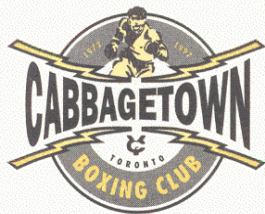


THE CABBAGETOWN YOUTH CENTRE THE CABBAGETOWN BOXING CLUB NEWSLETTER



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SPORTS COUNSELLING AND MENTAL SKILLS COACHING AT THE CABBAGETOWN BOXING CLUB Peter Wylie

There are many questions as to when the practice of Sports Psychology began. Some believe it has always been a part of sports. But according to some sources, the Russians were the first to apply Sports Psychology in the form of Sports Counselling to develop Peak Performance Athletes.

Realizing the impact of the Mind-Body connection on athletic performance, they intended Club Psychologists and Mental Skills Training to be their “secret weapon” in outperforming other countries. Europe caught fairly quickly on, but North America fell considerably behind. The American Psychological Association has only recently recognized Sports Psychology as an official discipline. Even so, up to this date, Sports Counselling remains the domain of professional, high-income competitors (golfers, US football clubs) and some high-end commercial fitness clubs.

As Olympic Trainer I have seen the difference between the North American concepts and the progressive attitudes of the European and Australian sports community. Some Australian clubs are actually redefining the counsellor’s role. While fully focused on the athletes’ sports performance, a number of Australian Sport Counsellors, with Social Science and Business related backgrounds, act also as personal advisors to club members in areas of general development and other personal issues.

Based on that concept, we are introducing Sports Counselling also at the Cabbagetown Boxing Club. Our Club has always been on the forefront of athletic training and sports results. We cannot fall behind in this rapidly developing area either; especially as some other clubs are already showing signs of moving ahead in this field too.

We don’t want our athletes to have to face opponents, who have the competitive advantage of a better training package.

Therefore the next issues of the Newsletter will cover the basics of Sports Counselling and will discuss ways of taking full advantage of this new program. Participants of the Peak Performance Mental Conditioning Workshops will also receive a working folder, containing Instruction Sheets for all topics covered by the workshop sessions.

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SPORTS COUNSELLING

How to take advantage of its tools and objectives (Part 1)

Henry M. Toran

What is Sports Counselling, who are Sports Counsellors and what is their role in a club's overall athletic development and training program?

A Sports Counsellor supplements the work of the club's physical fitness and technical skills trainers. The Counsellor guides athletes towards achieving optimum and persistent performance by making them better understand their own attitudes and motivations.

We might think that we always fully understand why we do certain things or why we want to achieve specific goals. However, this assumption is wrong. There are many psychological factors (self-concepts, beliefs, fears, desires) that sit deep in our "unconscious" and subconscious mind and that influence our thinking and behaviour. Those are the real driving forces that motivate us to accomplish certain results, or to avoid certain issues and situations.

The reasons for our actions and plans are often quite different from what we believe they are. But this "Not knowing our own mind" does not come cheap! Many frustrated efforts, disappointments with achieved results and wrong decisions in life could have been avoided with a better understanding of ourselves.

Therefore the Sports Counsellor focuses his work with athletes, professionals and non-professionals, above all on helping them fully understand some of the motivations that make them want to achieve (or avoid) particular results – both in sports and in life..

In close cooperation, the athlete and the counsellor will examine issues directly related to the athlete's sports performance. This leads to a better understanding of the boxer's personality, of his/her ambitions and goals, but it also uncovers those subconscious concerns and anxieties that we all have, but are either not aware of, or are reluctant to admit to ourselves and to others.

As a good athlete/counsellor relationship develops, such barriers to optimum achievement are successively removed. By establishing what works and what does not work for an individual athlete, the three main players, i.e. athlete, coach and counsellor have now the necessary insight to prepare a successful, winning game plan to achieve peak performance and dependable results.

But the important component in this new approach to counseling is the understanding of the influences that different other non-sports related factors in the life of the athlete have on his/her performance. The athlete and counsellor will examine, clarify and work towards resolving also matters of general concern. We are looking here at external events and situations that can have an impact on the athlete's mood, self-esteem, self-control and other personality features.

Throughout this process it is important that the counsellor maintain his function of "catalyst" – i.e. advisor, friend and "sounding board", to assist the athlete in identifying and understanding his/her ambitions, strength and "shortfalls". The counsellor's training and practical life experience must be the tools that will lead the athlete, and the athlete's coaching support, to finding the most effective ways to resolve existing problems and set challenging, but realistic achievement goals.

Note:

Part 2 and 3 of this series will examine some of the Mind Skills that the 51st Annual Convention of the California Psychological Association in Pasadena, California, established as main requisites, enabling the athlete to achieve peak performance: Progressive Muscle Relaxation, Deep Breathing, Total Relaxation, Visualization, Stress Management, Thought Control, Concentration and Programming for Competition.

A number of these Mental Skills techniques are already part of the Club's present Peak Performance Mental Conditioning Workshops. Others will be included in future workshop programs.

COACHES' BOXING CORNER - Johnny Kalbhenn

Remember this formula for success

- Practice and concentration, **then more practice and concentration!**
- Those who **let things happen** usually lose to those who **make things happen!**
- If you put little effort into your workouts, you will get out of your sport what you put into it --- **Very Little!**