Task One

Practice structure

Before any of the practice begins the coach should allow the players to explore the map.

When the players are first going into the map, they will be shown only one portion at a time. This should mean when the practice begins, they shouldn’t be overwhelmed and potentially build negative connotations. This type of coaching style is Laissez-faire also known as ‘submissive style’ “this style is a throw-out-the-ball-and-have-a-good-time approach” (Martens, 2012). By not overwhelming the players it should mean that when the practice begins the appropriate level of challenge can be met.

After players have explored the map, the team should discuss their first thoughts about the map, for example strengths and weaknesses. This should help the team all have a unified grasp on the situation.

Practice

Retakes are a good way for players to learn the map, as players are forced to play a random position on the map with some players trying to attack a site while others try to defend. To keep the appropriate level of challenge, at the start, the coach could block off parts of the map to allow the players to focus on only one part; every player has the same weapon and health. However, later in practice the coach could change the settings to make the game more random such as random guns, random health, and utility. This should keep the appropriate level of challenge at a point where learning should always be at its peak.

This means the player should be learning how the map works. Examples of this could be crosshair placement, utility usage, timings, and player position. This type of practice is called random practice or interleaved practice “Frequent change in task demands from trial to trial” (Wright and Kim, 2020, p. 99). The potential benefits to this style of practice are “learners trained with interleaved practice are characterized by a slower rate of acquisition but exhibit a capability to maintain” (Wright and Kim, 2020, p. 114). The coaching style used for the task will be autocratic or command style “the coach makes all the decisions...the athlete's role is to listen, absorb, and comply” (Martens, 2012).

After initial Practice

Once practice is over the players and coach could discuss how they want to play around the map. Discussing attacking, defending, post plant, callouts as well as set plays. After discussion, players should go into the map and practice these plays, seeing what works and what doesn’t.

The coach should have a democratic style or cooperative style “share decision making with their athletes” (Martens, 2012). This is because the athletes are at an elite level so will be able to have their own ideas and should know what will be possible and realistic.

The coach should also discuss with the team what they feel are their strengths such as team play, retakes, etc. As well as weaknesses that they feel they should work on. For example, callouts, post plant, etc. Again, using a democratic or cooperative coaching style.

The coach should also try and set up scrims with other equally skilled teams, this should allow the team to test the effectiveness of the set plays and strategies. This should also allow the team to test out team synergy around the map and find any issues that need to be worked on.

Appropriate challenge

Having the appropriate level of challenge is vital to maximizing learning “When task difficulty is low relative to the individuals’ skill, learning is sub-optimal but performance is high. Also, when task difficulty is too high, learning is not optimal because the task demands exceed current capabilities/attention capacities.” (Hendry et al., 2019, p. 4)

Feedback could be one way to keep an appropriate level of challenge. “The appropriate frequency of specific feedback depends on the learner’s level of expertise”. (Yan, Guadagnoli, and Haycocks, 2020, p. 322). Having good feedback should allow the athletes to discuss with the coach how they are finding the tasks, whether they are too challenging or too easy. This should then allow the coach to adjust the challenges to the appropriate level of difficulty. “Students who have higher skill should self-assess rather than rely on instructors or fellow learners for assessment of feedback.” (Yan, Guadagnoli, and Haycocks, 2020, p. 325).

Random practice, as stated before, is also good at making sure players are at the appropriate level of challenge. “Random practice, such as adopting a variety of shots from different locations on a court or interleaving practice of shooting and dribbling skills, can cause short-term struggles but will enhance long-term learning” (Yan, Guadagnoli, and Haycocks, 2020, p. 324). Therefore, utilising random practice at the appropriate level of challenge should mean that players are getting the most out of practice.

TASK 2

Identifying issues - needs analysis

Looking at the task brief, Mia is a young highly skilled FIFA player. Currently, she is struggling to perform and is losing lots of matches. Mia has stated she has high performance expectations of herself also adding she wants to play without mistakes and a fear of losing. Mia also said she struggles to deal with live audiences and often underperforms. Lastly, Mia struggles to manage her lifestyle which is negatively impacting her performance.

