

Design and pilot of the 'In Competition Performance States' (ICPS) tool to discriminate between Flow, Clutch and Choke performance states in freestyle kayaking.

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Summary and application of learning to practice.

Abstract

Background and Purpose

Many coaches and athletes actively pursue the 'Flow' performance state despite it being elusive and rare in sport. This study sought to highlight occurrence of the 'Clutch' performance state within a spectrum and assess whether this could benefit coaching within a competition.

What was done?

This study designed and piloted an 'In Competition Performance States' tool to discriminate between flow, clutch and choking in sport. Five adult elite male canoe/kayak freestyle athletes used the quantitative tool in the approach to and during a world championship, and subsequently took part in qualitative interviews to corroborate or refute the data.

Key findings

Distinct states of flow, clutch and choke were indicated, as was a clutch/flow transition, however, clutch performances appear predominant in elite male canoe freestyle. The quantitative tool demonstrated promise for use in applied coaching, particularly when no clear performance states were indicated. Mental toughness concepts were observed as moderating influences, especially with regard to pressure determined performance states and should be considered in future coaching strategies.

Points of interest for coaches

Future use of such an instrument 'in competition' could help coaches understand athletes' psychological states and how and when athletes perceive pressure in competition.

Conclusion

The 'In Competition Performance States' tool indicated that 'Clutch' performances may be more prevalent in elite male canoe freestyle competition and that different performance states can potentially be indicated using a simple tool.

To discuss this project further please contact Bruce at info@brucejolliffe.com