
Examining factors associated with performance anxiety among soccer players in Katima Mulilo of Zambezi Region in Namibia

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ABSTRACT: *The purpose of this study was to examining factors associated with performance anxiety among soccer players in Katima Mulilo of the Zambezi Region of Namibia. Quantitative methods were used to determine soccer players' performance anxiety levels prior and during the game. A total of (n = 100) soccer players from Katima Mulilo Zambezi Football League playing for A and B divisions participated in the study. The participants were selected purposively based on a reason that they were soccer players either in A or B division of the league. Data were gathered using a self-filled information questionnaire forms created by the researcher. Data was analysed with a statistical software SPSS programme. Percentages, frequencies, mean and standard deviation numerical figures were used to interpret the results. The highest score of (M = 4.00 ± SD = .000) was recorded for item 11 to which soccer players indicated that they had high level of winning thoughts on their minds prior to the game to be played. The second highest score recorded was item 7 (M = 3.86 ± SD = .355) to which soccer players indicated that they feared their opponents and spectators prior to the game. The third highest score was recorded in item 1 with (M = 3.74 ± SD = .443) to which soccer players indicated they always had spent more time for physical preparation prior to the game. The five lowest scores were recorded in items 5, 8, 24, 25 and 31. The lowest score was recorded in item 25 with (M = 1.11 ± SD = .323) to which soccer players indicated that they often felt blurred vision prior to the game. The second lowest score was recorded in item 31 with (M = 1.20 ± SD = .406) to which players indicated that they often had poor concentration during the game. The third lowest scored was recorded in item 24 with (M = 1.34 ± SD = .482) to which players indicated that they often felt some form of dizziness prior to the game. Therefore this study concludes that performance anxiety is caused by fear of failure, negative thinking, low self-esteem, uncertainty, worry, and lack of motivation, inability to deal with difficulty, negative self-talk, self-evaluation, and overthinking.*

KEYWORDS: factors, performance, anxieties, soccer players, Zambezi region

INTRODUCTION

Performance anxiety is a hostile psychological state in response to professed stress regarding the performance of a task under pressure (Teixeira et al. 2021). Moreover, performance anxiety is found to be a common emotional state experienced by athletes at all levels of performance. In general performance anxiety is made out of cognitive (apprehension and worrying thoughts) and somatic (amount of physical stimulation) components (Teixeira et al. 2021). Stress and anxiety about to perform in front of spectators or a large audience cause have been found to cause a high level of performance anxiety (Marks, 2021). Numerous researches conducted on performance anxiety have shown that being the center of attention and having all eyes on an individual by a large audience can be highly stressful to a lot of athletes if not well managed (Marks, 2021). Performance anxiety is always divided into mental (extreme fear of failure, unsettling focus, overthinking, and reduced self-confidence) and physical (tremors, racing heart, hyperventilation, muscle tension and bathroom troubles) categories (Kabula, 2022).

According to Ford et al. (2017) they found that performance anxiety cause sports associated injuries, lower performance levels, reduce self confidence, reduce concentration, increase common errors, reduce team work, and reduce cooperation among athletes. Competition anxiety is a predisposition to determine aggressive situation and take action consequently with the feelings of pressure, stress, and nervousness. Research shows that the competition anxiety instantly rise-up just prior to the competition and immediately decelerates after competition. The performance anxiety phenomenon occurs during the twenty four hours before a competition, and is known as pre-competitive anxiety (Wilczynska et al. 2022). Furthermore, studies have shown that the capacity to successfully deliver public sports performances at regional, national and international level is often burdened with stress, which makes performance anxiety a common practice.

Giving a public performance, besides demonstrating individual's skills' puts a athletes in a weak position of being exposed to other people's evaluative responses, with its cognitive, emotional and social links and effects (Martynuska & Domaradzka, 2018). Performance anxiety is natural in athletes' reaction which involves their mind and body. It is a fright system that is stimulated whenever an athlete sees a threat or danger (Khan et al. 2017). Whenever, the body and mind act in response to a threat or danger, an athlete feels physical feelings of anxiety. Moreover, anxiety, as a destructive emotional, affect awareness in sport competitions, where a large majority of athletes cogitate anxiety to be a negative aspect towards performance, which may result in decreases in performance (Khan et al. 2017)

Statement Problem

According to Wilczynska et al (2022) found that success and failure in competitive games and sports depend on series of emotions. Players may feel worried, tensed, stressed and fear prior to or during games or competition. Numerous studies have shown that performance anxiety have been a topic of concern by elite coaches, as in most cases it is a determiner in athlete's performance (Khan et al, 2017). Therefore the main purpose of this study is to examine factors

associated with performance anxiety among soccer players in A and B division leagues in the Zambezi Region of Namibia.