Applying stressors

Mia is potentially struggling with state sport confidence which is “the belief or degree of certainty individuals possess at one particular moment about their ability in sport” (Vealey, 1986, p. 223).



*Figure 1 Sport-Confidence Model (Vealey, 1986; Vealey & Chase, 2008)*

Mia’s performance is currently dropping so looking at figure one, this could be due to a lack of sport confidence. Uncontrollable factors such as potential Live audience being at events is something Mia struggles with, which is a factor that could affect Mia’s performance.

Another likely reason for Mia’s lack of performance could possibly be sourced back to environmental comfort issues. Mia has stated she finds it challenging to manage a live audience so playing in an environment with an audience could lead to a lack in performance. With Mia’s lack of performance, her situational favorableness could fall which then could lead to an even larger absence of confidence.

Another reason for a lack of confidence could be Mia’s mastery. It’s been stated Mia is a highly skilled FIFA player which could come with expectations. So, when Mia isn’t meeting her expectations, her confidence could fall leading to more performance issues. Without resilience and cognitive efficiency, these problems could be affecting Mia’s thoughts and actions which are likely to then affect her performance.

There is currently two main stressors Mia is facing that could be affecting her performance. One is social inhibition where the audience has a negative effect on sport performance. This has also been seen in other cases for example in an interview with elite CS:GO players “one player highlighted stressors when dealing with a live audience saying if you make a mistake, you are unsure if the audience have seen it, but you feel like they have, which leads to you feeling much worse” (Smith, Birch, and Bright, 2019).

As well as a fear of losing which is a form of cognitive anxiety which is “the degree to which one worries or has negative thoughts” (Weinberg and Gould, 2018, p. 78). This has also been seen in other athletes, in an interview with League Of Legends pros “Thomas discussed being scared of the consequences of losing and how he would feel afterwards” (Leis et al., 2022).

Coping strategies

Coping is a “constantly changing cognitive and behavioral efforts to manage specific external and/or internal demands that are appraised as taxing or exceeding the resources of the person.” (Lazarus and Folkman, 1984, p. 141).

One would suggest emotion focused coping strategies for Mia to overcome her social inhibition, this is “to overt behavioral strategies that regulate the emotional distress resulting from demands (Nicholls et al., 2010), but do not attempt to change the actual stressor” (Smith, Birch, and Bright, 2019). This could be good for Mia because “females preferred to use emotion focused coping in response to these stressors” (Nicholls and Polman, 2007). An example of this could be listening to music for instance “participants used strategies (e.g., listening to music, counting to 10,) to “zone out” and “block out” irrelevant stimuli” (Smith, Birch, and Bright, 2019). Using emotion focused strategies such as listening to music should help Mia overcome her social inhibition.

For Mia to overcome her cognitive anxiety one would suggest appraisal-focused coping strategies “This coping involves the (cognitive) re-evaluation of a situation to reduce its importance and refers to strategies such as situation re-structuring” (Smith, Birch, and Bright, 2019). An example of appraisal-focused coping could be in the form of self-talk.There are two forms of self-talk that could be used, positive and negative however, it is suggested that if positive is used it could be more effective “Strategies such as positive self-talk and thinking ahead were found to be effective, whereas thinking about irrelevant things and negative self-talk were ineffective.” (Nicholls and Polman, 2007, p. 16). By using appraisal-focused coping Mia should be able to overcome her cognitive anxiety.

Social support is something that could also help Mia when it comes to all her stressors, being able to talk to someone, for example, a coach or friend could lift the burden off her. In an interview with professional League Of Legends players one stated “Talking about what you feel, that’s also the main thing to cope with anything. If you talk about it, it always becomes easier.” (Leis et al., 2022). By having someone to talk to Mia should be able to build the resilience needed to overcome her stressors.

