

Emotional Intelligence Sports Inventory

ESI

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Prepared by
Martyn Newman
PhD., DPsych.



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Executive Summary

The Emotional Intelligence Sports Inventory (ESi™) represents an innovation in the measurement of psychological skills of elite athletes. It is an exciting advance in our understanding of the building blocks that are scientifically linked to elite sports performance. The ESi™ provides an efficient, valid assessment of an athlete's emotional intelligence and produces two reports:

The *ESi Summary Report™* provides a brief snapshot of scores on the ten emotional intelligence skills that support elite sports performance.

The *ESi Sports (Coaching) Report™* is a development tool that provides athletes with a comprehensive interpretation of their performance potential based on their emotional intelligence.

The reports include: a global Total ESi score; an individual's scores on 10 emotional competencies linked to effective sports performance and a validity scale that measures positive response bias. The *ESi Sports (Coaching) Report* also provides narrative descriptions of the emotional skills associated with each score, a wealth of coaching strategies for developing emotional intelligence and sports performance, and an action plan for designing a personal blueprint to build the skills for sustained elite performance.

Distinctive Benefits

The ESi™ is a brief, simple-to-use measure that can be completed online in only twenty minutes. It produces state-of-the-art reports of an individual's sports performance potential based on their emotional intelligence. In addition to the general features of the ESi, there are distinctive advantages to using this inventory:

- A solid international normative database of elite athletes, including participants from Europe, Australia and the USA ensures a broad representation of sports norms
- Ten multidimensional factors specifically linked to outstanding sports performance and representing the five general domains of EQ facilitates comparison across all validated models of emotional intelligence
- A validity indicator – the Positive Impact Scale - designed to identify response bias and increase the accuracy of interpretation
- Very good statistical reliability and validity provides increased confidence in the dependability and quality of the profile
- Two report options, including a brief Summary Report that provides a quick, cost-effective snapshot of scores; and a comprehensive Sports (Coaching) Report designed to provide practical strategies for building EQ and sports performance
- A range of supporting resources including: a consulting service team lead by performance specialist John Haime Author of the bestseller *"You are a Contender! Build Emotional Muscle to Perform Better and Achieve More ... in Business, Sports and Life."* Further online coaching modules are currently being added to the model.



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About the ESi Authors

Dr. Martyn Newman received his PhD., from the University of Sydney and holds an MA., from GTU at the University of California, Berkeley, a Masters of Psychology from Monash University, Melbourne, and a Doctor of Psychology from La Trobe University, Melbourne.

He is a consulting psychologist with an international reputation as an expert in emotional intelligence, leadership and sports performance. Dr Newman has held academic posts as Senior Lecturer at the University of East London and the School of Psychology, ACU National. He is regarded as a leading Australian authority on applying emotional intelligence to business and sports performance. As well as the *Emotional Intelligence Sports Inventory*, Dr Newman is the author of the international best seller, *Emotional Capitalists - The New Leaders* (Jossey-Bass).

The American Psychological Association has published his research in psychological assessment and his lectures and seminars on leadership and team performance have been widely acclaimed in Europe, Asia and Australia.

Dr Newman has worked as an executive coach and advisor to senior people at many leading companies and sporting organizations such as the England Rugby Football Union (RFU), the Victorian Institute of Sport (VIS), the Australian Football League, BP, ExxonMobil, AXA, Foster's, GlaxoSmithKline, and Quiksilver. Dr Newman lives between London and Melbourne.

Judy Purse MAPS, is a psychologist widely regarded for her coaching skills and business experience, has strong background in designing and delivering professional development profiles and performance reviews for organizations and teams. Judy has developed a number of psychometric instruments and reports, and recently designed, developed and delivered psychometric surveys for organizations such as Foster's, Quiksilver, C&C Group (Ireland), and Village Roadshow.



