

Some Tips for the Phenomenon of the Yips in the Sports

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Abstract

This Commentary Article describe about the Some Tips for the Phenomenon of the Yips in the Sports. Yips state seems to have increased muscle tension, and decreased flexibility of thoracic cage and spine. This condition has been reduced by our proposal and practice of pole exercise. These research would be continued with probable evidence data in the future.

Keywords: Yips; Athlete; Paradoxical performance; Pole exercise; Spine flexibility

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Commentary Article

Tokyo Olympic and Para-Olympic will be held in about a year, and the combined research for medicine, sports and psychology would be important [1]. The development in this field would be expected from several points of view from now.

Authors have continued sports medicine research and practical workshops for pole exercise and stretching in lots of opportunities [2]. Among them, we have developed the research on spine flexibility and the practice of pole exercise [3]. Furthermore, we have participated actual masters athlete championship and baseball games [4]. The first author Moriyasu had been baseball player with leading hitter title in the senior high school, and has attended all Japan baseball tournament in 2017 summer as a physical and mental training coach from various experiences, current topic about “Yips” would be described in this article [5].

For years, paradoxical performance has been described as a sudden decrease in some top athletes despite the persistence of their superior performance. It was been called as lost-skill syndrome in or “the yips” [6]. This is usually influenced by psychological factors and situation, then some athletes feel it as sport performance phobia from irrational fear of a stimulus–response–patterns [7]. Their characteristic points are i) mostly basic, simple, routine tasks are affected, ii) isolated on an element of total performance, and iii) before phobia athlete was fully capable of executing.

The definition of the “Yips” has been as follows: it has been the loss of fine motor skills in athletes. The condition can be found suddenly and without apparent explanation, usually in mature athletes with years of experience [8]. The mechanism has been poorly understood and has no known treatment or therapy. This situations are observed in baseball, golf, darts, table tennis, football and brass band.

Yips was used firstly in 1935 according to the Merriam-Webster dictionary. The representative example was a baseball player, Pittsburgh Pirates pitcher Steve Blass [9]. He was a dominant pitcher and All-Star from 1964 to 1972, but he suddenly lost his command by Yips in 1973 and retired in 1974. Formerly in 1980s and early 1990s, there were a few studies of Yips. After that, research on the Yips has been expanded recently. The majority of the publication were found in these 18 years [10]. The systematic review of Yips was summarized by Clarke et al., in which 25 studies were covered [8]. Consequently, the topic of Yips has been gaining traction in the fields of sports and music. The academic qualifiers have to recognize that there exist lots of significant amount of unpublished, interventional research on the yips [10]. Probably, sports psychologists and golf coaches have experienced abundant of various cases of Yips in usual daily lives.

Research for Yips included wider kinds of the subjects. Three psycho-diagnostic standardized questionnaires were applied to 4 groups (each n=20). They were healthy musicians, musicians with focal dystonia, healthy golfers, and Yips-affected golfers. As a result, categorization was possible due to specific elevated perfectionistic, stress and anxiety traits [11].

Athlete subjects are commonly found for the Yips. When an athlete feels psychological pressure to perform, he sometimes cannot achieve at the level of their skills as expected [12]. As suboptimal performance would be significant during the high stakes moment and event, the phenomenon is called as choking or yips [12]. Due to psychoanalytic theory, there are two psychodynamic conflicts which can contribute to choking in the situation with pressure. They are conflict over autonomy and conflict over aggression and competition.

Actually, many athletes have experiences to feel Yips. It is said that the cause would be from psychological factor and it is up to the athlete himself to overcome the situation. Generally, the strategy to lessen the Yips was believed to be mental training so far [12].

However, there exists another resolving way. The crucial point would be the physical influence from mental factor.

The narrative data from the yips were roughly divided into two groups. One is negative psychological changes, and another is psychological growth accompanying the experience of the Yips. Detail analysis of the latter yielded 5 category groups for psychological growth [13]. They are i) positive changes in consciousness of competition, ii) changes in self-recognition, iii) mental margin, iv) changes in the views of a way of others and v) deepening of understanding of competition. These results suggest that the experience of the Yips would lead to negative as well as positive psychological changes in the athletes [13].

Oriental philosophy has been known including Confucianism and Buddhism. Among them the meaningful word has been "body and mind". This means the situation that when you are concentrating on something, your body and mind are combined together and fulfilling. Furthermore, the body and the spirit are not separate, but one existence. In other words, they are aggregated and merged into one. Consequently, mental factors are always believed to affect physical factors. The state of mind affects the posture of the shoulders and chest. For example, dropping the shoulders, shrugging the shoulders and bending the chest down are found [3]. Evaluation and regulation of the alignment of chest, thoracic spine and scapula are important for people with mental problems [5]. Conversely, it would be possible for modifying the alignment to improve the mental state.



Figure 1: Pole Exercise effective for Yips.

From the above, it was thought that enhancing physical function could improve mental and psychological functions, and would lead to overcoming the phenomenon "Yips". Authors have continued working concerning physiotherapy, sports training, physical function and manipulation. Moreover, we have various experience with many high school baseball players with physical and mental problems associated with "Yips" [3]. There are many common problems in the baseball players with "Yips". Among various phenomena, several representative influences and/or changes were observed. Those are i) the decreased function of somatic sensory, body image, gravity center of the body, ii) the increased tension of general muscle at rest, abdominal muscle and iii) the decreased

control of flexibility of thoracic cage and spine [5,14]. In our clinical experiences, improving the condition of iii) seems to ease ii) and i). Then, we have conducted stretching using pole exercise with six basic movements [3]. After several minutes of practice, the flexibility of the thorax and spine clearly improves [5]. The figure shows our textbook of pole exercise by the authors [15] (Figure 1). It is written in both English and Japanese, and has been used in various opportunity for long.

In summary, Yips has been found in various sports, and we have experienced clinical cases with baseball players and others. Yips state seems to have increased muscle tension, and decreased flexibility of thoracic cage and spine. This condition has been reduced by our proposal and practice of pole exercise. These research would be continued with probable evidence data in the future.

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