Lastly one would suggest Mia uses a routine which is a form of approach coping “These referred to longer-term, orchestrated strategies that involved confronting the source of stress and deliberately attempting to reduce it” (Smith, Birch, and Bright, 2019). In an interview with League Of Legends professionals one “acknowledged performance pressure and pressure from social media, he discussed a routine he has followed for a while” (Leis et al., 2022). This could be what Mia needs to take away event pressure and help deal with other stressors.

TASK 3

Team analysis

In the scenario, Dan is an elite League Of Legends player. His favoured role is Bot however, he is asked to play support instead. He’s happy to play the role but gets annoyed with the mistakes the current bot can make and is increasingly getting frustrated. There is also some tension with the IGL, and the Mid as to who should be IGL. They are all of similar age (17-21) and do get along with each other. However, Dan can feel left out, for example, when the team goes out to eat, they do not invite Dan or Jake. The team is relatively successful, and communication is generally good and constructive. There are arguments over what level of competition the team should enter. They also don’t want to increase the time they need to practice. In recent tournaments there were arguments over in-game decisions which led to arguments about team roles.

Current factors affecting team performance

Looking at the team analysis it could be argued there could be a lack in overall team cohesion.

Cohesion is important as “Overall, a significant moderate to large relationship was found between cohesion and performance” (Carron, Colman, and Wheeler, 2002). Therefore, if the team wants to increase team performance, building cohesion might be a way to get there. Cohesion can be defined as “a dynamic process which is reflected in the tendency for a group to stick together and remain united in pursuit of its instrumental objectives and/or for the satisfaction of member affective needs” (Carron, Brawley, and Widmeyer, 1998).

However, cohesion can be split into two subdivisions. One is team cohesion “the degree to which members of a group work together to achieve common goals” (Weinberg and Gould, 2018, p. 192). In the scenario, it stated 2 players want to compete in higher-level events, while 2 of the other players say they are happy competing at the current level. This difference in team goals could affect how the team performs. Showing there could be a lack of team cohesion.

The second part of cohesion is social cohesion “the degree to which members of a team like each other and enjoy one another’s company” (Weinberg and Gould, 2018, p. 192). For example, in the scenario, it states that there is some tension between players over in game-roles as well as team roles. Also, one of the players Dan feels left out when 2 players go off for lunch and don’t invite him or Jake. This shows there is a potential lack of social cohesion in the team.

Intervention

A method the coach could use to build team cohesion is a team charter. This involves getting the team together and creating an agreed set of behaviours for the team as well as setting team goals. Setting team goals should be part of the team charter due to its potential importance when it comes to group cohesion, “group cohesion increases as commitment to, clarity of, and importance of the goal increased for players” (Weinberg and Gould, 2018, p. 200). In a research paper on the effects of a team charter on student team behaviours the outcomes were “teams that use the charter have a statistically significant higher level of the many facets of teamwork quality.” (Aaron et al., 2014, p. 96).

To fix the issue in team roles one would suggest the coach explains individual roles in the team, this is because “when players understand what us required of their teammates, they can begin to develop support and empathy” (Weinberg and Gould, 2018, p. 204).

One of the methods the coach could use to help with social cohesion is PDMS (personal disclosure mutual sharing). This is when each player in the team spends some time-sharing personal thoughts and experiences with the team.

An example of a PDMS session suggested by (Evans et al., 2013, p. 236) could be where athletes are given 2 weeks to prepare a 5 min speech in response to three instructions. Describe a personal story to help your teammates understand you better. Tell the group why you play the [sport] and what you think you will bring to the team. Detail a personal story that you would want the team to know about you that would make them want you in the trench beside them before going over the top into battle. The story can relate to any event that took place in your personal or sporting life and should illustrate something that defines your character, motives, and desires.

The research was done showing the effectiveness of PDMS in professional soccer “In line with previous research, the players experienced enhanced feelings of closeness and team cohesion, as well as improving their understanding of themselves and teammates” (Windsor, Barker, and McCarthy, 2011, p. 109). Using PDMS should help the team overcome the lack of social cohesion in the team.

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