



Sept 2022

Volume 22 Number 4

## Applied Research

### **GRIT Athletics Complete Athlete Performance Assessment** **Joseph Swift<sup>1</sup> and Stephen J Peterson<sup>2</sup>**

1 GRIT Athletics, LLC

2 Launch Shop, LLC

#### **Abstract**

Coaching young athletes with the intent of helping them develop into top performers in their sport is a challenging endeavor that requires a multi-disciplinary approach. Coaches must undergo continuous education on the various dimensions that comprise an athlete's life, as a way of eliciting the highest levels of effort, dedication, and focus the athlete can muster, in order to accomplish the difficult task of expanding the limits of what they're capable of. Without addressing the complex conditions of the athlete's life as a whole, implicit tension can start to build between the coach and the athlete, gradually inducing a level of stress that can lead to burnout on both sides of the relationship. It's not enough for the coach to simply get to know the athlete, which typically happens through conversation and observation.

To create an optimum environment in which the athlete develops, it is imperative for coaches to enhance their abilities through the use of tools and assessments. This is a way of reliably measuring an athlete's performance across multiple life arenas, reducing tension and negative judgment toward the athlete. Here we briefly highlight some of the strategies and tools GRIT Athletics coaches use to identify key points of interest which empower an athlete to aim for holistic development from a deep health perspective, and confirm the value of a multi-disciplinary approach to coaching.

#### **Keywords**

Coaching, Programming, Fitness, Deep Health, Assessment, Mindset, Behavior, Performance

## **Introduction**

In the news are repeated incidences of top athlete injury and harm to young athletes. Top athletes are taking time out for mental health issues created over many years. Young athletes are becoming more vocal in sharing the traumas which they undergo in rigorous training. GRIT Athletics and the Launch Shop have developed a set of assessment strategies and tools for coaches which protect the young athlete and allow them to maximize their potential at the same time.

## **Background**

Coaches, in an attempt to support their athlete's development, have several conditions to be aware of and compensate for, outside of the actual sport in which the athlete participates. Of note are considerations of culture, upbringing, personality, character, personal values and peripheral ability. When building a fitness and conditioning program that is meant to enhance the athlete's performance at the physical level, coaches should become aware, skillfully recognize, and effectively deal with these additional considerations as a way of supporting the athlete and creating a holistic perspective. This creates an environment of more complete development for the athlete where their potential can be maximized. In the long term, this reduces injuries and mental health challenges. It creates a positive atmosphere for participation and teaches the best aspects of sportsmanship.

The first strategy the coach should implement, is to expand their own learning as part of generating awareness of the mechanics, situations, and patterns that comprise the complete athlete. This process is sometimes referred to as Deep Health (Krista Scott-Dexon, et al. 2019). The individual coach can focus on the specific area that fits both their own interest and the needs of their athlete's.

The second strategy, is for the coach to build functional assessments which inform an evidence-based approach to coaching the athlete into an improved state of being and performing across different areas of their lives. An athlete assessment should at minimum, evaluate both the physical as well as the psychological factors associated with training, performing, and competing as an athlete (Harris, B. S., et al., 2013, Röthlin, P., et al., 2016). Conscious Athlete, a program developed by way of collaboration between GRIT Athletics and Launch Shop, refers to these as Life Arenas. There are many assessments that already exist which can be used for this process and are not currently commonly used in coaching. For example, there are a variety of normed questionnaires on anxiety, depression, and stress, which would be useful for evaluation of some of the psychological factors (Giles, S., et al., 2020).

### **Assessing the Athletes Readiness**

When it comes to assessing an athlete's mental capacity and readiness to expand their skill level, coaches often use Intake Interviews or Assessment Interviews to identify the athlete's wants and needs (Nicholls, A., 2017). An intake interview allows a coach to understand the athlete's long term goals, their current barriers or issues in training, and discuss potential solutions to the issues they're facing (Nicholls, A., 2017). This step should not be rushed. Cultural and mental health stressors and values in particular can create tension for the developing athlete. Proper assessment allows for the program of training to be developed that maximizes potentials.

