A Philosophical Construct: A Framework for Performance Enhancement

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Outlined in this article is an applied sport psychology philosophy (for consulting) based upon educational and existential principles. The athlete is related to as a total person. The consultant is concerned with the person and not just the athlete portion of his/her being. The philosophy advocated is grounded in existential philosophy with freedom of choice and responsibility for the consequences of the decisions made resting with the athletes. An important aspect of this philosophy is to have the athlete establish a mission or something to strive towards. Another aspect of existential philosophy is the importance of the present focus that is required to enhance performance.

This approach to consulting has been influenced by Zen and Hatha Yoga philosophy with its emphasis of letting go of control and transcending the ego so that the performer can become totally immersed in the performance.

KEY WORDS: Performance enhancement, Philosophy

After twenty-five years of consulting in the field of performance enhancement, my approach continues to be based upon educational and existential principles. My primary focus is to enhance athlete’s performance, both in and out of the performance venue; yet many concepts and techniques serve as “life skills,” as well as mental skills for sport. To accomplish the primary goal, I relate to the athlete as a total person. Before I can have an impact in the sport domain, a personal relationship has to be established; I must earn the athlete’s trust and respect as a person. I believe concern for the athlete as a person is unique in the sport culture since the coach’s priority is the actual performance and at some level, job security depends on it. The coach has primary responsibility for strategy, preparation, recruiting, and a multitude of

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details; as a consequence, concern for the athlete as a person often gets lost in the shuffle. I am concerned for the person, as well as the athlete and this is part of my job responsibility in order to complement the coach's role.

When I began working with athletes, my primary emphasis was to focus on teaching mental skills: goal setting, relaxation, imagery, and concentration training. Whatever the performance problem, I had a technique to help the athlete take care of the issue. In the last ten years, there has been a shift to a more philosophical approach. I have found that if athletes attach significance to performance it definitely helps them keep things in perspective. This may do more to help them perform to their capabilities than selected intervention techniques. For example, if the athlete seeks to perform at an elite level, he/she must recognize that adversity and challenges are part of the process.

Peak performance is not about being perfect, it is about learning to compensate and adjust. The quest for excellence is a love-hate relationship with one's sport. When the athlete comes to terms with this, he/she realizes that effectively handling adversity is part of the journey.

In this article I want to share how various philosophical constructs have influenced my work. Very quickly after beginning my work with athletes, I began to observe, ask questions, and determine team needs from the coaches and athletes. In the process of assessing their needs, I began to apply my academic expertise to the development of specific mental skills. Over time, I refined and modified my techniques based upon feedback from athletes and coaches. Today, my approach balances specific techniques and a broader philosophical perspective. Part of this philosophical perspective involves valuing and learning from the athletes and coaches with whom I have had the privilege to work.

Existential Approach

My approach to performance enhancement is grounded in Existential Philosophy. "Existence precedes essence" (Slusher, 1967). To existentialists, the word "existence" refers to the concrete human reality of experience. Existence is what is, not what should be or might be. In this approach the athletes' existence and the experiential knowledge that they obtain in their pursuit of excellence are paramount. As a consultant, all the great concepts, theories, and techniques in the world will be ineffective if I cannot make them relevant and meaningful to the individual athlete. I value the athlete's experience as part of my job is to facilitate that knowledge for that athlete. This is especially true for elite athletes because they have trained virtually their entire life and they have an abundance of wisdom related to their "lived
experience" in sport. This experiential knowledge serves as a foundation for their unique approach to sport. My job is to facilitate their understanding of this experiential knowledge and help them develop and refine various techniques that come from the experiential wisdom.

In my early years, I spent a lot of time and energy observing coaches and athletes. I definitely learned from and valued their experience. My questions helped me understand their concerns and issues regarding performance. This helped me to express my ideas in a manner that is practical and meaningful to athletes. Often, when I work with athletes and coaches, they tell me that they already do many things that I discuss. My value to the coach and team is that I provide a conceptual framework which helps athletes relate one technique or issue to another. This promotes a more integrated approach and provides athletes with "something to go to" when they confront adversity or pressure, particularly during performance situations.

**Sport is an Absurd Task**

Sport by definition is an activity where we put unnecessary obstacles in the way of the performer. Rules function to make the task more difficult or ineffective than if there were an absence of rules (Metheny, 1968). For example, in soccer players cannot use their hands, or in the hurdles the runner is not allowed to run around the hurdles but they must jump over them. These rules and regulations provide the structure to make the sport. Thus, sport by design is an absurd task.

