Goal Setting

Goal setting is advantageous and effective in daily life and in sports (Gould, 2010). The three types of goals most relevant to sports are: outcome goals (focused on the end results of a competition, involves interpersonal comparison); performance goals (the individual athlete's goals for him/herself, personal goals, self-referenced); and process goals (refer to how an athlete performs/executes a certain skill, skills/strategies to effective execution) (Kolovelonis, Goudas, & Dermitzaki, 2012; Weinberg, 2010).

Weinberg (2010) listed some general advice for productive sports-related goal setting: goals should be moderately difficult, yet challenging enough and realistic; goals should provide direction and focus (specificity and measurability); athletes' commitment to and acceptance of their goals will reflect in motivation levels; goals and feedback yield better performance results than just goals or feedback alone; use a combination of process, performance, and outcome goals; performance and process goals should be emphasized as they are under the athlete's direct control; use individual and team goals; set practice goals; barriers to goal achievement include limited time resources, stress, tiredness, academic pressures, and difficult social relationships; set short-, mid-, and long-term goals; action plans aid in goal-actualization; and write down goals.

Goal setting is an important aspect of self-regulation and the self-regulatory process (forethought, performance, self-reflection) (Kolovelonis et al., 2012). In the forethought phase, goal setting is related to motivation, self-efficacy, and self-reflective processes (satisfaction) (Kolovelonis et al., 2012). Kolovelonis et al. (2012) noted that students with set goals paid greater attention and demonstrated greater self-satisfaction. Students with process-oriented goals exhibited more self-efficacy and intrinsic interest as compared to students with performance goals (Kolovelonis et al., 2012). In the performance phase, Kolovelonis et al. (2012) noted that students used self-control strategies towards goal attainment. This performance phase is characterized by students' using analysis and evaluation to progress their goals (Kolovelonis et al., 2012). Self-talk was another strategy used amongst self-regulated learners in conjunction with goal-setting. Hardy, Oliver, and Tod (as cited in Kolovelonis et al., 2012, p. 222) defined self-talk as "those automatic statements reflective of, and deliberate techniques athletes use to direct, sports-related thinking".

Kolovelonis et al. (2012) studied the effects of self-talk in combination with process/performance goal setting on learning a new motor skill, dart-throwing. Eighty-five students (40 boys, 45 girls, from 5th and 6th grade) with no dart-throwing experience. The students were divided into 5 groups: process goal and self-talk; process goal without self-talk; performance goal and self-talk; performance goal without self-talk; practice-only control group (Kolovelonis et al., 2012). The students were given 9 tries to throw darts at the dartboard, and prior to their throws they were given a cue respective of their experimental group (Kolovelonis et al., 2012). Kolovelonis et al. (2012) used questionnaires at the end to evaluate the students' self-efficacy, satisfaction, enjoyment, and self-talk manipulation.

Kolovelonis' et al. (2012) results indicated that students using self-talk regardless of the goal-type improved their performance as compared to students without self-talk; and students who used self-talk and goal-setting significantly improved their performance as compared to the

control group. Kolovelonis et al. (2012) also noted that both process and performance type goals promoted a task-oriented learning climate: process goals helped direct focus on technique; performance goals aided in motivation to increase effort.

Reflecting back on my personal use of goal-setting, the techniques I utilized were: set challenging but realistic goals; develop short-, mid-, and long-term plans; break big goals into smaller steps--sometimes almost insignificant of themselves; do one thing every day towards my goals (kaizen); constantly reassess/readjust/refine goals; spend some time reflecting every day on the day's progress and what the next day might be like; acknowledge my feelings/doubts and consciously select to honor only the self-talk that will help me towards my goals. I have used the concept of "kaizen" for a long time and have redefined it to be relevant to me: [daily] small, continuous, meaningful improvements in mind-body-spirit. I publish a kaizen worksheet every Sunday on my website. One of the key reasons I adopt a "kaizen" approach is because I believe that goals must be sustainable in order to be attainable. One small improvement every day is better than being "stuck". "Wabi-sabi" is another Japanese view/aesthetic that generally means the acceptance of the transient and imperfect nature of all things--there is no "perfection", celebrate the oddities and uniqueness of things (that is not to say one shouldn't have high standards/goals of course). Wabi-sabi to me is more of an acceptance that everyone has an unique story/journey and is a "work in progress".

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