Research Questions

What are the factors associated with performance anxiety among soccer players in A and B division leagues in the Zambezi Region of Namibia.

LITERATURE REVIEW

It is extensively accepted that sports involvement encourages a healthier lifestyle, increases self-confidence and boosts peer recognition. Sports involvement has also been definitely associated to psychological growth (Hoover et al. 2017). However, participation in sports such as soccer may also control psychological actions, such behaviour, mood, attitude and performance anxiety, which in turn may affect characteristics like enjoyment, competing, winning, concentration, self-efficacy and continuous participation (Weinberg & Goud, 2021). Performance anxiety in soccer refers to the state of apprehension and uneasiness, about competition sports occasions. Moreover, performance sport anxiety is a distrustful response that takes place when a soccer player undermines his or her capability in dealing with demanding circumstances (Khan et al. 2017). According to the American Psychological Association (2022) defines performance anxiety as an apprehension and fear of the consequences of being unable to perform a task or of performing it at a level that will raise expectations of even better task achievement. Studies have shown that cognitive performance anxiety is a mental component, characterised by negative expectations about success or self-evaluation, negative self talk, negative thoughts, fear of failure, loss of self-esteem, low self-confidence, worries about performance, images of failure, inability to concentrate and disrupted attention (Moreira et al. 2021).

Positive self-evaluation enhance soccer players' performance as it allows them to reflect on their past and present strength and weaknesses to determine their future (Knight, 2020). More than 30 – 45% of young athletes who positively self-evaluate themselves tend to improve their sports performance by reducing their anxiety, improved teamwork, improve cooperation, increase self-esteem, improved problem solve skills and improved informed decisions (Taylor, 2020). Studies has further shown that positive self-evaluation in soccer helps to increase self awareness, helps to gain valuable insight into oneself as a player and as a person, increase mental toughness in confidence and resiliency in skills, foster a genuine curiosity for relentless learning, and improved attitude of continual drive for self-improvement (Ireland, 2022). On the other hand, studies have shown that negative self-evaluation are negative thoughts that commonly occur when you encounter a situation you at risk (Martynuska & Domaradzka, 2018). Negative self-evaluation leads to performance anxiety as one underestimate his or her inabilities to perform a task at hand (New Era, 2020). Negative self-evaluation decrease concentration levels in competition which can lead to injuries, low self-esteem, poor teamwork, lack of cooperation. More than 40% amateur soccer players have experienced negative self-evaluation in game or competition (Kabula, 2022).

Athletes who engage in positive self-talk has the ability to develop an effective strategy to cope with winning or losing mental and emotional stress (Njubei, 2022). Research shows that positive self-talk can: reduce signs of depression and anxiety, improve body image, reduce risk of self harm, help with the reduction of chronic pain, and help to calm down in stressful situations (Njubei, 2022). Whereas, negative can have a detrimental effect on a person's self esteem and belief in their self-worth and abilities. Moreover, negative self talk can lead to lowered capability to see prospects, as well as a reduced tendency to take advantage of those opportunities. This implies that the heightened sense of stress comes from both the insight and the variations in behaviour that come from it. Other outlined consequences of negative self-talk includes; perfectionism, limited thinking, relationship challenges and feeling depressed (Scott, 2022). Negative thoughts are related with negative feelings such as unhappiness, anxiety, irritation and hopelessness (Scott, 2022). Research have shown that the worse we tend to feel, the more possible we are to think negatively and be certain of these thoughts to be true, even though they are irrational and impractical. Repetitive negative thoughts are a cognitive process that manifest itself in the form of repetitive, self-centered thinking (Herman et al. 2021). According to Correia et al (2017) found that fear of failure is an accomplishment motive character that influences people to experience anxiety and worry, since people have learned that failure is related with aversive outcome. In a study conducted by Taylor et al (2021) they found that people fearing of failure suffer from a high risk of psychological anxiety. Moreover, the findings shows that they have a higher probable for exhaustion and that fear of failure is related with more hostile interactive and disruptive behaviours. The study results further suggest that fear of failure is linked with cognitive disruption, increased levels of worry, perceived tension and somatic anxiety.