I frequently discuss with athletes the ancient Greek Myth of Sisyphus (Camus, 1955). Sisyphus was the Greek mortal who overheard the gods talking about the meaning of life, and then informed other mortals about what he heard. The gods caught him before he could convey this pertinent information. He was put on trial, found guilty and sentenced to the futile task of pushing a large rock to the top of the hill. When he reached the top, the rock would roll back down and Sisyphus would have to walk down the hill and start over again. He was destined to do this for eternity.

Sisyphus accepted his punishment; when the gods watched him perform this absurd task they saw the first time he pushed it, he went as fast as he could, the next time he pushed it as slow as he could, the next time he used the back stroke, the next time the side stroke. Sisyphus took this absurd repetitious task and he determined the meaning he was going to put into it by the way that he choose to view it and the manner in which he would choose to push the rock. What the gods viewed as "punishment," he viewed as a
challenge, by the meaning he put into it. Each time he had a different purpose. He took this absurd futile task and put meaning into it by the attitude he took in pushing the rock.

The athlete, like Sisyphus, is involved in an absurd task where the repetition factor at times is boring and tedious. For example, a gymnast working on the balance beam does the same routine over and over, but she is the one that puts the meaning into the routine. The routine can change by where the athlete focuses her awareness as she is practicing her routine. As an athlete, there are a multitude of rocks that need to be pushed and it is the athlete that chooses the meaning she wants to put into it. The athlete is constantly confronted with the decision to just go through the motions or to have a sense of purpose and/or passion in what she does.

Freedom and Responsibility

From the existential perspective, freedom is expressed in the choices made by the individual. With the choices, comes the responsibility for the consequences of the decisions made. For example, when playing basketball if I choose to take the shot, then I am responsible and accountable for my actions. I remember my first year working with a collegiate gymnastics team. We had just finished competing at the national championships and when we returned to the hotel as I was walking to my room I heard one of the gymnasts crying in his room. The gymnast was very upset as we talked about his performance and eventually the coach came in and said, “Why are you so upset? You scored a 9.4 and you are crying that you didn’t get a 9.7, but you forgot when you chose to miss two weeks of practice early in the season. I explained those two weeks would cost you 0.3, so don’t be upset that you made a decision for which you now have to take responsibility.” I have found this type of “reality check” by the coach has been most helpful in my work.

Freedom in One’s Choices

The athlete must make rapid and constant decisions while performing. There are endless compensations and adjustments to be made during the hours of arduous training, and most importantly, during the act of performance. Many of these adjustments are subtle, but the athlete makes continuous decisions throughout the performance. I frequently tell athletes “Attitude is a decision.” Like Sisyphus, athletes can choose how they want to
think about those things that happen to them. Athletes must take ownership of their progress; they must see "failures" and set backs as feedback and then they must make the required adjustments. This commitment to learning accelerates the learning process and supports performance.

Athletes choose how they want to act. For example, when a pressure situation arises, they determine how they are going to react by how they appraise the situation, the choices they make, and/or by disciplining themselves to develop the mental skills to cope with the situation. The critical factor with the freedom to choose is the responsibility that accompanies the choice. This is one of the special things about sport; the athletes are responsible and accountable for their actions. Eleanor Metheny stated in *Movement and Meaning* the athlete “stands naked before the gods”. (Metheny, 1968 p. 65) The athlete must perform, fully exposed in an environment where performance counts. This act of performance unites the athlete with the musician, dancer, and actor because they all must perform. It is one of the reasons why sport is such a powerful learning environment.

**Responsibility**

The responsibility that accompanies the athlete’s choices is a concept which many young people in the United States have a difficult time accepting. Too often, in a team sport, when the team doesn’t perform well the players point to other players as being responsible for what happened. I have even seen large coaching staffs do this after major defeats. At the Olympic level, this scenario takes place between coaches, selection committee members, the administrative office, and the athletes. Many athletes are not willing to take personal responsibility. So many athletes in the United States have grown up in the world of adult organized sport, where parents take care of everything and where their view of sport has been shaped by only playing with an “official” referee. This structured, protected environment doesn’t encourage athletes to make choices or accept responsibility and accountability for the decisions they make.