Some examples of issues that tend to stifle an athlete's performance relate to:

- Conflicting interests (Choi, H., et al., 2020).
- Cultural and personal values (Gau, L. & Kim, J., 2011)
- Relationship challenges (Campbell, K., et al., 2016).
- Mismanaged expectations (Mothes, H., et al., 2017).
- Mental health challenges (Mottaghi, M., et al., 2013).

## **GRIT Athletics Assessment**

GRIT Athletics coaches use a behavioral analysis framework to evaluate the athletes performance under various and changing conditions of temporary stress, induced fatigue, and social pressure. The full assessment, called a PEC CACE Study™, evaluates pre-existing conditioning through a process of question and answer sessions, group discussions, cognitive, effectiveness and experiential activities, and a battery of physical challenges.

The main purpose of the PEC CACE Study™ assessment, is as a selection tool for athletes that demonstrate they have the highest probability of success in a GRIT Athletics program. By using evidence-based frameworks associated with deep health measures, and assimilating psychoanalytical tools, widely recognized by performance psychology practitioners, the GRIT Athletics coaches can feel confident that their programming will have the best chance of eliciting the growth potential of the athlete.

The secondary purpose of the assessment, is to support the athlete's growth by providing them (if they so choose) with a full report accompanied with resources, an online community, and three technical training programs that can catalyze self-initiated action towards creating life-enhancing progress.

GRIT Athletics coaches assess an athlete's physical capacity by understanding their baseline:

- Speed Endurance
- Heart Rate Variability
- Coordination
- Technique
- Body Awareness

## **Assessment Examples**

The purpose of assessing the physical performance of the athlete is described adequately by Tudor Bompa in an edition of his book *Periodization Training for Sports* which is to:

“...assess the body’s response to training and prevent overtraining. Such [Heart Rate Variability] devices can help in the following ways: confirming the internal load (residual fatigue) dynamics planned throughout a microcycle or macrocycle; enhancing our knowledge of the body’s response to our training methods; helping individualize volume, intensity, and frequency, thus optimizing the training program for each athlete; and helping us spot and quantify the effect of stressors outside of the training environment (such as work, school, family, and lifestyle).” (Bompa, T., 2015)

An example of a Dynamic Warm-up and Workout Combination meant to assess Speed

Development:

- A-Skip
- Stiff Leg Run
- High Knee Carioca
- Power Skips
- Lunges

One of the physical performance assessments GRIT Athletics is accustomed to having athletes perform to test their ability to adapt, focus, stop suddenly, and change direction is called The Box Drill. GRIT Athletics coaches are evaluating the athletes':

- Spatial/Cognitive Awareness
- Pattern Recognition
- Coordination
- Reaction Time

Drills such as The Box Drill can help coaches assess athletic performance across a variety of sports. Coaches are also accustomed to using sports specific tests to understand the athlete's strengths and weaknesses by mimicking the actual conditions the athlete will face in competition.

Track and Field, which is a specialty of GRIT Athletics coaches, are known to test performance measures such as:

- Acceleration
- Top End Speed or Maximum Velocity

- Positional Strength
- Speed Endurance
- Coordination

Understanding an athlete's baselines in the above five categories allows the coach to begin diagnosing performance issues as a starting point to charting a developmental program that will help the athlete improve their performance over the season.

## **Conclusion**

The path to developing a robust coaching program built to enhance athletic performance is challenging. It is impossible to do at a high level and quality program without a comprehensive understanding and methodology that includes a multi-disciplinary approach to navigating and dealing well with an athlete's various life arenas. Coaches can take several steps to develop their own abilities and learn to incorporate a fuller scope of coaching practices that serve the purpose of fortifying the athlete's mind and body, empowering the athlete to channel their potential and achieve high performance in their sport, but also more broadly, in life.