Studies have shown that somatic performance anxiety is the psychological element, activated the autonomic arousals, negative symptoms such as feelings of nervousness, difficulty breathing, high blood pressure, dry throat, muscle tension, rapid heart rate, sweaty palm and butterflies in the stomach (Moreira at el. 2021). Studies further suggests that overcoming performance anxiety is one of the major challenges in contemporary sport given social, mental and physical trauma contributed by our own society. Moreover, studies have found the following aspects to be helpful in combating performance anxiety that includes; progressive muscle relaxation, meditation, imagery training, visualisation, cognitive restructuring and goal setting have a vital impact on the reduction of stress and performance anxiety (Dubey & Choudhary, 2021).

Framework

This study was framed and informed by the processing efficiency theory of Eysenck & Calvo (1992) which says that cognitive anxiety, in form of worry, decreases the processing and storage ability of functioning memory in any given performance. The application of the processing efficiency theory guided the framework of this study and gave it a meaningful insight in examining factors associated with performance anxiety among soccer players.

RESEARCH METHODS

This study used quantitative methods to determine soccer players' performance anxiety levels prior and during the game. According to Creswell (2019) defines quantitative research approach as a process of gathering, examining, understanding, and writing the outcomes of the study.

Population

The population of this study consisted of (n = 100) soccer players from the Zambezi Football League playing for A and B division. According to Polit & Hungler (2019) population of study consist of the entire group of people that the investigator is fascinated in who have the same notable character traits.

Sample

Purposive sampling was used to select the study's participants. According to Creswell (2019) sample is a slight group of the targeted people that the investigator plans to study for overview about the target people.

Data Collection Methods

Data was collected using a 4 point self-evaluation Likert Scale with 35 items. Data collection is a technique of gathering and evaluating data on variables of concern, in a systematized method that allows one to answer to research queries, test assumptions, and assess results (Creswell, 2019).

Data Analysis

Data was analysed using SPSS v21 statistics software to find percentages, mean and standard deviation scores. The statistical descriptive data was interpreted and presented in tables.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

This section of this study presents numerical analysis and interpretation of data gathered as a result of the application of data collection.

Table 1 below show the demographic key informants of soccer players who participated in this study. A total of (n = 100) male soccer players participated in this study, (n = 50 / 50%) were sampled from A division league, whilst (n = 50 / 50%) was sampled out from B division league.

Table 1: Demographic profile of participants

<i>Gender</i>	<i>League Type</i>	<i>Total</i>
<i>Male</i>	<i>A division</i>	<i>50 (50%)</i>
	<i>B division.</i>	<i>50 (50%)</i>
		<i>100</i>

Table 2 shows performance anxiety results of soccer players prior and during the game. Item 1 indicates (74.3%) of soccer players spent much of their time in physical training prior to games and competitions. These results are supported by Ford et al (2017) study which found that training sessions demand much time of young soccer players as they cannot find a balance between their academic, social and sports life. This imbalance of time between academic, social and sports physical training has led to performance anxiety in soccer players. Furthermore, the results above aligns with (Mihaela, 2017) findings which emphasised that physical training, is one of the most vital component of sports training, marks the entire training process, defines performance and the beginning trends of the game world-wide, which is likely to cause performance anxiety if not well balanced. Item 2 shows that (28.6%) of players often think about the game while been played, whereas (57.1%) of the players over think about the game all the time prior to the game been played. The results above concur with the findings of Ciotti, (2020) suggesting that overthinking prior to competition in sports caused stress associated to performance anxiety by 25 – 30 % in both amateur and elite soccer players worldwide. Moreover, the same study further found that overthinking prior to the game make the soccer player question his/her stance, posture, style and form, which influence the freedom of enjoyment and competition.