This same mindset has worked its way into professional sports where the agent becomes the surrogate father. The agents take care of their athletes. Recently, I was informed of a case where a professional baseball player felt he was not getting enough playing time and instead of taking responsibility and meeting with the coach directly, he had his agent call the coach and talk to the coach for him. Isn’t this an extension of parents talking with the coach about their child’s playing time?
With one professional team, we have addressed this concern for the athlete to take responsibility by addressing responsibility as not just some abstract concept but as a skill similar to mechanics, speed, or agility. We have to establish an environment where athletes are asked more questions instead of constantly being told what they need to do. We must encourage athletes to think, make choices and be accountable. This also means that in planning practice sessions and/or in debriefing after performance, we address the issue of responsibility and explore strategies to develop it like any other skill.

**CONTROL THE THINGS YOU CAN CONTROL**

In performance, the athletes don’t have control of what happens to them, but they have control of how they choose to respond. Sysiphus didn’t have control of his punishment of rock pushing, but he did choose how he responded to it. Athletes have to take responsibility for those things they can control: their attitude, effort, and most importantly themselves. When athletes fail, they have to use that failure as positive feedback. It is that failure that will make them stronger. When the athletes assess the failure, and determine those factors they had control of and learn to make the necessary adjustments, they will enhance their opportunity for improvement. Most importantly, athletes learn to take responsibility and make the conscious decision to do what is needed to improve. And when they make the choice to improve it empowers them because now they can take ownership of their performance instead of just hoping it will improve the next time they perform. Pat Summit, the University of Tennessee Women’s Basketball Coach whose teams have won six national titles in the last twelve years stated: “Think about it. The more responsibility they (the players) are given, the more committed they will be to a project, the more they will make it their project. When it’s theirs, they feel more accountable for its success or failure, and they do whatever it takes to help it succeed. It becomes ‘our’ team instead of ‘my’ team…. Responsibility equals accountability equals ownership. And a sense of ownership is the most powerful weapon a team or organization can have.”

There are many factors the athlete doesn’t have control of such as playing time, referees, organizational politics, injury, etc. Many of the situations that arise are not “fair,” “right,” or “just,” but the athlete doesn’t have control of those factors. If athletes get pre-occupied with issues beyond their control, they waste energy and fail to prepare properly because the focus is lost. The athletes must distinguish those things they have control over and
focus their energy on what is going to have an impact. When athletes understand this concept, it helps them take a positive focus on the process of performance and not get distracted by focusing on things over which they have no control.

**CONTROL YOURSELF**

The second major aspect of responsibility is that you have to be in control of yourself before you control your performance. If the athlete is emotionally too aroused then that anxiety will manifest itself in the performance. In my discussions with athletes, I talk about how self-control leads to body control, which leads to skill control. Coaches have a tendency to “fix it” by adjusting the mechanics. If the athlete can perform in practice, but tightens up in the game, it is not a mechanical issue but a mental game issue. I find that athletes are more receptive to fixing it with mechanics, because this means there is nothing “wrong” with them; it is just their mechanics. In order to make consistent progress they must focus their efforts on the source of the challenge/problem rather than the symptom. This may well be a mechanics issue but until they perform, well prepared with high trust and confidence for several competitions, it is difficult to determine whether the errors are mechanical or mental.

**Establishing a Mission**

Once the athletes accept the fact that they have freedom to make choices but they must accept the responsibility that goes with it, I ask them to establish a mission or something to strive towards. It is not achieving the goal that is critical, but the passion they put into the pursuit of that mission. The athlete’s commitment level is a critical factor. The first question I ask an athlete after he/she informs me of their mission is “Why do you play?” “What is it about playing your sport that you truly enjoy?” I want to know, if they were told they had only two months left to live, would some of that precious time be spent playing their sport? If they wouldn’t play, then I confront them on their passion and explain it is acceptable to stop playing after the season is over. I want to know athletes’ goals and how long they have wanted that goal? What sacrifices have they made to achieve that goal and what sacrifices are they willing to make in the future? This provides me with a much better understanding of the athlete’s commitment level. This commitment level is
critical because when athletes know why they are playing, it helps them persevere through the difficult times. And if they lack the commitment, then they are going to have a hard time just doing the required training, let alone the mental training.

