 questions about how to help Robin become more balanced in running the offense to both sides of the floor. Explain your rationale for your answers in detail. Your rationale is as important as your actual response.

1. What behavior do you want to use to replace Robin’s current behavior in initiating a play? Why have you chosen this alternate behavior?

2. List at least the first three steps in your "shaping sequence" that you will reinforce to help make this change.

3. Is punishment needed to deal with this problem? Why or why not? If so, what should you punish?

4. What reinforcers and punishments would you use most frequently to get best results? What reinforcers and punishments are the most powerful in motivating change?
Case Study 9 - Brock Handling Big Game Pressure

Brock is an outstanding quarterback who has completed almost 65% of his passes during the season. Unfortunately, in big games Brock tends to get too "psyched up" or overaroused and often overthrows open receivers. More importantly, despite a pretty good touchdown-to-interception ratio of 20 TDs and only 11 interceptions, Brock tends to throw the majority of interceptions in big games when he believes the pressure is on him to move the offense and score at least 28 points if his team is to win.

Brock often doesn't read the defense well in these situations, and the majority of the interceptions were by linebackers dropping into coverage or safeties coming over to help on the play. To make matters worse, Brock reports not even seeing these defenders when he threw the interceptions. Answer the following 4 questions about Brock's energy management problems. Explain the rationale for your answers in detail because it is as important as your actual response.

1. What type of overarousal problem does Brock have that prompts him to have a large number of interceptions in important games? How do you know?

2. How does this problem affect his performance directly?

3. What strategies would you use to help Bob find and maintain his optimal arousal level? Why?

4. How could he develop and automate these energy management skills during practice?
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Case Study 10- How Dan Manages Coach-Induced Stress

Dan is a redshirt sophomore linebacker on a D-I collegiate football team. He came out of the Fall season as a starter, but a coaching change occurred and he is in a fight for a starting spot again in Spring practice. Dan had a bad first scrimmage where he graded out 55%, but he has played extremely well since in both practices and scrimmages. Dan's coach seems to like another player a lot for Dan's position, and even though Dan seems to have clearly outplayed his rival, scrimmage grades don't reflect his superiority.

Dan has tried to talk to his coach twice, the first time to have him explain his scrimmage grade and the second time to ask what he needed to work on to get more time with the first team. In both cases, his coach seemed to get upset with him and accused him of being "selfish" and putting his personal needs ahead of the team. **Answer the following 5 questions about Dan's stress problems. Explain the rationale for your answers in detail because it is as important as your actual response.**

1. What does "primary appraisal" tell Dan? Is there a potential threat or challenge to his physical and psychological well-being goals?

2. What does Dan learn from "secondary appraisal?" Does he feel like he has enough "personal control" over the situation to reduce or eliminate the threat? Does Dan have the "coping potential" to make things better?

3. What type of a "coping program" should Dan try to implement to effectively deal with his stress? Should he use "problem management" coping strategies? If so, what? Should he use "emotion management" coping strategies? If so, what?