## **References**

- Bompa, T., Buzzichelli, C. (2015) *Periodization Training for Sports*. Human Kinetics; Third edition (February 17, 2015) ISBN-10: 1450469434 ISBN-13: 978-1450469432
- Campbell, K., Hosseini, C., Myers, K., & Calub, N. (2016). Does Love Influence Athletic Performance? The Perspectives of Olympic Athletes. *Review of European studies*, 8(2), 1–7. <https://doi.org/10.5539/res.v8n2p1>
- Choi, H., Jeong, Y., & Kim, S. K. (2020). The Relationship between Coaching Behavior and Athlete Burnout: Mediating Effects of Communication and the Coach-Athlete Relationship. *International journal of environmental research and public health*, 17(22), 8618. <https://doi.org/10.3390/ijerph17228618>
- Gau, L. & Kim, J. (2011) The influence of cultural values on spectators' sport attitudes and team identification: An East-West perspective. *Social Behavior and Personality: an international journal*, Volume 39, Number 5, 2011, pp. 587-596(10). <https://doi.org/10.2224/sbp.2011.39.5.587>

- Giles, S., Fletcher, D., Arnold, R., Ashfield, A., Harrison, J. (2020) Measuring Well-Being in Sport Performers: Where are We Now and How do we Progress?. *Sports Med* **50**, 1255–1270 (2020). <https://doi.org/10.1007/s40279-020-01274-z>
- Harris, B. S., Blom, L. C., & Visek, A. J. (2013). Assessment in Youth Sport: Practical Issues and Best Practice Guidelines. *The Sport psychologist*, *27*(2), 201–211. <https://doi.org/10.1123/tsp.27.2.201>
- Mothes, H., Leukel, C., Jo, H. G., Seelig, H., Schmidt, S., & Fuchs, R. (2017). Expectations affect psychological and neurophysiological benefits even after a single bout of exercise. *Journal of behavioral medicine*, *40*(2), 293–306. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10865-016-9781-3>
- Mottaghi, M., Atarodi, A., & Rohani, Z. (2013). The Relationship between Coaches' and Athletes' Competitive Anxiety, and their Performance. *Iranian journal of psychiatry and behavioral sciences*, *7*(2), 68–76.
- Nicholls, A. (2017). *Psychology in sports coaching: Theory and practice* (2nd ed.). New York: Routledge.
- Röthlin, P., Birrer, D., Horvath, S., Holtforth, M. (2016) Psychological skills training and a mindfulness-based intervention to enhance functional athletic performance: design of a randomized controlled trial using ambulatory assessment. *BMC Psychol* **4**, 39 (2016). <https://doi.org/10.1186/s40359-016-0147-y>
- Scott-Dixon, K., "Food Environment, Empowered Eating & Deep Health," (2019) Dr. Mark Bubbs Performance Podcast, S3 Episode 37. <https://drbubbs.com/season-3-podcast-episodes/2019/12/s3-episode-37-food-environment-empowered-eating-amp-deep-health-w-dr-krista-scott-dixon-phd>

## Bio

Joseph Swift is a coach and exercise physiologist in the greater Tucson AZ area. The founder of GRIT Athletics, he has coached and mentored athletes of all types for over 20 years. Since his time as a Div. 1 football player (Univ. of Colo. - Boulder) and as an important member of the Nassau Community College track and football teams; Joe Swift has been sharing his knowledge and experience with high school, collegiate as well as professional athletes. He has been fortunate to share the field, track and weight room with teammates and fellow athletes from amateur to professional levels. His journey brought him to AZ, which has given him the opportunity to pass along his skills and knowledge to the next generation.

## TERMS OF USE

The International Journal of Healing and Caring is distributed electronically as an open access journal, available at no charge. You may print your downloaded copy of this article or any other article for relaxed reading. We encourage you to share this article with friends and colleagues.

C/O International Journal of Healing and Caring  
31907 South Davis Ranch Rd.  
Marana, AZ 85658

Email: [ijhcjournal@earthlink.net](mailto:ijhcjournal@earthlink.net) Website: <http://www.ijhc.org>  
copyright © 2022 IJHC. All rights reserved.  
DISCLAIMER: <http://ijhc.org/disclaimer>