I often talk with athletes about what they love about performance and the meaning it has for them, because the level of commitment is critical if the mental skills are going to have any impact. When an athlete’s commitment level declines, his/her motivation to just do the physical training is minimal, at best, let alone setting goals and developing an action plan, practicing imagery, relaxation, and all the other mental skills we have to offer. I think we sometimes are so quick to help with the latest technique, that we neglect to check the player’s level of commitment and passion. This is why my work incorporates both philosophical and psychological techniques. Techniques are not enough. The athlete must make a commitment to excellence and in some cases understand the rationale for the technique and then the techniques take on a new level of significance for that athlete. Many of today’s athletes want to know “why?” they have to do something. I believe it is part of quality consulting to provide an explanation for the services we provide and if we can’t provide a rationale for what we are doing, then we shouldn’t do it.

“Committed athletes are driven by their purpose, not how they happen to feel on a given day” (Ravizza & Hanson, 1995, p. 15). The mission gives athletes a direction, they know where they are going. The mission helps them develop their intensity. I use the word intensity not as an emotional construct, but as a philosophical term to imply intention and/or purpose. I often have had coaches say an athlete lacks aggression or intensity; when I talk with the athlete it is not an emotional issue but rather the athlete is unclear as to his/her purpose (i.e., role on the team, a lack of commitment to the task, etc.); I try to help the athletes clarify their mission and, most importantly (for the coaches), to give them specific things to focus on in the next practice or contest. This provides them with an opportunity to work on their mission as soon as possible and not wait for the major competition to be committed. Athletes may have the greatest goals, but what matters is what they are doing today to achieve those goals.

Athletes with a mission develop discipline because now they have something specific to work on, instead of just working hard. I suggest that athletes establish two goals before each practice. During practice, they should remind themselves of those goals, and after practice assess how well they did in achieving their goals. I also advise athletes to use their coach to get more information or input on the most effective plan of action to achieve their specific goals.
Another way that the mission aids performance is by giving meaning to the athlete’s performance. I have been influenced by the work of Victor Frankel’s *Man’s Search for Meaning* (1984) and his investigation of the survivors of concentration camps and what it took for them to survive. He discovered that it was not the physically strong who survived, but the mentally strong who persevered. He determined that sustaining a sense of purpose was critical and the meaning had to be obtained in both the long range goal of obtaining one’s freedom, and in finding meaning on a daily basis. When I work with athletes I want to know their long range goals, but I direct most of my attention to today’s mission. What is that one thing you are working on today because each and everyday the athlete chooses to take a step forward toward his/her goal, remain the same, or take a step back. It is the athlete’s choice and a step forward doesn’t always mean one is successful. The athlete can fail, but gain valuable information in the process or upon reflection. Thus, the athlete is accountable for his/her actions on a daily basis.

**Present Focus**

Another aspect of existential philosophy is the importance of the present focus that is required to enhance the performance. “The time is now, the place is here” is an important phrase that I emphasize all the time. For example, a gymnast who fails to focus on the present and gets mentally ahead of herself, loses her focus, which leads to errors. Mastery of a performance requires the athlete to be in the present moment; yet, some of their consciousness goes to anticipating and setting up the next move. If they get too far into the future, they lose focus and if they are totally in the present, they are not able to adjust to the next move as it presents itself. This is what the existentialists refer to as “being” and “becoming.” We must be here, but we are always moving and growing toward an objective. For example, when a figure skater is performing, she has to be focused on what she is doing, but she also has to anticipate her next move so she can set herself up for good execution. If the skater gets too far “ahead” of herself she may make mistakes since she is not focused and if she is not anticipating the next move, then she may have a problem properly setting the move up. Thus, there is that delicate balance that must be sustained between “being” and “becoming.” In athletics, this is addressed as a focus on the process, rather than the outcome. We are so conditioned as a culture to focus on the results, that we neglect the process. As an athlete matures there is a certain amount of attention directed
on the outcome but the skills are executed in the now moment. And finding that balance between process and outcome is what helps the athlete achieve excellence.

The existential orientation emphasizes the absurd nature of sport and the importance of athletes accepting their freedom, taking a proactive approach, and taking responsibility for their performance. A large part of the responsibility is to establish a mission so that the athletes are not just going through the motions, but there is a sense of purpose in their actions. And this purpose must be maintained in the present moment and as one moves towards their evolving objective.