The Challenge

Advances in Sport Personality Research

Over the last two decades sport psychology has contributed to the performance of elite athletes through the implementation and practice of psychological methods – techniques such as: relaxation, goal-setting, mental rehearsal and visualization, and self-talk. For the most part, this focus on psychological methods has been more widely considered by examining psychological skills derived from various personality traits and psychological dispositions of elite athletes. There has been a great deal of interest in understanding the relationship of personality variables to sports performance, and the bulk of the quantitative research literature has identified a cluster of six broad psychological skill areas linked to effective performance. These include: motivation, self-confidence, arousal and activation, concentration and attentional control, regulation of stress, and coping with adversity (Hardy, Jones & Gould, 1996). Although the findings have been encouraging, questions have been raised in regard to the use of various psychological inventories to identify particular variables and select athletes based on the ability of the inventory to predict success. Despite widespread use of psychological inventories in sports psychology, researchers and practitioners have questioned the utility, validity and appropriateness of certain inventories in the sports context (for e.g., Orlick 1989; Gauvin & Russell 1993; Vanden Auweele et al. 1993).

These concerns have centered on a number of core issues: 1) many of the inventories used have been traditional personality inventories and not developed for specific use with athletes; 2) many inventories have been developed in a clinical context with theoretical models of psychopathology as the underlying platform; 3) data used to validate the inventory were developed from non-athletes; 4) poor sampling techniques, experimental procedures and a lack of high quality statistical procedures to validate the tool; 5) most tools tend to be single skill focused or based on personality rather than competency based dimensions; and 6) a lack of conceptual framework for making comparisons between athletes and non-athletes. Concerns such as these have prompted eminent sports psychologists such as Mark Anshel (2003) to call for the development of inventories designed specifically for athletes to measure the factors that support peak performance.

Despite the limitations of some traditional psychological inventories and the problems with a number of research methodologies, sports psychologists generally agree that there is evidence of a psychological profile that distinguishes elite performers from less successful athletes. Much of the evidence falls into the six broad psychological skill areas referred to earlier: motivation and mental toughness, self-confidence, arousal and activation, concentration and attentional control, regulation of stress, and coping with adversity.



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Motivation

Very high levels of motivation are necessary to produce and sustain consistently high levels of sports performance. (Hardy & Parfitt, 1994). The ability to maintain motivation over the long-term, particularly in the face of the challenges of elite sports competition, appears to be a characteristic that distinguishes elite performers from the rest. Motivational state includes the influence of factors such as self-confidence and self-reliance that support intrinsic motivation, along with achievement drive and resilience.

A fundamental element of motivation involves the desire to win. Of course, all athletes want to win, but the motivation for winning is not always straightforward. Gill and Deeter (1988) have identified three dimensions: competitiveness (desire to win and strive for success in competition), win orientation (focus on winning and avoiding losing), and goal orientation (focus on personal goals). When athletes and non-athletes are evaluated using the Sport Orientation Questionnaire (SOQ), athletes score higher on all three dimensions, and significantly higher on the competitiveness. In addition, Gill and Dzewaltowski (1988) found that elite athletes were more oriented toward the quality of their performance than toward the contest's outcome. In other words, elite athletes work hard to succeed in competition but are inclined to evaluate their achievements by performing at their personal best - performance goals - rather than by only winning or losing - outcome goals. Hence, the emotional factors that affect intrinsic motivation have begun to attract more interest in sports psychology.

Self-Confidence

Sports psychologists appear to agree that self-confidence may be the single most influential psychological contributor to success in sports. As a construct, self-confidence has been difficult to define in the literature and has been operationalized in several different ways: as self-efficacy by Bandura (1977), and as sports confidence by Vealey (1986) who applied Bandura's ideas specifically to sport; and perceived competence (Harter, 1982; Nicholls, 1984). In general terms, self-confidence can be thought of as the individual's global level of belief associated with overall performance expectations (Vealey, 1986). Although some questions remain, there are numerous research studies that have identified a strong relationship between self-confidence and elite performance. Accordingly, athletes with high levels of self-confidence are more likely to have high self-expectations and to anticipate successful performance outcomes.