Item 3 shows that the fear of failure thoughts are high prior to the game by (42.9%), whilst item 4 shows that the fear of failure thoughts are reduced by (42.9%) while the game is been played. Vallerand & Rapaport (2017) found that fear of failure that are though prior to the game been played are likely to cause stress which can influence performance's results. Moreover, the result above can be linked to a study by Correia et al. (2017) findings which suggest that fear of failure is associated with numerous maladaptive concerns on soccer players these includes sports drop-out, sports burn-out, high level of worry, performance anxiety and stress

Item 5 shows that soccer players never have disruptive thoughts before the game by (45.7%) while their thoughts were found to be disrupted during the game by (54.3%) in item 6. Furthermore, item 7 shows that (85.7%) of soccer players feared their opponents prior to the game; while item 8 shows that players never feared their opponents during the game by (54.3%). Item 9 and 10 shows that soccer players evaluated their self-performance prior to the game been played by (51.4%) and by an escalating score of (71.4%) during the game all the time. Item 11 results show that players had (100%) winning thoughts in their mind prior to the game, whilst item 12 show that players had the winning thoughts a little bit lowered by (48.6%) during the game. The results above are clearly associated with the findings of Dubey & Choudhary (2021) which suggest that disruptive thoughts, fear of opponents and spectators, self evaluation, winning and losing thought cause performance anxiety to athlete prior and during the game.

Item 13 shows that players never had a positive state of mind prior to the game been played by (77.1%), whereas item 14 show that players gained a positive mind state by (65.7%) during the game all the time. Item 15 and 16 shows, that soccer players judged their self-performance prior to the game by (42.9%) and by (45.7%) often during the game. Moreover, item 17 results shows that soccer players never felt pressure prior to the game by (57.1%), while item 18 shows

that soccer players felt more pressure during the game by (65.7%) all the time. Item 19 shows that players rarely feel rapid heartbeat prior to the game by (25.7%) though (57.1%) higher indicated to have felt this condition. Item 20 shows that players felt dry mouth prior to the game by (40%) often, whereas item 21 shows that players felt trembling hands and knees prior to the game by (48.6%) all the time. These study results above are linked to Martynuska & Domaradzka (2018) findings which suggests that giving a public performance by showing off one's competence and skills can lead athletes to a poor low mind state, lower self esteem, self judgement and pressure to perform.

Item 22 shows that players felt a shaky voice prior to the game by (51.4%) often, while item 23 shows that players felt sweating prior to the game by (51.4%) often. Item 24 shows that players felt dizziness prior to the game by (65.7%) often, whereas item 25 shows that players felt some form of blurred vision prior to the game by (88.6%). Item 26 shows players felt lightheadedness prior to the game by (42.9%), while item 27 shows that players felt the state of coldness prior to the game by (54.3%) often. Item 28 shows the feeling of tension among soccer players by (45.7%) prior to the game, whereas item 29 shows that players felt a state of dry mouth all the time by (60%) before the game. In any given sport event fear can lead to numerous instant physical body behaviour such as shaky breaking voice, poor vision, coldness, tension and dry mouth Angelidis et al. (2019).

Additionally, item 30 shows that players never had a poor concentration prior to the game by a score of (51.4%), whereas item 31 shows that players had a poor concentration during the game by (80%) often. Item 32 shows that players felt a sense of self-doubt prior to the game by (31.4%) all the time, while item 33 shows that players never felt self-doubt during the game by (60%). Item 34 shows players felt the worry to lose and win prior to the game by (68.6%), while in item 35 soccer players never felt the worry to lose and win during the game by (45.7%). The results above align with Zealand (2020) outcomes which alludes poor concentration, low self-worth, worry as one of the hindrance towards high quality performance. Moreover, the study findings further established that good performance in sport requires a good mental preparation in order for athletes to perform to the best of their abilities (Ireland, 2022).

Table 2: Percentages results per Likert Scale category derived from 35 item questionnaire