Holistic Approach: Athlete as Person

As an educator, my approach focuses on the total person. I am concerned about the person as well as the athlete. I believe this is especially critical in working with female athletes. They want to know that their coaches and support staff value them as people. Mike Candrea, the softball coach at the University of Arizona, who has won five national championships emphasizes the importance of establishing personal relationships with his athletes and how much this helps him provide effective motivational techniques, communicate with athletes and, most importantly, demonstrate that he “cares.” When the female athlete knows that the coach cares about her as a person, it is easier for her to handle the coach’s feedback in practice and games. When this type of personal relationship is not established, it is difficult for the athlete to receive constructive criticism without taking it personally. For example, in tennis, a poor backhand stroke doesn’t mean you are a terrible person.

This approach is also important for the male athlete. I have worked with many male athletes who base their self worth on how well they perform. At the professional level, many of the players’ wives have shared that this is a major issue. I have also observed that once the athlete has children, it really helps in not personalizing and carrying the game home because that 2 year old child couldn’t care less whether Dad or Mom wins or loses. When a diaper needs to be changed, it helps keep things in perspective on what is truly important.

This personalization of the individual performance is one of the most common issues I confront in my work with athletes. Athletes have to realize that they are not their performance. The “athlete” is one part of their identity and they must keep a balance with the other aspects of their life (acade-
mics, social activities, family, volunteer work, etc.) I constantly emphasize this with athletes. One professional athlete I worked with played for ten years in the minor leagues. He had three opportunities at the major leagues but each time he was in the majors, he did not perform well. After his last missed opportunity, I told him during the off season to go back to school and finish his college degree. That off season he called me and said he took my advice and as part of an education class he had to do an internship with handicapped children. He loved it... for the first time in his life he found something he had a passion for and was good at, besides baseball. Once he discovered there was more than just baseball, his perceived pressure decreased and he learned to perform when the pressure was on and he went on to have three years in the major leagues.

Hatha Yoga and Athletic Performance

This “whole person” orientation is also related to the actual performance. This is where I incorporate many of the principles that I gained from my study of Hatha Yoga. Yoga means “to yoke or join together”. Hatha in sanskrit means “Ha” the sun (active force) and “tha” the moon (passive force). In yoga the physical aspect is reflected in the “asana”, or posture, one is doing. The mental component is emphasized in the concentration and awareness that one directs toward their movement. The emotional aspect is addressed in the feelings and sensations that accompany the asanas and the use of the breath. And when the physical, mental, and emotional components join together the movement takes on a spiritual dimension in the sense of purpose that is attained.

The physical aspect of performance is reflected in the actual skills that are performed, the biomechanics and physiological aspects of the performance. Yet, this is not enough; the mental aspects of performance are equally important. Athletes must be able to think clearly, know the strategic aspects of the performance and make a commitment to the plan that is going to be executed. They must also be aware during their performance, so that they can make the adjustments that are required. The emotional aspect of performance is reflected in the intensity level of the performance. I am constantly working with the breath (breathing techniques) to monitor the emotional aspects of performance. Athletes must be in control of themselves before they try to control their performance. And a very simple way to monitor if they are in control is to check on their breathing and see if they can take a nice slow steady breath before they perform. Some athletes get so immersed
in their performance and try so hard, that they over-try. The harder they try, the worse it gets. Thus, as stated earlier self-control leads to body control, which leads to skill control. So often coaches want to fix the skill, when the “issue behind the issue” is to release the unnecessary tension which is having a detrimental effect on the mechanics.

The “spiritual” part of performance is the sense of purpose an athlete has in their performance, because when they know why they perform and what they enjoy about their performance, it is easier to persevere through the difficult times. I haven’t met many elite level athletes that love their sport all the time; rather it is more of a love/hate relationship. A sense of purpose and passion can sustain athletes as they battle through the adversity because one certainty is that there will be distractions and obstacles on the road to excellence.

Zen Philosophy

The final philosophical aspect is total immersion with the task at hand. There is that sense of connection with one’s performance (Orlick, 1998). And in order to foster that connection, the athletes must first be in control of themselves so that eventually they can “let go” of attempting to control. This is where excellence in sport is similar to Zen philosophy. For example, “to gain control, you have to let go of control,” but there is that delicate balance between having control and letting go of control. When the pressure is on, sometimes the issue is trying less instead of trying more, but this requires that the athlete is in control so that he/she can think effectively.