Arousal and Activation

Usually described by coaches and athletes as “psyching up”, arousal and activation is far from a single unitary construct. There appear to be a number of interactive effects of certain motivational, personality, and situational variables that affect performance and there is no one optimal level of arousal or activation level that allows all athletes to perform at their best. (Schmidt & Wrisberg, 2000). Accordingly, athletes need the ability to identify their optimal level of arousal by developing greater awareness of their physical, emotional, cognitive and social responses to competitive environments. Greater self-awareness assists athletes to understand what their body feels like, what they are thinking and feeling in performance situations associated with successful and unsuccessful performances. Given that subjective emotional experience affects the intensity, motivation, confidence, and focus of athletes, it is important to assess an athlete's self-awareness. This is typically assessed in sport psychology through the administration of self-report inventories (Jones, 2003).



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Concentration and Attentional Control

Focus is indispensable to competitive success because it enables an athlete to direct and maintain their attention on their competitive efforts. Moran (1996) uses the term *concentration* to explore the relationship between attention and sports performance, and describes concentration as the capacity to exert mental effort on a task while ignoring distractions. Moran further suggests that the terms *attention* and *concentration* can be used interchangeably. There is considerable evidence that athletes attend to and are distracted by different cues (Nideffer, 1976; Van Schyock & Grasha, 1983). An athlete's attentional style can be assessed on two dimensions in response to the particular demands of the sport: direction and width (Nideffer, 1990). Direction refers to whether athletes are focussing on internal cues or external cues. Width relates to whether they are required to focus narrowly on just a few cues or more broadly on a wide range of cues. Athletes with the flexibility to adjust their focus selectively and attend to relevant cues appear to be more successful in directing their competitive efforts. Of course, one of the major challenges to controlling attention in sport is the increased anxiety and arousal that is often associated with elite competition. Heightened anxiety, for example, can result in a narrowed, internally focused attentional state that may result in selective attentional bias or distract from attending to important external cues. So, in addition to being able to selectively focus attention, successful athletes must know how to manage anxiety.

Some researchers have explored the idea of trust as a psychological skill in which athletes release conscious control over movements and instead trust a more fluid and automatic response (Moore & Stevenson (1991, 1994). The fundamental psychological skills to achieve this involve: *concentration* – what an athlete focuses on – *confidence* – the athlete's belief that they have the specific abilities, and *composure* – maintaining a quiet and relaxed mind prior to skill execution. Together these skills comprise an athlete's ability to remain focused on the present moment, and to be centered and relaxed regardless of what is happening in the competitive situation.

Regulation of Stress

The ability to manage intense pressure and anxiety is a fundamental requirement of all competitive sport (Hardy, Jones & Gould, 1996). According to eminent sports psychologist Terry Orlick, the ability to remain cool under situations of tension and stress is the true sign of a champion (Orlick, 1986, 1990). This is primarily achieved through an individual's ability to take control of the events they confront. Stress and anxiety result when an athlete perceives that events are outside of their control and this perception is affected by an athlete's level of self-confidence. All athletes experience heightened anxiety before a competitive event. However, elite performers: tend to deal more effectively with anxiety prior to competition; tend to manage their emotions well; are more likely to interpret their anxiety symptoms positively and stay calm when under pressure. Elite athletes can effectively regulate their emotions and manage their shifting moods to maintain composure and an optimal level of arousal to think clearly and act appropriately.



Coping with Adversity

Elite athletes must possess the ability to cope with high levels of stress and adversity that arise from the experience of setbacks and performance failure. The ability to cope well is determined largely by the way an athlete views the demands of the environment and their ability to control the source of stress. Accordingly, personality and motivational factors such as anxiety, optimism and self-confidence influence the evaluation of the situation and contribute to athlete's level of resilience. Perhaps the most comprehensive framework for considering various facets of coping and resilience in sport has been described by Loehr (1994) as "mental toughness". Loehr considers mental toughness to mean reaching and sustaining an athlete's ideal performance state, and this state is achieved through the influence of emotional control, self-confidence, optimism, controlled anxiety, attentional control, personal accountability, high but realistic self-expectations, and high goal orientation. Moreover, Loehr contends that mental toughness is a learned competency rather than an inherited trait.