Item Statements	Never (%)	Rarely (%)	Often (%)	All the time (%)
Item 1: Physical preparation for the game in advance	0	0	25.7	74.3
Item 2: Emotional thoughts prior to the game	0	14.3	28.6	57.1
Item 3: Fear of failure thoughts prior to the game	14.3	14.3	28.6	42.9
Item 4: Fear of failure thoughts during the game	42.9	28.6	14.3	14.3
Item 5: Disruptive thoughts prior to the game	5.7	42.9	45.7	5.7
Item 6: Disruptive thoughts during the game	5.7	11.1	28.6	54.3
Item 7: Opponents and spectator fear prior to the game	0	0	14.3	85.7
Item 8: Opponents and spectator fear during the game	54.3	45.7	0	0
Item 9: Self performance evaluation prior to the game	0	20	28.6	51.4
Item 10: Self performance evaluation during the game	2.9	14.3	11.4	71.4
Item 11: Winning thoughts prior to the game	0	0	0	100
Item 12: Winning thoughts during the game	14.3	14.3	22.9	48.6
Item 13: Positive state of mind prior to the game	77.1	11.4	5.7	5.7
Item 14: Positive state of mind during the game	0	8.6	25.7	65.7
Item 15: Judgement on how I will play prior to the game	20	11.4	25.7	42.9
Item 16: Judgement on how am playing during the game	11.4	8.6	45.7	34.3
Item 17: Feeling pressure prior to the game	57.1	14.3	11.4	17.1
Item 18: Feeling pressure during the game	0	17.1	17.1	65.7
Item 19: Feeling rapid heartbeat prior to the game	8.6	25.7	57.1	8.6
Item 20: Feeling dry mouth prior to the game	11.4	20	40	28.6
Item 21: Feeling trembling hands and knees prior to the game	11.4	14.3	25.7	48.6
Item 22: Feeling a shaky voice prior to the game	25.7	22.9	51.4	0
Item 23: Feeling sweating prior to the game	5.7	34.3	2.9	57.1
Item 24: Feeling dizziness prior to the game	0	34.3	65.7	0
Item 25: Feeling some blurred vision prior to the game	0	11.4	88.6	0
Item 26: Feeling light-headedness prior to the game	5.7	34.3	42.9	17.1
Item 27: Feeling the state of coldness prior the game	17.1	8.6	54.3	20
Item 28: Feeling tension prior to the game	14.3	11.4	45.7	28.6
Item 29: I feel dry mouth before the game	14.3	11.4	14.3	60
Item 30: Poor concentration prior to the game	51.4	14.3	34.3	0
Item 31: Poor concentration during the game	0	20	80	0
Item 32: Feeling of self-doubt prior to the game	20	20	28.6	31.4
Item 33: Feeling of self-doubt during the game	60	25.7	14.3	0
Item 34: Feeling the worry to loose and win prior to the game	0	0	68.6	31.4
Item 35: Feeling the worry to loose and win during the game	45.7	5.7	45.7	2.9

Table 3 below, shows five items that yielded the scores were items 1, 7, 11, 13 and 14. The highest score of ($M = 4.00 \pm SD = .000$) was recorded for item 11 to which soccer players indicated that they had high level of winning thoughts in their minds prior to the game to be played. These above results are linked to Shaune et al (2020) which imply that positive self motivation with positive thinking on winning boost confidence and can decrease performance anxiety in sports. The second highest score recorded was item 7 ($M = 3.86 \pm SD = .355$) to

which soccer players indicated that they feared their opponents and spectators prior to the game. Fear of spectators and opponents cause performance anxiety prior and during competition, athletes always feel judged and will not play with that required freedom of skill expression (Ciotti, 2020). The third highest score was recorded was item 1 with ($M = 74 \pm SD = .443$) to which soccer players indicated they always had spent more time for physical preparation prior to the game. These results are supported by Mihaela (2017) findings which suggest that physical training need more time and space to any given sports code as it develop and train the body for up coming activities and movement with application of sport character. The fourth highest was recorded in item 14 with ($M = 3.57 \pm SD = .655$) to which soccer players indicated to have had a positive state of mind during the game. The fifth high score was recorded in item 13 with ($M = 3.54 \pm SD = .919$) to which players indicated that they did not gain a positive mind state prior to the game. Positive mind state creates a foundation of any emotional awareness and it allows athletes to be familiar unforeseen sports pressure that may energy (Shaune et al. 2020).

The five lowest scores were recorded in items 5, 8, 24, 25 and 31. The lowest score was recorded in item 25 with ($M = 1.11 \pm SD = .323$) to which soccer players indicated that they often felt blurred vision prior to the game. The second lowest score was recorded in item 31 with ($M = 1.20 \pm SD = .406$) to which players indicated that they often had poor concentration during the game. The third lowest scored was recorded in item 24 with ($M = 1.34 \pm SD = .482$) to which players indicated that they often felt some form of dizziness prior to the game. The fourth lowest score was recorded in item 8 with ($M = 1.46 \pm SD = .505$) to which players indicated that they feared opponents and spectators all the time prior to the game. The fifth lowest score was recorded in item 5 with ($M = 1.71 \pm SD = .825$) to which players indicated that they often have disruptive thoughts prior to the game. These results above are associated with Hasanah & Refanthira (2019) suggesting that somatic anxiety such as heart palpitations, urination, cold sweating, blurred vision, dizziness were part of performance anxiety symptoms visible in soccer players prior to the game/competition to be played.