A book I recommend to athletes is Zen and the Art of Archery by Eugen Herrigel. There is one section where the teacher explains to the student “the right shot at the right moment does not come because you do not let go of yourself” (Herrigel, 1989, p. 30). After engaging in the rigorous Zen Archery Training for six years, the student finally shot the Zen shot. He is all excited when the master teacher stated, “You are entirely innocent of this shot ... the shot fell from you like a ripe fruit. Now go on practicing as if nothing had happened.” (Herrigel, 1989, p. 52). The master didn’t want him to get his “ego” involved in the process. One must transcend the ego orientation in order to obtain that immersion with the task. It’s almost as though the athlete allows the performance to occur rather than attempting to make it happen. This is why many athletes claim that when they are performing at a peak level, there is a relaxed concentration and a feeling of effortless effort (Ravizza, 1977).
I-Thou Relationship

When an athlete is performing well, there is a sense of connection with the task at hand. Many people in our field relate this to concentration and focus and they approach it from a psychological orientation. I approach the importance of concentration from Nideffer’s (1981) perspective, which many people in our field do; I also address it from a philosophical perspective by incorporating the concepts of Martin Buber in his concept of the I-thou relationship (Buber, 1953). Buber developed the concept of the I-thou relationship to capture those relationships in one’s life that provide meaning and make a difference from one’s usual relationships. Buber claimed that the I-thou relationship requires intensity, presentness, directness, mutuality, and that the experience is ineffable. Thus for this type of relationship to develop, the person must be totally involved in the present moment, and this type of presentness leads to an intensity that is often lacking in daily life. There also is a directness, or spontaneous direction, to the relationship. All parties involved have a sense of mutuality in that they move and interact with each other. The final characteristic is that when they have this type of experience they don’t have to discuss it, they know it.

Buber discussed his I-thou relationship primarily as a meaningful relationship with another person, but in sport the relationship can come between two athletes or the athlete and his/her performance. When I discuss this with athletes I discuss the importance of them doing those things they need to do to be present and focused. They must first focus on themselves, then their body, then their skill and then direct that energy out to the task and form that relationship with the task at hand. And when the athlete is in that type of relationship, there is no need to discuss or talk about it. For example, the golfer must do what they need to be prepared for their match, warm-up their body, warm up their swing, get that good connection with one’s swing; and then get that connection with one’s swing, the ball, and the target and then allow the performance to occur. Thus, Buber’s work provides a broader perspective on the nature of meaningful relationships and the athlete’s relationship with their sport needs to be more of this type of I-thou relationship. In sport, there is that struggle and/or contest that intensifies the total experience and often functions to heighten the sport experience.

I believe there is a balance that must be obtained between the specific performance enhancement skills and the broader philosophical aspects of performance. We have to use the most appropriate methods or approach for that athlete. I have observed many young athletes when they attend a
national training camp and they do not perform to their potential because they lose their confidence and attempt to try too hard instead of trusting their ability. Of course, they have never previously performed with so many good players and against such a high level of competition. The athlete must understand that they are now performing against some of the most talented players; setbacks and failures are a natural part of the process at this level. Early in my career I would begin to “fix” the problem by teaching the athlete various relaxation and imagery skills, but this was only taking care of the symptoms. Now, I try to explain to athletes that this is part of the process and most athletes go through this type of experience. It helps them keep everything in perspective, and this may reduce their anxiety more than any specific intervention technique. At times I have been too quick to fix things with some technique, when clarifying the athletes thought process may help them gain the perspective that is needed. It is after they have an understanding of the issue that we can then incorporate the specific mental skills to compliment and support their understanding.

Also, if one just discusses philosophical issues and doesn’t develop specific mental skills, the athlete doesn’t have specific methods to deal with the adversity. Thus, I want the athletes to have a broader understanding and know why they are performing; but I also want them to be proficient in the mental skills so they have them as resources to incorporate when the situation dictates and this can only add to their level of confidence since they are prepared to cope with adversity.

In summary, my work as a performance enhancement consultant is grounded in existential philosophy with its fundamental concepts of freedom and responsibility, appropriate self-control, clarification of a mission, and present focus. My approach has also been influenced by Zen and Hatha Yoga philosophy with its emphasis on letting go of control and transcending the ego so that the performer can become totally immersed in the performance. My background as an educator has added to my approach with a view of the athlete as a whole person, which incorporates the physical, mental, emotional, and spiritual domains of the athlete’s performance.

REFERENCES