Summary

Considerable research has found a robust and consistent relationship between these six psychological skill areas and competitive performance. Elite athletes make greater use of psychological skills and strategies than non-elite athletes. Indeed, most sport psychologists and coaches would argue that psychological preparation is a very important part of sports performance. Although often discussed within the context of either psychological methods (discrete techniques) or personality variables or traits, there is a growing body of evidence that these psychological skills are based on an individual's capacity to manage and regulate emotions. Accordingly, there is now considerable interest in considering these constructs within the framework of emotional intelligence (Mayer & Fletcher, 2007) in Saunders).

Emotional Intelligence

To date there are several approaches to describing emotional intelligence (EQ). Contemporary theorists like Peter Salovey and John Mayer (1990) were the first to publish scientific articles in peer-reviewed journals. Their theory of EQ was framed within a model of *intelligence* and referred to a constellation of *abilities* through which people dealt with their own emotions and those of others (Salovey & Mayer). Reuven Bar-On (2000) placed emotional intelligence within the context of personality theory as a model of *well being*. Of course, Daniel Goleman (1995, 1998, 2001) has clearly been the most influential in popularizing the concept. Goleman (1998) formulated EQ in terms of a theory of *performance* based on emotional competencies and although he has attracted widespread criticism that his definition of emotional intelligence is sweeping and over inclusive, his work has provided many valuable ideas for conceptualizing emotional intelligence (Mathews, Zeidner & Roberts, 2004). Building on Goleman's work, Newman (2007) recently described a model of emotional intelligence that is particularly related to leadership competencies – the emotional capital model. Newman has argued that leaders high in emotional capital possess an advanced capacity of being able to guide people to action from within by engaging the prime movers of behavior – emotions. Together, these four models share a common core of basic concepts that refer to the ability to recognize and regulate emotions in ourselves and in others.



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Emotional Intelligence and Sports Performance

Over the past five years, sport psychology researchers and practitioners have become increasingly vocal in their suggestions that emotional intelligence (EQ) may be an important construct in the sports domain (Meyer & Fletcher, 2007). Accordingly, interest in emotional intelligence has increased specifically in the realm of athletics (Zizzi, Deaner, & Hirschhorn, 2003). Proponents have claimed that emotional intelligence can enhance leadership performance, team cohesion, and coping with pressure. Given the disparate theoretical frameworks and assessment techniques used, research has been limited by precisely the same concerns as those affecting psychological assessment in general – namely, the utility and appropriateness of using traditional emotional intelligence inventories not developed for specific use in the sports context.

With such an intense focus on defining and measuring the psychological profiles of elite sports performers, questions have been raised regarding the validity and reliability of current psychological inventories – including measures of emotional intelligence – to measure these variables effectively (e.g., Schutz & Gessaroli 1993; Orlick 1989). The failure to define a conceptual framework and develop specific inventories appropriate to the sports context has been termed previously by some as the “shotgun” approach to research (Anshel, 2003). A number of leading sports psychologists have called for the development of more appropriate measurement tools that measure the psychological constructs associated with elite performance, developed within the sporting context and validated on athletes (Anshel, 2003; Mayer & Fletcher, 2007). The development of the *Emotional Intelligence Sports Inventory* (ESi™) is a direct response to these challenges. The model of emotional intelligence underpinning the ESi provides a unified framework for examining the key psychological factors associated with the skills of elite athletes, and the ESi itself provides a valid and reliable psychometric tool for measuring them. As such, the ESi represents an exciting advance in our understanding of the building blocks that are scientifically linked to elite sports performance.