<i>Item Statements</i>	<i>Mean</i>	<i>Standard Deviation</i>
<i>Item 1: Physical preparation for the game in advance</i>	3.74**	.443
<i>Item 2: Emotional thoughts prior to the game</i>	3.43	.739
<i>Item 3: Fear of failure thoughts prior to the game</i>	3.00	1.08
<i>Item 4: Fear of failure thoughts during the game</i>	2.00	1.08
<i>Item 5: Disruptive thoughts prior to the game</i>	1.71*	.825
<i>Item 6: Disruptive thoughts during the game</i>	3.31	.900
<i>Item 7: Opponents and spectator fear prior to the game</i>	3.86**	.355
<i>Item 8: Opponents and spectator fear during the game</i>	1.46*	.505
<i>Item 9: Self performance evaluation prior to the game</i>	3.31	.796
<i>Item 10: Self performance evaluation during the game</i>	3.51	.853
<i>Item 11: Winning thoughts prior to the game</i>	4.00**	.000
<i>Item 12: Winning thoughts during the game</i>	3.06	1.11
<i>Item 13: Positive state of mind prior to the game</i>	3.54**	.919
<i>Item 14: Positive state of mind during the game</i>	3.57**	.655
<i>Item 15: Judgement on how I will play prior to the game</i>	2.91	1.17

<i>Item 16: Judgement on how am playing during the game</i>	3.03	.954
<i>Item 17: Feeling pressure prior to the game</i>	1.89	1.18
<i>Item 18: Feeling pressure during the game</i>	3.49	.781
<i>Item 19: Feeling rapid heartbeat prior to the game</i>	2.66	.765
<i>Item 20: Feeling dry mouth prior to the game</i>	2.86	.974
<i>Item 21: Feeling trembling hands and knees prior to the game</i>	3.11	1.05
<i>Item 22: Feeling a shaky voice prior to the game</i>	1.74	.852
<i>Item 23: Feeling sweating prior to the game</i>	3.11	1.07
<i>Item 24: Feeling dizziness prior to the game</i>	1.34*	.482
<i>Item 25: Feeling some blurred vision prior to the game</i>	1.11*	.323
<i>Item 26: Feeling light-headedness prior to the game</i>	1.97	1.09
<i>Item 27: Feeling the state of coldness prior the game</i>	2.77	.973
<i>Item 28: Feeling tension prior to the game</i>	2.89	.993
<i>Item 29: I feel dry mouth before the game</i>	2.23	.843
<i>Item 30: Poor concentration prior to the game</i>	2.17	.923
<i>Item 31: Poor concentration during the game</i>	1.20*	.406
<i>Item 32: Feeling of self-doubt prior to the game</i>	2.71	1.12
<i>Item 33: Feeling of self-doubt during the game</i>	1.54*	.741
<i>Item 34: Feeling the worry to loose and win prior to the game</i>	3.31	.471
<i>Item 35: Feeling the worry to loose and win during the game</i>	1.66*	.725

Note: ** five highest scores; * five lowest scores

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

It can be established that performance anxiety is one the serious problem that affects athletes' performance in competitive sports. Hence this study concludes that performance anxiety is caused by fear of failure, negative thinking, low self-esteem, uncertainty, worry, and lack of motivation, inability to deal with difficulty, negative self-talk, self-evaluation, and overthinking. Moreover, practicing, training often, use channelled imagery, mindfulness relaxation prove effective in the reduction of performance anxiety in soccer players. Therefore this study recommends the following strategies on how to handle performance anxiety in sports:

- **Be Positive.** Good advice always helps. Strengthening what went good during a game or competition can help rise confidence and reduce the undesirable thoughts that can increase anxiety.
- **Make a plan prior to the game.** Paying attention is one of the initial aspects to focus on when an athlete is under stress. Help athlete to develop a game plan and help them to stick with it throughout the game.
- **Normalize and admit feelings of anxiety.** Experiencing anxiety in high-stress circumstances is usually part of our daily lives. Letting the athlete know that these emotional state of mind are normal and can go a long way in decreasing anxiety. Moreover, with young athletes, the notion of having 'butterflies' in their belly is obvious the common way to have a conversation talk about it.

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