

Conditioning for Golf – Planning Success

(Although written within the context of golf this approach is applicable in all settings)

Defining The Training Purpose

Having completed the necessary analysis and evaluation of the sport and individual you will have no doubt uncovered a range of strengths, weaknesses and possible areas to focus on. The next stage in the training design process is to establish the desired outcomes or what I describe as defining the training purpose.

Much is written on the subject of goal setting in sport and exercise. I therefore imagine that the concept of setting the goals of training is unlikely to be new to you. Pick up any good sport psychology, personal development or coaching book and you will find ample space given over to sections on how to establish and write a whole range of goal types (outcome, performance, process etc...). Fortunately this is not another mind numbing piece on SMART goal setting so you can read on.

In basic terms Locke and Latham (1990) define a goal as:

“a cognitive theory of motivation which effectively energises individuals to become more productive”

Personally I also like the less formal definition that goals are *“dreams with legs”* (O’Connor & Lages 2004)

Taken in a more applied context goals provide a structure for training and should meet the medical, emotional and functional needs of the person while acknowledging the limitations within their life (Holly & Shaffrath 2001)

Motivation & Desire

According to Vroom’s Theory of Motivation (Siff 2003) it is not just the goal but also our perception of the goal that motivates. Motivational force is driven by:

- I. Perceived attractiveness of achievement (how attractive is it to me)
- II. Perceived probability of achievement (do I believe I can do it)

This suggests we are strongly motivated by a goal if it is attractive to us and we believe we can achieve it and combinations of the two variables provide differing levels of motivation. This may be extremely important for a coach or trainer since we are now moving into the realms of perception and belief and we know that these can be altered or changed. *(see article on Great Expectations for more on this)*

It is therefore important to ask the individual not only what is your goal? But also what is motivating you to do or want this? This allows us to explore the issue of desire, ***if there is insufficient desire it won’t matter how SMART your goals are or how skilful you are as the practitioner.*** As a wise person once said “desire is the fuel in the furnace of ambition”. All successful interventions whether they be conditioning, coaching, learning or otherwise are based on a clear understanding of the driving purpose and a strong desire to achieve.

Getting to What We Want.

In most situations we can narrow things down to basically two elements, what is wanted (the outcome) and what is to be done (the process).

In practical terms the entire process involves four elements:

- A. Identify the current state or situation (where are you now?)
(Based on client requirements and individual needs analysis data)
- B. Identify the desired state (what would you rather have?)
- C. Identify the steps to be taken to go from 1 to 2 above.
- D. Take the required steps.

1. Present State _____ ? 3 ? _____ 2. Desired State

When working with a client we can break these elements down into smaller steps.

1. What is the happening right now?
2. What do you want? Or what would you rather have?
3. How will you know you've achieved it?
4. What resources do you need?
5. What are you going to do?
6. What might the consequences be and are you ok with this?
7. Create a plan
8. Act on the plan
9. Evaluate

Having completed steps 1-6, it is quite acceptable to find that the desired outcome is changed or completely re-thought. Perhaps it is difficult to evidence achievement, or the resources required are not reasonable. Maybe the consequences of achievement outweigh the benefits. Whatever information comes from this process it is an excellent way of really developing clarity and a much deeper and more meaningful appreciation of the objective.

Using A Timeline

Although perhaps not directly aware, the client has been developing ideas for a plan from the beginning, so when they begin step 6 and actually create the plan, many ideas have already been formulated. I have found using a timeline an excellent way of taking a client through this process and also an excellent way of them tapping in to the experiences they already have that may help them. *(There are many resources in print and on the web explaining timelines in detail and a good description is contained in the O'Connor and Lages book in the reading list).*

Adaptability

The planning of success is constantly evolving and developing. Success in whatever form the client requires comes from consistent review, evaluation and re-assessment. It is fundamental to initial programme design that one defines the purpose of training. Equally, goal achievement is often a moving target and the natural destabilising nature of life and sport means the pathway today may need to be adjusted or changed tomorrow; remain focused while remaining flexible.

References & Recommended Reading

Cox R.H. (2006) Sport Psychology – Concepts and Applications

Gallwey W.T. (2000) The Inner Game of Work

Gavin J. (2005) Lifestyle Fitness Coaching

Holly R.G. & Shaffrath J.D. (2001) “Cardiorespiratory Endurance” in ACSM’s Resource Manual for Guidelines for Exercise Testing and Prescription (4th edition)

Locke E.A. & Latham G.P. (1990) A Theory of Goal Setting and Task Performance

O’Connor J. & Lages A. (2004) Coaching with NLP

O’Keefe J. (1998) Business Beyond the Box – Applying your Mind for Breakthrough Results

Siff M.C. (2003) Supertraining

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