The Emotional Intelligence Sports Inventory (ESi)

The ESi™ is a survey tool designed to measure an individual’s emotional intelligence (EQ) as it pertains to effective sports performance. The ESi™ provides an efficient, valid assessment of the EQ factors that support sports performance based on a well-researched model of emotional intelligence. It draws on the emotional and social competencies identified by Daniel Goleman (1995), Reuven Bar-On (1997) and Martyn Newman and Judy Purse (2008) in their respective benchmark models and is based on an extensive review of the literature relating specific emotional and social competencies to effective sports performance. The ESi™ is distinguished from other, general measures of EQ (e.g., Bar-On, 1997; Boyatzis, Goleman, & Rhee, 2000) by its development as a specific measure of EQ and sports performance.

The ESi comprises 77 brief questions that reflect critical aspects of the skill being measured and indicates the presence of this skill in the behavior of the individual being assessed. The frequency with which an individual demonstrates behaviors related to a skill is the best measure of that skill. It takes approximately 20 minutes to complete online and produces a *Summary Report of results* and a 19-page *Sports (Coaching) Report*. The *Sports (Coaching) Report* is designed to assist athletes to understand their signature strengths and development opportunities as they relate to emotional intelligence and key dimensions of sports performance.



Preliminary research using the ESi has identified links between specific components of emotional intelligence and particular behaviors associated with effective sports performance (Newman & Purse, 2009; Saunders, Smith & Newman, 2010). High levels of emotional intelligence in these areas can help predict sports success because they enable an athlete to manage and direct their emotional experience toward desired outcomes.

ESi Competencies

More than a decade of empirical research has identified ten emotional intelligence competencies characteristic of successful athletes. The ESi model consists of ten factors that contain content from all four major domains of EQ. The ESi measures these competencies and athletes with these skills are characterized by:

Self-Awareness - the capacity to tune-in to the messages the body is constantly sending; be aware of emotional experience and motivations, and understand how feelings and emotions impact on personal performance, attitudes and judgements.

Self-Confidence - the ability to respect and like themselves and be confident in their skills and believe in their ability to perform at high levels.

Self-Reliance - the emotional power to be self-directed and take full responsibility for personal performance and back personal judgments and the ability to be self-reliant in making significant decisions.

Competitiveness - the strong desire to strive for success in competition by competing against others to win where the primarily focus is the challenge of reaching optimal performance and success is measured by performing at their personal best.

Achievement Drive - the ability to maintain a strong drive to achieve personally meaningful goals and be energized by the stimulus of pushing themselves outside of their comfort zone to take on new challenges.

Resilience - the ability to cope effectively with major setbacks and disappointments in sport; a strong will to succeed and the ability to bounce back from performance setbacks by focusing on the task ahead rather than the negative emotions.

Focus - the ability to maintain an effective focus and avoid distractions and the ability to sustain concentration and stay centered regardless of what is happening in the competitive situations.

Flexibility - the ability to adapt thinking, feelings and actions in response to changing circumstances and the ability to “go with the flow” to maintain optimal performance.

Self-Control - the ability to manage emotions well and restrain actions and stay calm when under pressure, and the ability to manage shifting moods to maintain composure and an optimal level of arousal to think clearly and act appropriately.

Optimism - the ability to sense opportunities even in the face of adversity and maintain an overall positive attitude and high expectations of what they can achieve and generally maintain positive mood.



Conclusion

The *Emotional Intelligence Sports Inventory* describes a set of positive emotional skills that represents a new psychology of sporting excellence. The research supporting the development of the ESi reveals the important role emotional skills play in this field and ongoing research using the ESi is promising. The *Emotional Intelligence Sports Inventory* is a psychometric tool that signifies an innovation in the measurement of elite sporting behaviors. It is an exciting advance in the ability to measure the building blocks that are scientifically linked to the behaviors of successful sports people.

For further information about the complete Emotional Intelligence Sports Inventory technical paper, including science and research, please contact *New Edge Performance* at www.newedgeperformance.org.



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